

“IF JESUS HAD NOT COME”
Isaiah 43:1-11, Acts 3:13-23, John 15:18-22
February 24 & 25, 2024

“A man one day was low on funds and all he had was one valuable thing to his name - a family ring that had been passed down for generations. He didn’t want to part with the ring that was so full of memories, but he needed money to survive. He took his ring off, took it to the pawnshop, and gave it to the pawnbroker. The pawnbroker gave him a few dollars for it accompanied by a ticket. On the back of the ticket, a redemption price and date were listed.

“The gentleman intended to buy his ring back but the date rolled quickly and he still did not have the money. He came and pled with the pawnbroker not to sell his ring in his shop. He begged for more time but the pawnbroker would not budge from the original agreement.

“The next day was the day for the ring to be put out to be sold. The remorseful seller came by that day only to find his beautiful ring polished and sitting in the shop window. It now cost twenty-five times the price he sold it for.

“Some of us today have pawned our lives for a pittance. We pawned our souls and we don’t have what it takes to redeem it. But, two thousand years ago, God sent Jesus Christ to pick up the tab for the lives we pawned. The beautiful thing about the Lord Jesus Christ is that He can afford to pay the price.”¹

But the question I have for us to consider today is what if Jesus had never come to the Earth? What if Jesus, as God’s Son, had not come to be our Savior and Lord? What if God had waited 2000 years longer to provide a Messiah for the Earth? What would our situation be like if we had not been blessed by God in the gift of His Son? Where would we be, and what would life look like?

Much of the answer to this question comes from our Scripture lessons today. We can start with the Old Testament lesson of Isaiah 43:1-11. Isaiah starts by telling us, “*But now, this is what the Lord says - He who created you, Jacob, He who formed you, Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you...’*”

¹ (tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 261, #787)

(43:1). Isaiah tells us God has done a great work for us, in that as we put our hope in Him, He redeems us from all our unrighteousness. These words of prophecy through Isaiah was fulfilled through Jesus, who by His life, paid off our sin debt and bought us for a price we could not pay ourselves. He paid the price for the payment of our sin by giving His life as a ransom for us, essentially fulfilling our sin debt and bringing us back to God. He has rescued us from the wages of sin, which is death.

Had Jesus not come as our Redeemer, we would still be lost in our sin and hopelessly pawned off to the world. We would have no hope in redemption of any kind, and our souls would belong to another god, one of the gods of this world. Had Jesus not come to this world to redeem us, our lives would be forfeit, and we would forever be God's enemy, fully incased in our sinfulness.

Isaiah 43:1 continues by telling us, "...*I have summoned you by name; you are Mine.*" God has called us to be His followers, to be His children. He knows each one of us by name, and has individually reached out to us so that we might hear His voice and accept His summons. Through Jesus, we each have been called to duty as His witnesses by the authority of His Name, the Name that is above all other names (Philippians 2:9). Since we have Jesus as our redeemer, our ears and hearts have been enlivened to hear God's call for us to return to Him as His precious child.

But if Jesus had never come to the earth, though God would have put out His call to us, our ears and our hearts would have been stopped up with messages from any number of things from this world. We could possibly have followed the call of materialism and put our hearts and minds into pursuit of all of the world's riches and wealth. The call for satisfying our selfish pleasures would also have muted out God's summons for us to return to Him and we would be heart-set on indulging in all of delights of this world. Our eyes would have only vision to see the next trick, or the next hit, or the next shot, or the next joint, or the next lollipop, or the next blast. We'd be looking for the next gig, the next drag, or the next treat, or the next ball game, or the next slot machine, or the next adventure of whatever sort. If Jesus had not come to the earth to call us back to the Lord our God, we'd be head-over-heals in love with this world, desiring to live life to the fullest before we died. Life would be fully engaged with all that this

world could give.

Isaiah 43 continues with how God rescues us. “*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze*” (43:2). God is so intimately concerned about each one of us, His desire is that we not be destroyed, but lifted up out of all of our troubles and trials. He delights in our safety so that we might rejoice in Him and praise Him for all His protection. He sent Jesus to rescue us from all of the dangers and snares of this world as we put our trust in Him.

But if Jesus had not come to the Earth, then we would find ourselves limited to our own strength and our own wisdom to keep us safe. Then, the floods of dilemmas and predicaments would overwhelm us and we would have nowhere to turn but to other people, many who would delight in taking advantage of us during our desperation and calamity. Then the fires of hardships and disappointments and distress would consume us and destroy our joy, our hope, our love and our peace. Our lives would be threatened and it would be hard to find anything worthwhile to give us a reason to live.

