

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

What if Jesus had not come? What if there were no Christ in Christmas because He had not come at all?

On the one hand, it's an impossible question. The whole universe is in Him, through Him, and for Him. Without him, everything comes apart.

***Colossians 1:15-20 (NLT) "Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross."***

But on the other hand, it can help us appreciate His coming to consider what our lives and our world would be like had He not come.

If Jesus had not come, we would not know God's complete faithfulness. We would not know the fulfillment of every last promise, including the very first one he made: that an offspring of Eve would crush the head of our great adversary, Satan (***Genesis 3:15***). ***2 Corinthians 1:20 For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" And through Christ, our "Amen" which means "Yes" ascends to God for his glory.***

One of the things that separates Christianity from other religions is our God is a promise-keeping God. He is not arbitrary, He is the same yesterday, today and forever, with no variance or shadow of turning. We can count on Him to keep His Word.

If Jesus had not come, we would not know the fullness of God's love. ***"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13), and "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).*** This is bigger than you think at first glance. We are able to love because He first loved! Think of the greatest love you have experienced with another human and that would not have happened had Jesus not come!

If Jesus did not come, we would not know the depths of God's humility and compassion toward us. According to ***Hebrews 2:17, Jesus "had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."*** Jesus was made like us in every respect — he took on all of our weaknesses and temptations and sufferings. And he did it that he might be a more merciful advocate for us. Without Him, there would be no hope of triumphing over the temptations we all face. No one has any hope of ever getting 'better'.

If Christ had not come the Bible would have ended with Malachi's curse instead of Revelation's blessing! ***Malachi 4:5-6 "Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives. His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their***

***children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse."***

***Revelation 22:20-21 He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's holy people.***

If Christ had not come our greatest experience with God would be at Mt. Sinai where the Law was delivered as we watched from a distance.

***Hebrews 12:18, 22-24 You have not come to a physical mountain, to a place of flaming fire, darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai. No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering. You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect. You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel.***

We have this wonderful privilege of a personal experience and relationship with the Creator of the Universe. We aren't kept away at a safe distance but we are welcomed into His very throne room!

If Jesus did not come, we would not know his atoning death and life-giving resurrection, and thus we would not know our own salvation. There would be no salvation for sinners. ***"If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10).***

By and large our world and its cultures try to live as if Jesus had not come. We don't want to be challenged by His Truth, we don't want to acknowledge His boundaries, we don't want to admit that life without Him is complicated and, at best, hard to sustain. As He said, "without me you can do nothing".

We don't have to work hard to imagine a world without Jesus-just observe any religion or belief system that doesn't have Christ as Savior. The best of them require individuals to work really hard seeking unattainable perfection and the worst of them are filled with hatred, judgment and violence.

The Church created the celebration of Christmas by taking over formerly pagan celebrations and rituals with the hope that it would draw the masses to Jesus. However, throughout history it is too often the masses that draw the Christians. The challenge for us as Christians is to not only make Christ the center of our CHRIST-mas, but to make Him the centerpiece of our lives. Let's challenge ourselves to not just make sure we celebrate Jesus' birth during this season but that we celebrate our beautiful Savior every day. Beyond Christmas without Christ, let's ask ourselves how many days we live as if He had not come? How much more beauty and grace would fill our Christmas and our daily lives if we were intentional about celebrating our Beautiful Savior?

***Psalms 27:4 "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple."***

**(Next week: No Jesus means no resurrection. What does that look like?)**