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What If There Had Been No Christmas?

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Series: Miscellaneous Messages

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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What If There Had Been No Christmas?

I want us to ask ourselves one simple question today, and our only goal is to answer that question.

The question is: “What if there had been no Christmas?” What if that star had been a mirage? What if that manger had never been home for anything but a stable of animals? What if the wise men had come...and found nothing? What if the prophecies of all the prophets concerning Messiah were as yet unfulfilled? What if there had been no Christmas?

There would be no Christmas carols or nativity scenes. But man would simply substitute another occasion for celebration. Or Santa Claus (who now so shares the spotlight of attention with the King) would simply be on stage alone. But that’s not what I mean. I mean, what would life be like in the 1990’s? Better still, what would your life be like this very day “if there had been no Christmas”?

That question forms the basis of our thoughts together in this lesson, and is, as well, the title of this study. It is a question you might well ponder together with your children or your neighbors to help bring Christmas into its proper perspective.

To remind ourselves of the importance of Christmas, we must remind ourselves who Jesus was, who Jesus is! Jesus is the only real Living Legend. He is The Legend of Legends. All of life and all lives derive their capacity for life from Him. Remember John 1:3? There it says,

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

(John 1:3,4 NKJV)

That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

(John 1:9,10 NKJV)

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones

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or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

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.

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,
(Colossians 1:16-19 NKJV)

THE LEGEND OF LEGENDS

My friend, do not let the “Ho Ho Ho’s” and the holly, the wrappings and the reindeer, the tinsel and the trees, the packages, and even the pageants, for one second diminish the reality of WHO Christmas is. Not what, WHO. Christmas is the Creator of heaven and earth, the sustainer of life, the image of the invisible God, the One FOR Whom and BY Whom all things exist. Christmas is the head of the Church, the first-born from the dead. Christmas is a person. Christmas is Jesus Christ. Not a shadow of God, but God Himself. We hum, “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear,” and “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” in the same breath. *But this is the birthday of God!* Angels fold their wings. Mighty men bow their knees. Yea, one day every knee will bow at the mere mention of His name—JESUS. Not a good man, but the GOD MAN. He is not only the meaning of life; He is life. *Without Him, life does not exist.*

So all of life derives its life from Him, and the degree to which we reflect His likeness, to that degree alone do we become living legends. It’s not what a man does in this life that counts, it’s what a man does *with* His life that counts! So as you sing “Hark the herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King,” do not let the familiarity of the words minimize the reality of Who the King is. How can we sing it without our hearts racing within us at the mere mention of the Name? Christmas is Jesus, and Jesus is everything! Therefore, Christmas ought to be the most precious, the most meaningful, the most significant time in a Christian’s life, because Christmas is the reality of the Legend of all Legends living in us.

But the excitement of Christmas heightens to an even greater pitch when the reality that the Legend of Legends merges with the importance of the moment of moments! For we celebrate at Christmas not only a Person but also an event. And though our

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finite minds can only grasp a fragment of the reality of it, the awesomeness of what we can grasp ought to overwhelm us.

THE MOMENT OF MOMENTS

That reality is this: At a precise moment in time, predetermined in eternity past by an omniscient God, prophesied for generations by holy men of God as they were moved by His Spirit, prepared for ages by a nation of men called out to receive this moment and translate it into the reality of human experience, at a precise moment in time, the eternal Creator of heaven and earth, who spoke the worlds into being, chose to leave eternity and enter time, to leave heaven and enter earth, to leave sinlessness and be tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin. At a specified divinely-ordained mini-second in time, history became His-story at last. And God become a man, that man might become godly again. God came in the likeness of man so man could become in the likeness of God. Everything in recorded history to that time was simply to prepare us for this moment.

Cain and Abel told of His coming. Abraham and Isaac told of His coming. Joseph told of His coming. Moses told of His coming. Every legend recorded was a pre-developed negative whose ultimate imprint would simply and clearly proclaim: "Jesus is coming!" All of history B.C. was simply to prepare us for His coming. All of history A.D. is simply to prepare us for His coming again! And the moment of moments that divided all of history and fulfilled the meaning of all that came before and prepared to give meaning to all that was yet to come was the moment we celebrate as CHRISTMAS.

History stopped! And started again. The angels stopped, and erupted in an anthem of praise. The heavens burst forth with a glorious light. Mankind could begin again! The King had come! The Kingdom was coming! So Christmas is not a holiday. Christmas is a Holy Day. That makes all holi-days fade into utter insignificance. You can add them all up: Independence Day, Veterans Day, Columbus Day, Thanksgiving. They may all mean something to you until you say CHRISTMAS. And then suddenly all of the events in history fade into oblivion at the very thought of the moment of moments when God become a man.