Isaiah 43 also reminds us, “*Since you are precious and honored in My sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you...*” (43:4). We have value and worth from the Lord our God. We are each a dear treasure of His, and He delights in us. We are important to Him and He loves us enough to purchase us back from the pawnbrokers of this world, to be with Him forever.

But if Jesus had not come to the Earth, we would be treated like cattle by those in powerful positions. We would be abused and mistreated, used only for someone else’s desire, and our value would be less than the ground we walked on. We would find ourselves trafficked like slaves, sold to the highest bidder, and when our usefulness was finished, we’d be discarded like a piece of trash with no hope of finding any life.

Isaiah 43 goes on to say, “*Do not be afraid, for I am with you...*” (43:5a). God provides us with His strength and His courage to continue on in our lives. When God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)? God gives us the fortitude we need to face life’s hardships and trials, to stand strong in

Him so that we might boldly live as His people. In His strength we can do all things. With God's presence with us, we can do mighty work to protect the innocent, uplift the meek and lowly, resist the forces of Satan, and dynamically change the face of this world as we seek to follow God's commands.

But if Jesus had not come to the Earth as our powerful Master, we would have no mettle in our lives. We would have no bravery to stand up to the wrong around us. We would be quickly consumed by cowardice and find ourselves hiding from every evil and wickedness. Without Jesus to provide us the hope of the Holy Spirit's power in us, every dictator would have complete command over us, and we would become the pawns over which they could do whatever they wished, with no concern of revolt or uprising. Without Jesus in our world, our fears would debilitate us to the point of becoming a conquered people.

Isaiah 43 also calls us to be the witnesses of God's preeminence. He says, "*You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after Me*" (43:10). God has called us to demonstrate to the world His power, His presence and His provision to all the people who will trust in Him. We are His chosen people, called to live in ways that present the Only True God to the rest of the people of the world. We are the ones whom God has appointed to present and show His great love for us.

If Jesus had not come to the earth as God's own Son, as our Savior, the world would never know of the Lord God Almighty's existence. We would be drawn instead to religions created by man's imaginations. We would be worshipping the dead, relying on the words and ways of false and manipulative religions that relegate people into stations of which they cannot change. We would be following the ideas of organizations that use people to get what they want, thereby creating two layers of power and influence - the rich and powerful, and the poor and feeble. There would be no chance for equality among the people, and we would be locked into identities given to us by those in control. If Jesus had not come to the Earth, we would be offering our children as sacrifices and preying upon the

weak in order for us to secure our futures and guarantee our survival. We would be willing to sacrifice all that we have in order to gain favor from the gods of this world, never getting it mind you, but chasing it as hard as we could go.

And Isaiah 43 tells us, “*I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from Me there is no savior*” (43:11). God is the One who has lovingly granted us salvation from all of the things of this world. He is the One who created all things, and He is the One who has designed us to worship and honor Him. Out of His great compassion for us, He sent Jesus to the Earth to save us from eternal destruction. God longs for us to return to Him so that instead of destruction we might have real life, eternal life with Him where there is no struggle, no pain, no hardships, no sorrow, no tears, and no death. Jesus, and only Jesus, is our Salvation from eternal destruction, if we will let Him save us.

But we have turned all the things of the Earth into rebellion against Him, and have turned our backs upon Him. Had Jesus not come to the Earth, our lives would only be like a wisp of smoke, once strong, and prominent, and powerful, yet over time wasting away into nothingness. We cannot save ourselves because of our sinfulness, so if Jesus had not come to be our Savior, we would become like the people lost in a great flood, washed away and buried at sea, deposited into the depths of the mud and muck and mire of the world with no hope and no rescue.

Then Acts 3:15 allows us to see that we have hope of resurrection beyond this world, beyond this life here on the Earth. Peter tells the people, “*You killed the author of life, but God raised Him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.*” Jesus, the One through whom the world and the universe was created (John 1:2-4), offered His life for us on the cross to achieve our salvation. He, the One who gave us all life and breath, took our place to be executed for our sins. He was crucified and buried, but on the third day, rose again so that all who believe and trust in Him might also receive resurrection. In Christ Jesus we also can find life from the dead, and will one day be resurrected from this life of flesh to be with Him in His Father’s house. Jesus came to give life to all who would profess Him to be their Savior, to all who would trust in His teachings and to all who would obediently follow Him.

But if Jesus had not come to the Earth, there would have been no perfect sacrifice made on our behalf to eliminate our sins. There would have been no payment to the great pawnbroker, Satan, for the purchase of our souls. There would have been no newness of life given after this earthly flesh takes its last breath and is laid down into the cold, dark grave. If Jesus had not come to be with us as our Savior, we would have no assurance of resurrection from the dead, and we would for all eternity be cast out of God's presence, forever experiencing the agony and anguish of being in His absence. If Jesus had not come to save us, our destiny would have had only one destination - hell.

