

## THE WORLD ... WITHOUT CHRIST

If I had not come .. (John 15.22)

Mrs. Charles E. Cowman mentioned in her book Streams in the Desert a Christmas card that depicted a clergyman who fell asleep on Christmas Eve and dreamed of a world without Jesus. There were no stockings waiting to be filled, no churches anywhere, and nothing could be found that related to the birth of the Savior. During his dream the pastor was asked to visit a dying woman, but when he opened the Bible he was horrified to discover it ended with the book of Malachi. There was no New Testament. Suddenly, he awakened to hear the choir singing in the church and realized the awful things seen in his sleep were illusions, but he was left to consider what the world would be like if the Son of God had not come to Bethlehem. Christmas carols would not be heard, Sunday schools would be nonexistent, and for the most part people would be as the heathen without hope when they died.

If Christ Had Not Come.., we would not know the Father

It is sometimes easy to forget that without Christ, Jehovah would be, for many people, an inscrutable, faraway, mysterious Being. Even today in some countries, countless thousands and even millions of people worship images of wood or stone, hoping to appease a detached deity. For them, the idols represent gods who are harsh, condemning, and difficult to please.

The ancient Hebrews received from God a system of law that could be misunderstood by those who fail to comprehend the father love of Jehovah. Many Israelites failed to see the true intent of the Law and its purpose as a standard of righteousness. For them, it became the restrictive rules of a God who lashed out in anger at those who failed to obey the Law. They feared God for what He might do, but they failed to appreciate Him for who He truly was.

When Jesus of Nazareth began His ministry, He described God as a

178

heavenly Father who cared for the most undeserving of His children. The Savior portrayed Jehovah as a parent awaiting the return of His prodigal child. The man from Galilee encircled children with His arms, touched repulsive lepers, and taught that God sympathized with a sparrow when it fell to the ground. Anywhere in the world. When Philip said to the Lord, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" (see John 14:8-9). God is exactly like Jesus, but that glorious fact would have remained unknown if the Lord had not come to earth.

If Christ Had Not Come ... prayer would be impossible

Within the ancient world, only special people had access to God. Moses went into the mountain to meet the Almighty; Elijah prayed and God responded by preventing rain from falling over a period of three and a half years; Isaiah, Daniel, and others prayed and received responses from heaven, but such experiences were unknown among ordinary citizens. The priest alone interceded because no one else had access to the Holy of Holies. When worshipers visited the tabernacle at Shiloh or the temple in Jerusalem, they believed they were close to God. If they were unable to attend the feasts, they had no other means of approaching Jehovah. Once every year the high priest of Israel was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies when he wore a breastplate upon

## THE WORLD ... WITHOUT CHRIST

which was engraved the names of the tribes. He was their official representative before the mercy seat, and he prayed for his people who had no access to the throne of God. Prayer was unknown among ordinary people.

When Jesus preached, He introduced ideas never before expressed. His words were astonishing; His thoughts electrifying. He said to His disciples that "men ought always to pray." The workman could pray at his plow, the mother in her kitchen, a child at a bedside, the nurse walking through a hospital ward, the doctor with a patient, the scholar among the books, the professor with the students. Prayer might be likened to a long distance telephone call to heaven; a call necessitating the assistance of an operator. Jesus claimed He would always be on duty to put callers through to the otherwise unreachable palace in heaven.

If Christ Had Not Come..., there would not be a gospel

The Lord also said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man

179

cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). If any of the prophets had used such words, the claim would have been considered blasphemous. The Pharisees were incensed when they heard the son of a carpenter claim to be the only means whereby access to Jehovah was possible.

The writer to the Hebrews said, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). It was said of Jesus, "Never man spake as this man." The officials who were sent to apprehend the Lord had never heard such words; the message of Jesus was completely new. It had never been heard by people of earlier generations. Drunkards had no hope of deliverance, and, at the present time, people suffering from AIDS would be as helpless. With no cures available, sufferers would be doomed. If the Savior had not come, there would be no gospel, no Calvary, and no hope for those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Preachers would be unable to speak about the cleansing power of the precious blood of Christ. There would be no cathedrals around the world, and no choir would sing Christmas carols. Many great composers were inspired by the message of salvation; famous paintings were created under the spell of the gospel. Great universities possess vast libraries, but their rarest and costliest volumes were written to enhance the message of Jesus. Atheists never erect hospitals in needy countries of the world, and rescue missions are not financed by infidels. If Christ had not come to earth, most of the blessings of western civilization would have been nonexistent. If light never shone, darkness would be eternal.