My friend, we must not take Christmas lightly. Let us bow before Him in awe and submission. The Legend of all Legends in the moments of all moments was born of a virgin and placed

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in a manger so that man could be re-born by God's Spirit in the manger of the heart. Get excited about Christmas! It's not a day, it's a Person. It's the beginning of life as we, as regenerated children of God, have come to know it.

THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS

But what if there had been no Christmas? That is the Question of Questions! If Christmas is to mean to you and to me what God intended it to mean, we must for a few moments rewind the video tape of human history to that first Christmas morning, erase that event, and then fast forward life again back to today and see what life would be like as we know it...*without Christmas!* It would be a good journey for your family to take at Christmas time, a journey into the world of today, "If there had been no Christmas."

We'll call them the Twelve Ways of Christmas, twelve ways Christmas revolutionized life. Or we might say, twelve areas of emptiness that would exist this morning, "if there had been no Christmas". For if there had been no Christmas, you and I would find life:

- 1) Without ORDER- Ephesians 5:21-22; Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:18-21
- 2) Without JUSTICE- John 5:22; John 9:39; Revelation 18:10
- 3) Without EQUALITY- Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:28; Matthew 19:14
- 4) Without LOVE- John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; I John 4:10,15; Romans 8:35
- 5) Without FORGIVENESS- Ephesians 1:7; I John 1:9; Matthew 6:14; Matthew 18:22
- 6) Without POWER- Matthew 28:18; John 1:12; Acts 1:8
- 7) Without COMFORT- John 15:26; John 16:7
- 8) Without PURPOSE- Philippians 3:10; James 1:2; II Corinthians 12:10; I Peter 4:12
- 9) Without REALITY- John 1:18; John 14:9
- 10) Without JOY- John 15:11; John 16:22-24; John 17:13
- 11) Without PEACE- Ephesians 2:14; John 14:27; Romans 5: 1; Revelation 21:23

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12) Without HOPE- I Corinthians 15:55-57;
I Thessalonians 4:13-17

That's the kind of life we'd have. Let's begin our journey.

1- If there had been no Christmas, you and I would live today in a world without order. Because Jesus came, there is order in marriage. Husbands are to love their wives as He loved the Church; wives are to submit themselves to their husbands as to the Lord. Competition, chaos, and confusion yield to order and understanding as each has a specified role and specified responsibilities. If there had been no Christmas, the home, even now under intense attack by the enemy, would long since have ceased to be. Because Jesus came, order exists in society at large, as well. Believers are to submit themselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, to obey the police, honor the laws, pay their taxes, honor their employers, honor their parents. Remove the church from the world and you remove the cement that holds its foundations in place.

One day soon we'll be caught up together with Him. The church will vanish and all order and resistance to disorder will vanish from sight. And only when He returns will order once again be restored. Picture the chaos...if there had been no Christmas.

2- If there had been no Christmas, would there be justice in the world? Or do not the scales of justice rest their weight on Jesus Christ? Do not the courts of the world still in varying degrees pass their judgments in harmony with His concepts of morality, His concepts of human rights, His concepts of family purpose? And though as history rushes to open its final chapter, justice gives way to humanistic philosophies which deny the existence of absolutes, will not perfect justice be executed when Jesus comes again? Though evil seems to triumph on occasion, will not the Perfect Judge one day rule in righteousness? But, oh, until then, would there be justice at all if there had been no Christmas?

3- If there had been no Christmas, would such a thing as human rights, human values, or human equality even exist? Was it not Jesus who broke down the wall between Jew and Gentile?

Romans 10:12,

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

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And in Galatians 3:28 does not Paul bulldoze a level platform at the foot of the cross? He says,

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Women, long relegated to second class citizenship in society were truly liberated in Jesus Christ. Children were elevated to their position as spiritual jewels by Jesus, who gathered them into His arms and said, "Invite the little children and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven", (Paraphrase of Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:14-16, Luke 18:16).

To Jesus, the leper was a person! The downtrodden were special, the poor were princes and kings in the making. Class systems dissolved at the feet of Jesus. The rich were not to be given priority in His church. God sees no skin tones. He looks on the heart. And Jesus calls the weak, the foolish, the men who are nothing to set at naught those who are.

So self esteem only comes at Jesus' feet, and equality becomes God's middle name as we move quietly into the arms of eternity where man's prejudices and barriers well cease to exist at all. But until then would there be equality or human worth as we know it? Probably not, if there had been no Christmas.

4- If there had been no Christmas, would we even understand the meaning of the word, "love"? Before Jesus came, was not love something you gave to some who deserved love, or to someone who could offer love in return? And was not love limited to those you could see and feel and touch? But Jesus came! And God so loved the whole world He gave His only Son. Jesus made love *unlimited*.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners [in rebellion], Christ died [loved] for us.
(Romans 5:8 NKJV)

Jesus made love *undeserved*.

