Emmanuel **– wk 1: The Great Mystery**

**Have you ever struggled with feeling like God is far away? We’ve all been there – a time or two.**

**Especially at Christmas… busy, $ worries, family, parties… God, where are you? Are you really there - are you really with us - are you really with me? Today deals with this very thing.**

**We are taking a break from Acts – to talk about the great 1st Advent of Jesus. The coming of Jesus – Christmas.**

**Luke is Mary’s point of view – Matthew is Joseph’s. Mary just told her betrothed husband to be – “I’m pregnant from God.” (How that might have gone over…)**

**Contemplating leaving her**… [**Matthew 1:20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=50&search=Matthew+1%3A21) **And she (Mary) will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, (Savior / healer) for He will save His people from their sins.” (That was the whole point – that is why he came) 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: (Angel quoting Isaiah 7:14) 23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”**

**Christmas is – God with us! The very present presence of God interacting with us. (Emm- Gk spelling/ Imm - is Hbw). To truly understand this mystery, we must understand who Jesus is!**

**\*\* I love Christmas music – do you have a favorite? Play a few…**

**Let’s look one the oldest Christmas songs ever in – Col 1.**

**Written in stanza form, repeat phrasing – to be sung and sited.**

**Many scholars believe Paul is possibly quoting a common hymn sung in the early church. A song about… Jesus - who he is, and how he came here for us.**

**An ancient Christmas song… God with us! (All things!)**

**Colossians 1:15 He is (Jesus) the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness (of God) should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.**

**Let’s break down this - Ancient Declaration – All Things!**

**Col 1:15 - Christ is the image (gk. eikon = icon) of the invisible God**

**(John 8:58, Rev 22:13, Phil 2:6-11, John 14:6, John 1:1-18)**

**1. Jesus is the image of the invisible God!**

**Starts with one of the clearest descriptions of who Jesus is in all of the Bible - JESUS IS GOD clothed in skin. Says 7 ways**

**\* Good doctrine develops a dynamic relationship w/God (explain) Bad theology hurts people and damns people.**

**God in essence is invisible. (Ex 33:20, John 1:18, 1 Tim 1:17, 6:15-16)**

**He is spirit - no eye can see or will ever see him…**

**God in essence is unapproachable. (1 Tim 6:15-16, Hebrews 12:29)**

**Holy and radiant light - consuming fire. No man can see & live!**

**1 Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

**1 Timothy 6:15 …God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.**

**We can never get to God on our own - ever! How then can we ever know him? “The image”- stamp of God. God came to us.**

**\* But are we not made in the image of God? (Gen.2) We are created to reflect and resemble God - relationally, love, emotions – like God.**

**But Jesus is the very – exact image – only begotten of God.**

**We are made in the image of God, Jesus is the very image.**

**Hebrews 1:3a The Son (Jesus) is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, (exact imprint of his nature) sustaining all things by his powerful word. (Jesus is the invisible God – in the flesh)**

**Colossians 2:9 For in Him (Jesus) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**

**ONE God - Mystery of the trinity. Not 3 gods (polytheism); He is not one God who wears diff hats (modalism); He is not God subdivided into part (partialism). One yet diff - A great mystery. Our finite, 3-dimensional minds cannot comprehend – He is Multidimensional.**

**The Trinity is not a pie – with 3 equal parts. They are each fully God, 1 God - 3 persons… the great mystery!**

**The father is the mind of God – (Jesus) the Word is the expression of that thought – the Spirit is the power that carries the thought. (John 1)**

**The father is omnipresent – the son is God present with us – the Spirit is God present in us.**

**John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; (LDS) without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. (Jesus is the very spark that made us conscience beings) 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. / 14 The Word (GOD) became flesh (Christmas) and made his dwelling among us. (JESUS) We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

**The mystery of that moment! When almighty God became a baby! The only one, never has been, never will be another!**

**Back to the song - Colossians 1:15 He is (Jesus) the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (NLT - He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation)**

**2. Jesus is supreme over all things!**

**Some think it means Jesus was the first thing God created. (JW’s)**

**This is not about order but position. lit. means – first position of.**

**“son” itself is figurative – a place of union and authority**

**First born in ancient families meant – control and superiority.**

**This refers to Jesus supreme position over all creation.**

**Notice how the song continues – Col 1:16 For by Him (Jesus) all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.**

**LDS, JW’s if Jesus was created and he created all things - then he created himself. Jesus is not a creation - was not made.**

**As God and creator – Jesus is supreme over all things.**

**3. Jesus is creator of all things! (Col 1:16)**

**All things visible (universe) & invisible (spirit realm) - by Him & for Him.**

**The amazing wonder of His creation!**

**A comet vapor trails are up to 10,000 miles long. If you could take that vapor, and put it in a bottle, it would take up less than 1 cubic inch of space.**

**Saturn’s rings are 180,000 miles in circumference - but main rings - 32 ft thick**

**If the sun were the size of a beachball and put on top the Empire State Building, the nearest stars would be as far away as Australia. \* 93 million miles from Earth. Perfectly placed for life – and seasons.**

