

710 What Would the World Be Like Without Christ?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

Today we're asking the question, "What would this world be like without Jesus?" Jesus is indeed the most important person ever to live on this earth. Paul said in Philippians 3:7-8, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Paul would rather have a relationship with Christ than to enjoy all of the advantages he had before he became a Christ. Christianity is truly a pearl of great price that a person desires to buy so badly that he will sell everything else to get that one pearl. I hope you have that kind of heart and that you too desire to have Christ in your life more than anything else.

James Allen Francis in 1926 preached a sermon about Jesus, in which he said, "He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village, where He worked in a carpenter's shop until he was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerate preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

While He was dying, His executioners gambled for His garments, the only property He had on earth. When he was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one solitary life."

If Jesus had never come into this world, our world would be a very different place. I would characterize it first as a **world without faith**. The world Jesus entered was a world filled with idols and superstition. Every god was honored and no god was special. Even the Jews in his day were filled with hypocrisy and human traditions. A world that has many gods has many conflicting and confusing faiths. No one could afford to offend any god, so people gave some allegiance to every god. Now, when every faith is right, no faith is right! If every set of morals is all right, then there really is no set of morals that matters. When everyone's truth is true, no one's truth is really true. Too many faiths means that there is no real faith at all. Dostoyevsky in his book *The Brothers Karamazov* wrote of a culture without God. He said, "But what will become of men then? ... without God and immortal life? All things are lawful then, and they can do what they like? Didn't you know?" Again he said, "If God is dead, then all things are permissible." Jean-Paul Sartre, the French philosopher, found atheism "cruel"; Albert Camus found it "dreadful"; and Friedrich Nietzsche found it "maddening."

David wrote in Psalm 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" The religious fool David describes is not so much an atheist in thought as in the way he lives. He is a practical atheist; he lives his life without any regard to whether God matters. He is truly "godless." An ungodly world frees the

guilty and punishes the innocent. An ungodly world is a thankless world who can never separate things holy from things common. It makes fun of what should be respected and glorifies what is abominable. An ungodly world is full of chaos, selfishness, greed and cruelty. It has no basis for trust, because it rejected its creator. Paul described a godless world this way in Ephesians 4:17-19: "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity."

The Lord Jesus provides something very different, however. He gives us life by telling us the truth and leading us to what is eternal. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). That is a very important claim. Jesus is saying that he is God's Son and can lead us to heaven to the Father. What evidence is there for us to trust Him? There are many lines of evidence for Jesus. First, the Old Testament prophesies about his coming, life, death, and resurrection. There are more than 100 prophecies in the Old Testament that tell us where he was born and when, how he would suffer and be betrayed, how he would be crucified and be raised on the third day. There is no other person in all of history whose life is prophesied in such a way. Jesus is uniquely the Son of God. Second, the life of Jesus testifies to his utter righteousness. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that he was tempted in all points as we are but never sinned. He is indeed unique. Further, Jesus is the very essence of truth—he is utterly trustworthy. Jesus said to Pilate in John 18:37 "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." We can distinguish truth from error by searching through his words. Jesus promised in John 8:31-32, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Third, Jesus proved himself true by His resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4). I want to say more about this in some future programs, but there are good reasons to believe the resurrection of Jesus is true. The empty tomb, the grave clothes, the change in the disciples, and the existence of the church give us assuring evidence that Jesus is everything he claimed to be. He is worthy of our faith. We can commit our lives and souls into his hands with no fear. Who else has risen from the dead? No. one. Confucius' tomb is occupied. Buddha's tomb is occupied. Mohammed's tomb is occupied. Jesus' tomb is empty!

Second, if Jesus had never come to this world, we would surely have a **world without hope**. Paul describes a world that doesn't acknowledge God or give Him thanks in Romans 1:28-32: "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them." Such a world is without a doubt cruel and hopeless. Frankly, our world is becoming more and

more godless. In the last 100 years men have killed other men more than in any century in history—170 million people. 130 million were killed because of atheistic ideology (Stalin, Hitler and Mao). Someone has said, “In the 18th century, the Bible was killed; in the 19th century, God was killed; and in the 20th century, man was killed.”