If Christ Had Not Come..., there would be no Easter

Years ago when I was a collector of seashells, I exchanged specimens with a woman who lived in Florida. I received a letter informing me of her terminal illness; her world was dark. She had no faith in religion and had given instructions that her body was to be cremated and its ashes scattered on the sea. That unfortunate woman was dead before she died! I knew another woman who confessed that when she discovered possible cancer she "nearly went mad." The woman never attended any church, had no Christian friends, and the prospect of approaching death filled her with dread. Healthy people do not commit suicide. Death has always been man's enemy, and it claims victims from all sections of society. Kings and millionaires die. The greatest scientists have been unable to discover the secret of increasing longevity. The

180

greatest talents known to men are destined to be buried in a grave.

## THE WORLD ... WITHOUT CHRIST

If Jesus had not been born in Bethlehem, if the Son of God had not risen triumphantly from the tomb, then man's greatest enemy would have remained unchallenged and funeral services would terminate with the words "Earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust." Youth would be a challenge, middle-age a struggle, and old age a tragedy! The Christian gospel has brought new hope to humankind; it supplies a purpose for living and the assurance that beyond the tomb awaits a better and brighter world. The words of Jesus made a profound impression upon all hearers. He said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). The Savior taught that the human body is only a house in which people temporarily live; that although it will become unfit for habitation, the mortal can put on immortality and death will disappear forever (see 1 Cor. 15:26).

I have often watched as an old saint was waiting to meet the Savior, and have seen a face illumined with the radiance of heaven. I remember a grandmother who gave me strict instructions regarding her funeral. She said, "I know what you will be doing. You will take my body down to the mission, and you will stand near my casket and preach. Now don't you go saying a lot of rubbish. You just tell those people that Granny was a sinner saved by grace. And don't forget I shall be listening to you, so you had better do what I say." That charming member of my church smiled; death was no longer a menace. It was the introduction to the timeless ages of eternity. If Christ had not come, I would have been unable to help that delightful lady.

If Christ Had Not Come..., there would be no missionaries

I shall always remember a Christmas when I was visiting the Central Highlands of New Guinea. I had been sent there to make a film for the Australian Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. Special arrangements had been made to celebrate the festive season. A pageant had been prepared, and this was the first time such a thing had been attempted on that mission field. A "stable" consisting of straw had been erected in the center of a field; it had an open front over which a curtain was drawn. Thousands of dusky natives had traveled many miles over the mountains, for the event had been publicized among the tribes. The missionaries borrowed horses from a nearby government station, and upon these rode three missionaries dressed as the wise men, bringing their gifts to the baby. Reverently, they carried ajar of shaving cream,

181

a bottle of perfume, and something else to represent myrrh. The baby was a doll, and throughout the presentation the huge audience was spellbound. Mrs. Norman Draper, a gifted linguist, told the Christmas story and used a portable amplifying set to broadcast the message. The curtain was drawn aside, and toward the end of the performance the natives looked with awe and wonder at the doll, which lay in the fruit-box "manger."

Only a few months earlier, unevangelized tribesmen had gone on the warpath, and fifty-seven native Christians—a whole church—had been massacred. I almost wept when I saw those New Guinea people listening and watching as for the first time the story of the birth of Jesus was dramatized in their midst. Today, because of the untiring activities of those missionaries, churches have been established in the area and people help those whom they formerly hated.

I remember the fateful Christmas day in 1917 when the roar of battle ceased in World War I. A courageous chaplain climbed out of the muddy trenches in France and boldly approached the German lines. He asked for and talked with the enemy commander and reminded him that both in Germany and England families would be singing carols in the churches. It was Christmas day when peace and goodwill should be among all men. No more shots were fired until January 3rd, 1918,

THE WORLD ... WITHOUT CHRIST

but in the meantime both sides grasped the opportunity to attend to their wounded comrades and remove the dead from the battlefield. After ten days of peace and quiet, the war departments of both sides decided "it was time to get on with the war. " Some critics wondered if the chaplain would be court-martialed, but instead he was given the highest military honor. If Jesus had not come to earth there would be no missionaries either on the battlefields of France or in the Central Highlands of New Guinea.

When a young reporter was interviewing Governor George Wallace, he asked, "Sir, what has been the greatest moment of your life?" He was surprised when Wallace replied, "It has not yet come. The greatest moment of my life will be when I see my Savior face-to-face." That testimony from a man who was crippled permanently by an assassin's bullet would have been impossible if Jesus had not come to earth.

182□

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.