**Earth travels around the sun at about 8X the speed of a bullet fired from a gun.**

**There are more insects in 1sq mile of rural land than all humans on earth.**

**A single human chromosome contains 20 billion bits of information. How much information is that? If written out in book form - it would take 4000 volumes.**

**It’s been said every work of art has a piece of the soul of the artist. You can know great artists thru their art. That’s how creation is. The heavens declare the glory of God. They point to the artist!**

**Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. 3 They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. 4 Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.**

**Like a beautiful wedding ring – the ring is not enough. The ring only points to the man behind the ring.**

**Back to song- Col 1:17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.**

**4. Jesus is forever eternally before all things!**

**Jesus did not just show up – 2022 years ago. He has eternally been present before all creation and will eternally be long after.**

**Jesus is not God Jr. The Father’s Bubba. God in training -**

**Jesus is God of eternity – who always existed! Before all!**

**Jesus in Rev refers to himself as Alpha and Omega - 6X**

**(Revelation 1:8, 17, 2:8, 3:14, 21:6, 22:13)**

**Col 1:17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.**

**5. Jesus holds and sustains all things!**

**Key to our survival is Oxygen - Scientists struggle to figure out how an atom can hold itself together. Nucleus of a common oxygen atom - 8 protons (+ charge), 8 neutrons (no charge), and 8 electrons (- charge) flying around it. Like charges repel, opposites attract. Yet here is 8 +/- protons hanging out together.**

**They should fly apart. They should have never existed…**

**Yet here they are – here we are. In 20’s/30’s - discovered a powerful mystery nuclear force holding atoms together (called the strong force). Not sure why it works – like gravity – they know the how, but not the why. They did find however, firing protons into the nucleus- creates nuclear power and explosions.**

**Point is this - there is a mysterious power that holds not only atoms together – but also the entire universe. JESUS!!**

**God did not create us and check out. (watchmaker) Jesus created all things – and actively holds all things together – for his pleasure.**

**By Him - thru Him - for Him. The beginning – middle - and end.**

**Back to the song - Col 1:18 And He (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church, (Head of not just creation – but active and involved with His people) who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

**Even in the resurrection to come, Jesus is first!**

**6. Jesus is preeminent over all things – including the afterlife!**

**Active in and with his people (the church) and prepares our future.**

**Jesus the first to be resurrected and gloried! In Jesus we get a glimpse of what His church will be like in the resurrection.**

**Jesus was physically dead - physically buried - physically resurrected. Then walked, talked, ate, fixed a meal, walk thru walls, teleported - The first glorified body – we see our future!**

**Jesus is head over the dead and afterlife!**

**Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, (fullness = pleroma. Lit. totality of the divine – not a piece or part) 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.**

**7. Jesus through his blood – reconciles all things!**

**This is not universalism – but rather will make all things right.**

**Only God alone could bear the weight of sin. No king, no govt., politician, ruler, or person can ever do that! Only His Blood!**

**Jesus - “made peace through the blood of His cross.” - That baby in a manger was born to die a bloody death. Not by my actions or efforts. He alone has done it, and he alone gets the glory!**

**This ancient Christmas song declares – Jesus is God!!!**

**Then Paul (after the hymn) makes it personal - Colossians 1:21 And you, (you) who once were alienated (far from God) and enemies in your mind by wicked works, (our lives were opposite of God – That was me!) yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight. (Forgiven and made new)**

**The invisible God – became visible to reconcile and redeem!**

**We were the enemies – we were the criminals – yet He paid our ransom and served out our time and judgement on the cross.**

**8. Jesus the king will return – to receive his people to himself.**

**This is when the final part of this verse happens - Colossians 1:22b …to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.**

**Round 1 - As a humble servant. A baby in a food box. To grow and bear our judgement – sin – and shame.**

**Round 2 – He’ll coming riding a white horse in full glory as the King of kings! And - we will see him as he truly is!**

**The joy of Christmas – is found here.**

**God left the throne of heaven – God came to us! Jesus!!**

**To walk with us! To die for us! To reconcile us! To return for us!**

**That means Purpose – Hope – peace – has come! It is here!**

**The mystery of God – in the flesh! To bring you life!**

**The heavenly host of angels shouted and declared it to the shepherds! Luke 2:10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. (the promised savior – you’ve been praying and waiting for!) 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly a great company (plethos – a multitude) of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”**

**Why would Jesus do this? Why would Jesus come here?**

**The mystery of God’s great love for us!**

**Are you stunned? Are you in awe? I am!**

**So, when you see the manger (pic) a baby - he is not just a messenger, a piece, a part, sample, or symbol – of the divine. That baby is GOD! In fullness, in the flesh.**

**The greatest present of all – the Father gave his presence!**

**The invisible Father – in the flesh – God with us!**

**God with us in our pain – sorrows – suffering – trials – tears!**

**God with us in our joys – laughter – peace – and blessings!**

**So, when Jesus says come and follow me – it is the invite of God, to come. To reject Jesus is to reject God himself.**