But Jesus came to give us hope in the gospel, which is God’s power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). The gospel is not just good news; it is great news of love and redemption. It tells us how Jesus “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). The gospel gives us hope of forgiveness. In 1 Tim. 1:15-16, Paul says, “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.” Jesus can take the greatest sinners and transform them into the greatest saints. The old story of love and grace changes hearts and lives.

In the nineteenth century Charles Bradlaugh, a prominent atheist, challenged a Christian man to debate the validity of the claims of Christianity. The Christian, Hugh Price Hughes, was an active soul-winner among the poor in the slums of London. Hughes told Bradlaugh he would agree to the debate on one condition. Hughes said, “I propose to you that we each bring some concrete evidences of the validity of our beliefs in the form of men and women who have been redeemed from the lives of sin and shame by the influence of our teaching. I will bring 100 such men and women, and I challenge you to do the same.” Hughes then said that if Bradlaugh couldn’t bring 100, then he could bring 50, then he could bring 20. He finally whittled the number down to one. All Bradlaugh had to do was to find one person whose life was improved by atheism and Hughes—who would bring 100 people improved by Christ—would agree to debate him. Bradlaugh withdrew from the debate!

Third, if this world had no Jesus, it would certainly be a **world without love**. The historian Will Durant wrote of ancient Rome: “Charity (love) found little scope in this frugal life. Hospitality survived as a mutual convenience at a time when inns were poor and far between; but the sympathetic Polybius reports that ‘in Rome no one ever gives away anything to anyone if he can help it’—doubtless an exaggeration.” Without the love and sacrifice of Jesus, we certainly would not see the kind of love and sacrifice so evident today. Christians are by far the most sacrificial and generous people in the world. Jesus taught that kind of love in parables like “the Good Samaritan” where a Samaritan helped a man who had been robbed and beaten. Jesus challenges us to go and do likewise. Jesus taught us that when we do a kindness for anyone, it is like doing a kindness for Him. In Matthew 25:34-40, Jesus rewards those who serve others. He said, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see

you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’”⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’”

We know love because of Jesus. John said in 1 John 4:19, “We love because he first loved us.” My friend, no one will ever love you like Jesus does. He was willing to die on a cruel cross for you to demonstrate his utter love for you. Let his love and forgiveness touch your heart and life. Paul said in Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” Every good thing in your life has come to you because of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Your world is as good as it is because he cares for you. How sad our world would be if we had never known the love of Jesus, who could say to those who were nailing his hands and feet, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34). He loves you enough to forgive you too. Do you love him?

A world without Christ is indeed a sad place. It is a world without faith in what is really true, hope for eternal life, or the deepest kind of love. Paul describes the life of people before they become Christians this way in Ephesians 2:12: “remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” People without Christ are without hope, without prayer, without the help of God. Friends, we need God, whether we know it or not. Life is desperate and lonely without Him. I am glad the Bible doesn’t stop there. Paul said in Ephesians 2:4-7, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” God doesn’t just care for us today; He has our eternal future in his heart and planning. Heaven will be such a wonderful place.

The world without Christ I am most concerned about today is the world you have control over. You can let Christ into your life or shut Him out. If you shut Christ out of your heart, He cannot bless you the way He has those who let Him in. He wants to bless you, but you have shut Him out. My friend, would you let him into your life?

You can do that by trusting in Him—believing in Him and His word. It is not enough just to acknowledge that He is the Son of God and Lord, you need to make Him the Lord in your life and take His teaching seriously. When you do that you will surely change your life (repent) and start living for Him. Becoming a follower of Christ means that you will be willing to confess him before others and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. In baptism, God saves you, adds you to His church, causes you to be born again, and gives you the gift of the Holy Spirit. Christ can fill your life with joy, with peace, with love, and with hope. My friend, let him in your life.

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