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent [gave]...
(I John 4:10 NKJV)

Jesus made love *unconditional*. I John 4:15-16 says whoever confesses Christ as Lord, God dwells in Him and whoever has God dwelling within has the capacity to love as God loves. Jesus made love *transferable*. "What can separate us from the love of Christ?"

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Paul asks in Romans 8:35. Then he answers... “nothing”. Jesus made love *undefeatable*. Now a husband can love his wife whether she loves him or not. Now a wife can love her husband whether he’s lovable or not. Love never faileth. At last! An ingredient to add to life that cannot fail to overcome. But love came down at Christmas. And we would have neither the capacity to love or the understanding to love, if there had been no Christmas.

5- If there had been no Christmas, would such a thing as forgiveness be? Forgiveness came wrapped in a packaged labeled “Jesus Christ”. It was in Him. Ephesians tells us that

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
(Ephesians 1:7 NKJV)

Now “in Christ” our sins are blotted out, cast behind God’s back, never to be remembered any more. And now “in Christ” continuous forgiveness is ours.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
(I John 1:9 NKJV)

Now man need no longer live laden with the guilt of his past. Can you imagine what it would be like today if you did not know your sins were forgiven? If you had to live under the load of your past? And has not His forgiveness of our sins now set us free in His love to forgive as He forgave? Seventy times seven to forgive? My friend, man would have no forgiveness and no grasp of forgiveness if there had been no Christmas.

6- If there had been no Christmas, you and I would be powerless to face life, to resist temptations, to become new creatures filled with new strength. We would have no power! Where does power come from? Matthew 28:18 NKJV, Jesus speaking,

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

How do we get it?

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become...
(John 1:12 NKJV)

What do we do with it?

But you shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you and you shall be witnesses... (Acts 1:8 NKJV)

The power to become, the power to overcome, the power to be, all exist because Jesus came. What would life be with no power?

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That's what life would be like if there had been no Christmas.

7- If there had been no Christmas, would we have comfort in our grief, in our loneliness, in our rejection? No, the Comforter whose arms surround us and whose love engulfs us in despair is only ours... because of Christmas.

Jesus is speaking here in John 15:26,

But when the Helper [comforter] comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

John 16:7,

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

Can you imagine standing by the graveside of a loved one without the Comforter? Can you imagine that experience in the hospital without the Comforter? Can you imagine experiencing the hurt of that rejection that so broke your heart without the Comforter? Imagine it. And you will know what life would have been like if there had been no Christmas.

8- If there had been no Christmas, what would have been the purpose in life's trials? Yes, what purpose in life itself? In Philippians Paul said,

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
(Philippians 3:10 NKJV)

In James 1:8, James said,

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, [when the sky falls!]

In II Corinthians 12:10, Paul said,

I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon me.
(paraphrase)

In I Peter 4 Peter cries out,

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad also with exceeding joy.
(I Peter 4:12,13 NKJV)

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Can you imagine life with no purpose other than to make money, pay taxes, and die? Can you imagine enduring life's setbacks, discouragements, and failures without knowing that through it all His mind is being formed in us? Without the confidence "that if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him?" What purpose would there be to it all if there had been no Christmas?

9- If there had been no Christmas, would not we be living in a world void of reality, imagining what God is like; fashioning God after the image of our own experience? But Jesus came. Christmas came. And He proclaimed,

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.
(John 1:18 NKJV)

He could say to Philip in John 14:9,

...Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father;...
(NKJV)

Now we no longer live in darkness with no sense of reality. We've seen God cry. We've seen God teach. We've seen God heal. We've seen God wash feet, hug children, feed disciples. We've seen Him pray, rebuke, exhort, love. We've seen God alive in man because we've seen God in Jesus Christ. But we would be living in a world void of reality if there had been no Christmas.

10- If there had been no Christmas, would we, could we experience real joy (that inner encouragement that's unaffected by outer circumstances)? It was Jesus Who gave us joy. He invented it, patented it, and He alone imparts it.

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:11 NKJV)

Jesus said to the father,

But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.
(John 17:13 NKJV)

Can you imagine life devoid of joy? Then you can imagine what life would have been like if there had been no Christmas.

11- The eleventh way of Christmas brings this to mind: If there had been no Christmas, would peace be a reality? There are really three kinds of peace. We would have no external peace

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without Him.

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27 NKJV)

And we would have no eternal peace without Him.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1 NKJV)

Eventual peace will be found in Him as well.

