

John 15:22 (NKJV) "If I had not come..."

This month we have examined the impact to us personally, and to the world as a whole, if Jesus had not come or had come differently. Along with the Scripture, we have used our theme song from the month, *What A Beautiful Name*, help us imagine a world with Christmas, a world without Christ.

- We have seen that He is the beauty in all that is beautiful—What a Beautiful Name—and that had He not come the world would be even more chaotic and complicated than it is now. That in all probability we, the human race, would have destroyed each other by now. And we challenged ourselves not to take that for granted but to look for His beauty in everything, even in our pain.
- We discovered the wonder of His birth and found that God orchestrated it perfectly, in spite of satanic opposition and human error. The wonder of His birth proves to us that God is actively at work, intervening in our lives to "...bring about good..." and that we can trust His Word. The wonder of His birth, of the way He came and the bloodline from which He came, assures us He is available to us. His wonderful name tells us He is the Lord of all—available to all! And we challenged ourselves not to take that for granted by understanding *"You didn't want Heaven without us so Jesus you brought Heaven down. My sin was greater, your love was greater, What can separate us now!"*
- This week we look at What a Powerful Name and instead of asking ourselves, "What if He had not come?" we will ask ourselves, "Am I living as if He had not come?" Is the power of His name translating into my everyday life? In her song, 'A Baby Changes Everything', Faith Hill sings about how this baby changed everything—from His mother Mary's life to our life. But, in reality, how much are we allowing that change to impact our lives? Are there areas of our lives where we are not accessing the Power of His Name?

From the Gentle Cry of the Cradle to the Mighty Roar of the Cross!

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NLT) "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!"

The Gentle Cry from the Cradle:

Matthew 1:21 (NLT) "And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Revelation 12:4-5 (NLT) “[The dragon of old] stood in front of the woman as she was about to give birth, ready to devour her baby as soon as it was born. She gave birth to a son who was to rule all nations...”

“The government will rest on His shoulders” affirms His lordship. For now, the Messiah’s Lordship is over those who trust Him and obey Him as Lord. It’s currently an invisible kingdom, but there is coming a day when it will be visible and universal and even those who do not acknowledge Him will bow their knees and admit He is the Lord.

“...name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins...” For satan and sin, this gentle cry announces the beginning of the end. Just look at the power of His name in His birth announcements:

Luke 2:8-14 (NLT) “That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”

In spite of all the efforts to stop this moment by the forces of darkness, Heaven announced the birth of the Messiah.

Remember that feeling when you were a kid when the lie you had told began to unravel and you knew the end was near. Or maybe that sinking feeling you get when the blue lights come on and the police officer pulls in behind you! Multiply that thousands of times over and you might get an understanding of what the enemies of God felt when they heard the gentle cry of that baby in Bethlehem on that night. Shepherds heard the beauty, majesty and power of Heaven, while the forces of darkness heard the furious roar of the Lion of Judah, shaking them to their very core as they realized their best efforts at stopping the plan of God had failed. Oh, they would continue with those efforts, as Herod issued the order to kill the babies, but there was something inside of them that told them they couldn’t stop God.

Look again at His birth announcement in Isaiah, written by the prophet 700 years before the birth of Christ:

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NLT) “For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies will make this happen!”

Look at the power of His name in this announcement and what it means to us:

- **Wonderful Counselor:** The end of confusion. He is the wonderful counselor who not only tells us the truth—He is Truth! He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. There is no room for confusion because Jesus makes it clear He is the way. ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)***. In every major encounter Jesus had with individuals who came to Him for counsel He always knew what to say, when to reach out to a seeking heart, and when to rebuke an impetuous soul. Even his enemies testified, ***“Never did a man speak the way this man speaks” (John 7:46)***. He is the ultimate and true answer to all the lies and confusion our enemy uses to trick us. We hear a gentle cry on that Holy night. Our enemy hears a mighty roar!
- **Mighty God:** This little child is God come to earth, divinity taking on flesh, fully God, fully man. He is the One who in creation brought order out of chaos. He is not only the Wonderful Counselor who can tell us the truth; He is the Mighty God who can empower us to do it! He is the Mighty God who brings order from our chaos. Because this little baby with the gentle cry is the Christ, and because Christ is God, He can forgive sin, defeat Satan, liberate people from the power of evil, redeem them, answer their prayers, restore their broken souls, and reign as Lord—“Mighty God”—over their newly ordered lives.
Those at that first Nativity saw a fragile little baby and tried to wrap their minds around His divine nature. All of Heaven and all the forces of darkness saw Almighty God and tried to wrap their minds around His human nature. We hear the gentle sounds of a baby, while darkness trembles at the roar of Heaven’s King!
- **Everlasting Father**, which literally means **the Father of Eternity**. Nothing is too complex for the Creator and Sustainer of everything. Infinity and all its intricacies are nothing to Him who is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. The cultures of this world become more and more complicated, making life harder and harder to figure out. But listen to the description of life with the Messiah in ***Isaiah 35:8 (TLB) “And a main road will go through that once-deserted land; it will be named “The Holy Highway.” No evil-hearted men may walk upon it. God will walk there with you; even the most stupid cannot miss the way.”*** His way is so free from the complexities of life that even the most directionally challenged cannot lose their way! Even the fool has no excuse for choosing another way.
On that cold Bethlehem night, those around this child felt the warmth of a fire started by Joseph while all of darkness felt the burning fury of our Father’s passion lighting the way home.
- **Prince of Peace:** The angelic announcement of peace on earth was a two-pronged proclamation. First, it proclaimed that God’s peace is available to men and women right now. Read the words of ***Luke 2:14*** carefully: ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”*** Who are those with whom He is pleased? They are those who have yielded their lives to the authority of His government: ***“The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that***

