

If Christ Had Not Come

John 15:22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

We live in an age in which only one prejudice is tolerated – anti-Christian bigotry. Michael Novak, the eminent columnist, once said that today you can no longer hold up to public ridicule groups such as minorities or women or homosexuals or ethnic groups (and rightly so!), but the one group you can hold up to public mockery without penalty is Christians.

Attacks on the church and Christianity are common in the media, and less conspicuously in our schools, universities, and governments. As Pat Buchanan once put it, “Christian-bashing is a popular indoor sport.”

But the truth is this: Had Jesus never been born; this world would be far more miserable than it is. Had the church never existed, some of earth’s greatest accomplishments would never have graced the pages of history.

In fact, many of man’s noblest and kindest deeds find their motivation in simple love and willing service for the humble Carpenter of Nazareth named Jesus Christ.

At this time of the year, the 1946 film classic “It’s A Wonderful Life” is always popular. In it, the character played by Jimmy Stewart gets a chance to see what life would be like had he never been born. The main point of the film is that each person’s life has impact on everybody else’s life.

Had they never been born, there would be gaping holes left by their absence. If this is true for every human being, it is immeasurably true for Jesus Christ. He had more impact than anyone else who ever lived on human history!

But although the greatest man who ever lived changed virtually every aspect of human life, most people don’t realize His contribution. **The greatest tragedy of the Christmas holiday each year is not so much its commercialization, but its trivialization.** People have forgotten Him to whom they owe so very much.

Much of what we take for granted finds its roots in Christ and His teachings. And yet Christianity is ridiculed as an impediment to progress, a bane on humanity, and remains today the one safe target of contempt and prejudice.

Everything that Jesus touched, He utterly transformed. He touched time when He was born into this world; He had a birthday, and that birthday utterly altered the way we measure time. He turned the river of the ages out of its course and lifted the centuries off their hinges.

Now, the whole world counts time as “Before Christ” (BC) and “In the Year Of Our Lord” (Anno Domini – AD). It’s ironic that the most arrogant atheist writing a letter to a friend must acknowledge Christ when he dates that letter!

The salvation of eternal souls is obviously the primary goal of Christianity, but there are many other benefits brought by Jesus and His church to our world that are simply **by-products** of Christ’s teaching, applied to daily living.

In 1926, in a sermon to young people, Rev. James A. Francis powerfully summed up the contribution of Jesus in a piece that has become known over the years as, “One Solitary Life.”

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 shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant 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 popular 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 the only piece of property He had on earth – His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today He is the central figure of the human race and the leader of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that 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.

Consider the impact of Jesus Christ in just five areas:

1. The Value of Human Life

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Prior to the coming of Christ, human life on this planet was expendable and exceedingly cheap, as it still is today in parts of the world where Christianity has not penetrated. And as we in North America abandon our Judeo-Christian heritage and values, you will see life become increasing cheap once again!

In the ancient world, child sacrifice was a common phenomenon. It was a dangerous thing for a baby to be conceived in classical Rome or Greece; abortion was rampant, and abandonment of infants was commonplace. It was common for handicapped, or unwanted, or female babies to be taken out into the forest or the mountainside and left to be consumed by wild animals or to starve, or for others to pick them up for their own perverted ends.

But then Jesus came! And since that time, Christians have cherished life as sacred, even the life of the unborn. In ancient Rome, Christians saved many of these abandoned babies and brought them up in the faith. Abortion absolutely disappeared in the early church, and their higher view of the value life created the foundation of modern civilization!

2. The Worth of Women

John 8:11b And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Before Jesus came, a woman's life was also very cheap. In ancient cultures, the wife was the property of the husband and women were generally declared not able or competent to be independent. In ancient religions like Hinduism, widows were voluntarily or involuntarily burned on their husbands' funeral pyres, and many young girls were dedicated from birth to be temple prostitutes.

But then Jesus came! And He elevated women by treating them as equals. How ironic that feminists today do not give any credit to Christianity; in fact, they say it has oppressed women. In reality, the reverse is true. Had Jesus never come, the feminists who curse Him might not have lived more than a few weeks!

3. Compassion For the Poor

Proverbs 14:21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

The world before Christianity was cold and unkind toward the underprivileged. Historical documents show no trace of any organized charitable effort. People who had problems were thought to have brought their circumstances upon themselves.

But then Jesus came! He set the great example of helping the poor and caring for the downtrodden, even when they were strangers. And while poverty has always been part of life on earth, the church has done more to alleviate it than any other institution in history.

The early church actually attracted many of their converts because their kindness was such a contrast to Rome's harshness. The vast majority of

today's charitable organizations had their start within the confines of the church.

4. Moral Absolutes

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Fornication, adultery, group sex, homosexuality, lesbianism, sodomy, bestiality and every conceivable kind of immorality and perversion were rampant in the ancient world. Many of these vices were practiced by the ancient Canaanites; that's why God instructed Israel to drive them out of the Promised Land!

Historians tell us that every great civilization throughout history has gone through two phases: the phase of ascendancy until it reaches the pinnacle of its power, and the period of descent until it finally plunges into oblivion.

Historians also declare that, without exception, every one of these kingdoms and nations adhered to a strict moral code during their rise, then once they prospered, entered into promiscuity and sexual expression which resulted in their ultimate downfall. Without exception!