The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). (Revelation 21:23, 25 NKJV)

Is it not His very name? Mighty Counselor, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace! No wonder the angels sang that first Christmas morning,

Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men. (Luke 2:14 NKJV)

For man would not know peace if there had been no Christmas.

12- There would be no hope. If there had been no Christmas, death would have been the final chapter in the essay of life. Now we can shout with Paul, Oh, death where is thy sting, oh, grave where is thy victory?" (I Corinthians 15:55) and "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (I Corinthians 15:54b). Death died at Christmas.

So in I Thessalonians 4 Paul said,

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (I Thessalonians 4:13,16)

Death is the door through which real life is found. But can you imagine facing the grave if there had been no Christmas? Can you picture the chaos? The injustice? The inequality? The lovelessness? The guilt? The weakness? The loneliness? The emptiness? The confusion? The conflict? The hopelessness? ...if there had been no Christmas? What reason would there be for living life or for giving life? So we do not celebrate just another

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holiday on Christmas. As Christians, we celebrate a Person, the legend from Whom all legends exist. We celebrate an event, that moment of moments when God became so we could become. We ought to be filled with awesome wonder at Christmas. For life would not be life at all if there had been no Christmas.

But wait a minute! What if...there has been no Christmas... for you? What if, even amidst all of your knowledge of Christ, you have never really personally come to know Him, never invited Him to be Lord of your life? What if you've never asked God to prepare the manger of your heart so Christmas could take place in your spirit and Christ could be born in you? Wouldn't this be the perfect time to celebrate your own personal Christmas?

- There's no need for you to live life any more *without forgiveness*. You can find total liberation from your past.
- There's no need for you to live life *without real love*. You can have unconditional love.
- There's no need for you to live life *without comfort*. You can have the Comforter to stand beside you.
- There's no need for you to live life *without power*. You can have the dynamic power in your life that raised Jesus from the dead.
- There's no need for you to live life *without purpose*. You can have a reason for living, a reason for suffering.
- There's no need for you to live life *without joy*. You can have constant, abiding enthusiasm.
- There's no need for you to live life *without peace*. You can have a peace that passes all understanding.
- There's no need for you to live life *without hope*. You can know this very day that for you death is a doorway. Life is eternal.

All this can be yours this moment if you make Christ yours this moment by asking Him to come into your heart, to cleanse it and make it new. There is a brilliant star shining in the heavens just waiting to come to rest over you. Ask Him into you life today, and you'll never, ever again have to live as if there had been no Christmas.

If you are ready to celebrate Christmas, but are not sure that

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Jesus is in your heart, you can ask Him in right now. You can just silently pray:

Dear Jesus,

I have been living life as if there had been no Christmas. My sins still separate me from you this moment. I acknowledge my sins. And I invite Jesus Christ to prepare the manger of my heart, and be born again in me. I ask Him to be my Savior right now. Please come into my heart, Lord Jesus.

Thank you, Lord. It is Christmas.

Amen.

If you prayed to receive Christ, won't you share it with someone else? The angels are rejoicing. We want to rejoice, too.

And Christian, what kind of Christmas ought we to have? Merry? To say the least. For we have been reminded what life would be like, yea, what our lives would be like if there had been no Christmas.

IF THERE HAD BEEN NO CHRISTMAS

If there had been no Christmas,
What would our lot have been?
A life of utter helplessness
With no relief from sin!

If there had been no Christmas
Where would life's order be?
Would not we each be void of
Any real authority?

If there had been no Christmas
Would fairness have its price?
Do not the scales of justice rest
Their weight on Jesus Christ?

If there had been no Christmas
Would man still find his worth?
Or did not human self-esteem
Begin at Jesus' birth?

If there had been no Christmas
Through guilt would we be driven?
The weight of sins forever ours
No hope to be forgiven!

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If there had been no Christmas
No gift from heaven above
Would man but even comprehend
The meaning of real love?

If there had been no Christmas
No incarnation hour,
Would you and I not helpless be
Devoid of strength or power?

If there had been no Christmas
What emptiness! What fear!
For we would have no Comforter
In grief to draw us near.

If there had been no Christmas
What reasons would exist?
For living life, for giving life
To evil's force resist?

If there had been no Christmas
No manger's baby boy,
Would not entrapped in life we be
Devoid of peace or joy?

If there had been no Christmas
As man breathes out each breath,
He'd live in fear, for without Christ
All life would end in death.

If there had been no Christmas,
Life's glorious refrain
Would end in strife and suffering
With no relief from pain.

But there *has* been a Christmas
And all of life is new.
The question now is simply this:
Has Christmas come for you?

If Christmas is not real to you,
Beloved, stop, and pray;
And ask God's Son to come to you
And make this Christmas Day.

You, too, will come to know Him
All power to you He'll give!
Receive God's Christmas gift today
And you'll begin to live!

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