hope in his mercy” (Psalm 147:11, KJV). Jesus makes it clear that His Kingdom is not of this world and those who are part of His Kingdom may be in this world but cannot be of this world.

Secondly, the angel’s announcement of “peace on earth” declared the arrival of the only One who ultimately can bring lasting peace on earth. Jesus Christ will bring lasting peace in the final establishment of His earthly kingdom. There will be no power struggles, no insurrection, no conflict, not even the slightest threat to disturb the peace He brings to the world when He returns to rule.

Isaiah 9:7 continues, **“There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace.”** In other words, His government and peace will keep expanding and improving. How can anything perfect improve? That’s one of the mysteries of Messiah’s government. It gets better and better, and the perfect peace flows deeper and deeper.

The sound heard coming from that cradle was a gentle cry. The sound heard in the Spirit was the roar of the Mighty Lion of Judah, splitting the darkness wide open and flooding a world lost in sin with the glorious light of the Messiah. Demons tremble while a weary world rejoices! Do we, His followers, live as if it really happened?

The Mighty Roar from the Cross:

Nothing satan and all the forces of darkness could plan or do worked to stop our God from coming after us. How beautiful, how wonderful, how powerful the name of Jesus! The same forces that tried to stop His birth, failed in their attempts to stop Him from growing into a man. And imagine the horror satan and all darkness felt when they thought they had succeeded by nailing Him to a cross and from that rugged cross the Messiah proclaims, “IT IS FINISHED!” What started on this earth as a gentle cry from a cradle was now punctuated with a mighty roar from a rugged cross. Earth and sky shook and the universe stood in awe as Jesus saved His people from their sins! What a powerful name it is!

But the mighty roar didn’t stop there. No, death and the grave felt its power as He ‘*silenced the boast of sin and grave!*’ No wonder we call Him Savior. What a powerful name!

(Song: No Wonder)

Let’s close by looking at a phrase in our famous Christmas verse from Isaiah, **“And the government will be on his shoulders.”** It literally means: **“The weight of the world will be on His shoulders.”**

This is where we challenge ourselves and ask are we living as if Jesus did come?

- Are you worn out from trying to solve every problem, improve your marriage, help your children, take care of your parents, get your coworkers shaped up, and in general trying to fix your siblings and parents and roommates and friends and neighbors?
- Are you exhausted from trying to repair all the broken people and the messed up situations all around you?

- Are you overwhelmed by your circumstances and the complexities and confusion of this world?
- Are you frustrated with the path your life is taking?
- Are you trying to earn God's favor and salvation?

No wonder you're tired.

Here is where the message of Christmas becomes all-important. Think about the baby in the manger. He came to set us free from the terrible burden (and inevitable failure) of trying to run the universe. Maybe it's time you turned in your resignation as manager of the universe. I have good news for you—God will gladly accept it.

Let the weary world rejoice. Christ is born! He can carry the full weight of all your problems, for "the government will be on his shoulders." Don't live another moment as if He had not come! His shoulders are built for the load. Ours are not.

He is *The Prince of peace* —And He offers us this simple promise: Live simply and innocently, pursuing God and Jesus—the God of Peace--will carry the weight of the world on His shoulders, and use that weight to crush our enemy!

Romans 16:19-20 (VOICE) “ The stories about the way you are living in obedience to God have traveled to all the churches. So celebrate your faithfulness to God that is being displayed in your lives—seek wisdom about the good life, and remain innocent when it comes to evil. If you do this, the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet soon. May the grace of our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One, the Liberating King, be ever present with you.”