But then Jesus came! He was born into this defiled world and taught that sex was sanctified by God, but only when expressed in a marriage according to His Word. As a result, His church stood out like a beacon of light in a dark world. In AD 125, the Athenian philosopher wrote this about the Christians:

“They do not commit adultery or immorality. Their wives are as pure as virgins, and their daughters are modest. Their men abstain from all unlawful sexual contact and from impurity, in the hopes of recompense that is to come in another world.”

Christianity has helped preserve the family as the basic unit of society and has protected millions of people from sexually transmitted diseases. Today, the popular idea is that biblical teachings lead to frustration and inhibitions, but the evidence doesn't back that up. Dr. Francis Braceland, former

president of the American Psychiatric Association and editor of the American Journal of Psychiatry wrote, "Premarital sex relations growing out of the so-called new morality have significantly increased the number of young people in mental hospitals."

People have been led to believe that the biblical teaching on sex is really not going to make them happy. For forty years, we have been hearing from all kinds of "experts" who tell us that permissiveness is the name of the game.

And so, we have produced a whole generation of permissive little monsters who have succeeded in causing our nation to cringe behind triple-locked doors and locked windows. Many are afraid to go out in big cities at night, because some people lurking in the shadows just can't control their urges. But we taught them not to!

5. Personal Freedom

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Wherever the Word of the Lord has been preached, tyrants have trembled, despots have been cast from the throne, and people have become free. The tremendous liberties we enjoy in North America we owe primarily to the Bible. Liberty is a constant theme in the Word of God!

But such liberties are only found in countries that began with a Judeo-Christian base. Free speech is a gift from the church, founded by Jesus Christ! You'll never hear a talk show in a Muslim country discussing whether Mohammed was really a prophet of Allah.

Muslim converts to Christianity are executed in Islamic states! You'll never head a talk show in Chinas discussing whether citizens should be allowed to leave China at will. Chinese converts to Christianity are persecuted!

But in every nation where Christianity first set people free from the shackles of sin, those who had experienced spiritual liberty set in motion an inevitable quest for civil liberty as well. The great irony today is that many people use their civil liberties to rail against Christianity!

The list could go on and on, because the followers of Jesus Christ have brought to the world many benefits such as hospitals, universities, capitalism, representative government, the abolition of slavery, much of modern science, higher standards of justice, and the inspiration for our greatest works of art. **If Jesus had never been born, we would undoubtedly wish that we had never been born either!**

Although this list of contributions is staggering to the mind, it does not even begin to touch what Jesus really accomplished for humanity, because He came to establish a SPIRITUAL kingdom!

John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

It truly took an amazing man to bring to the world what Jesus gave us, but the things we have talked about could indeed have been brought to the world by a mere human being. However, the baby born in Bethlehem was more than a mere human being!

Most of what Jesus does for humanity happens on a much deeper level than just making changes in their society. He comes to change HEARTS! (Society changes only when hearts change anyway!)

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Matthew 1:20-23 ²⁰But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. ²¹And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. ²²Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, ²³Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

If Mary's son was to be called "Immanuel", why did she name Him "Jesus"? Because they mean the same thing! Immanuel means "GOD WITH US" and Jesus means "YAHWEH SAVES." God didn't come to dwell among us so we could build hospitals or colleges or have better human rights, He came to save our souls. **AND WHERE GOD DWELLS, GOD SAVES!**

Imagine being there on that first Christmas morning. Do you know who you hold, Mary? You are cradling the Author of Grace!

- He who is ageless is now moments old
- He who is limitless is now suckling your milk
- He who strides upon the stars now has legs too weak to walk
- The hands which held the oceans are now an infant's fist
- To Him who has never asked a question you will teach the name of the wind
- The source of language will learn words from you
- He who has never stumbled you will carry
- He who has never hungered you will feed
- The King of Creation is in your arms!

Wherever He dwells, He will bring salvation! The list will be endless: Zacchaeus, Bartimaeus, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, the demoniac from Gadara, the Samaritan woman at the well, Matthew the tax collector, the widow's son from Nain, the servant of a Roman Centurion, the woman with the issue of blood, the ten lepers, the daughter of Jairus, the blind, the deaf and the lame! An endless list!

Imagine a world into which Christ had not come! No Christmas! No Christians!
No hope!

Imagine a world without a Bible! Think of pastors trying to counsel, minister to the sick, and conduct funerals without the comfort of God's Word!

Imagine a world without the church! No wonderful worship, no joyous songs, no powerful prayers, no life-changing altar calls!

Imagine your life without His blood to cleanse you from sin, without His Spirit to lead you, and without His name to call upon in times of trouble!

No wonder Paul said ...

1 Corinthians 15:19 *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

We live in what scholars are calling the "Post Christian Era." The world for the most part has rejected Jesus Christ, little realizing that they simultaneously have rejected nearly all the advances of society upon which we build our modern civilization! But even more important, they have rejected their eternal salvation!

There are only two choices with Jesus Christ, because He as God has set the boundaries. So when you do not actively obey the Word of God, you automatically ally yourself with those who are "anti-God."

WHEREVER JESUS DWELLS, HE BRINGS SALVATION!

Romans 8:8-9 *⁸So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

You must receive His Spirit to receive salvation – Jesus must dwell IN YOU!

The Bible teaches us that salvation is God's free gift, but like all gifts we must receive it in order to enjoy it!

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*