Acts 3:16 informs us, "*By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' Name and the faith that comes through Him that has completely healed him...*" Jesus is our Master Physician. Since He has created all things, He knows the intricacies of our human bodies. He knows the brokenness that occurs in our lives. He knows the devastations of cancer, and Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's, and Lou Gherig's, and leprosy, and paralysis, and multiple sclerosis, and cystic fibrosis, and cerebral palsy and all the other debilitating diseases. He knows the illnesses that plague us, AND He knows what it takes to heal them! In the power of His Name, healing is possible for those who are sick and disabled and infirm.

But if Jesus had not come to the Earth, there would be no hope of healing, no chance of finding restoration or cure from the brokenness of this world outside of our own ingenuity. Without Jesus' intervention, we are forced to endure these plagues on life with only our own knowledge and medical treatments to depend upon. Without Jesus, we have no hope of cleansing or renewal or repair, no relief from the pain and anguish and panic and suffering that we are left with because of them.

Acts 3:19 gives us Peter's instructions, "*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...*" It is sin that has broken this beautiful world that He created. What once was perfect and good has been corrupted by our sins against God. But God has provided us an avenue to come back to Him, our Messiah, Jesus. As we repent of our sins, God is gracious and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9), so

that the hardships and terrors and burdens of this life might be replaced with refreshing and renewal. All things are possible through Christ Jesus, as He strengthens us and purifies us and encourages us (Philippians 4:13).

But if Jesus had not come to be our Savior, we would be left trapped in our rebellion against God so that nothing would be able to bring us restoration and refreshment. Our lives would continue to waste away and we would grow weaker and weaker until there would be nothing left of us. If Jesus had not come, there would be no path to righteousness and peace, so we would find ourselves at the mercy of coincidence, with the hope of luck, and the confidence of happenstance. Not only would our bodies waste away, but our spirits would continue to degrade and disintegrate.

And Acts 3:23 tells us plainly, “*Anyone who does not listen to Him (Jesus) will be completely cut off from their people.*” Without Jesus, there is no hope of becoming a part of the family of God, for it is only in Him that we find access into God’s family. If Jesus had not come as our Savior, the doors to heaven would forever be shut to us, with no possibility of admission into the Kingdom of God.

Yet, God desires that all people come back to Him, that all people would be saved from their sins. Jesus came to seek and to save all those who are lost (Luke 19:10), so that all who hear His voice and turn to Him will find entrance for themselves in God’s house. Jesus is the gate to the Kingdom (John 10:9), and only those who believe in Him, accept Him as their Savior and obey His commands, are allowed access into God’s house as children of God.

Yet, we find ourselves living in a world that lives as though Jesus had never come to the Earth as our Savior. We are surrounded by people who live for themselves, who seek power and prestige, who desire wealth and influence, who crave fame and notoriety, and who care nothing about those around them.

However Jesus did come into the world as our Savior, and those who follow Him and trust in Him and claim Him as their Messiah are treated just as He was. Jesus told us it would happen. Listen to His words. This is John 15:18-22. (READ John 15:18-22)

We who believe in Jesus are no longer a part of this world, for we belong to Him. He has purchased us back from the pawnbroker at a great price, which tells us of our value to Him. But the world, which continues to live as if Jesus had never come into the world, hates us when we diligently seek to follow Him and obey His commands. Because we “*do not belong to the world*” (Jn. 15:19), we are hated and despised and rejected just as Jesus was. But when we are rejected by the world, we are acceptable to the Lord our God, and find ourselves as His servants, children of God, heirs with Jesus as brothers and sisters in Christ (Romans 8:17). And as children of God, we find respect and honor and value given to us such as the world can never take away from us.

If Jesus had never come into the world as our Savior, Redeemer and Friend, we would find ourselves hopelessly lost in the ways and means of the world. But because Jesus has come to us as our Savior, we have the hope of redemption and rescue, we have the courage to witness to the world our faith, and we have salvation that brings us to resurrection, healing, repentance, refreshment, and acceptance before God. Thereby we are freed from the penalty of our sins, and find ourselves as witnesses of Jesus in a world that longs to find hope and life and peace and joy and love.

If Jesus had never come to this world as our Savior, there would be none of those. But because He has become like us, He has given us hope and life and peace and joy and love, to the envy and spite of the world. Thanks be to God that Jesus became like us so that we could become like Him.

Let's pray. Father thank You so much for sending Jesus to us to become our Savior, our Messiah, and our Lord. Without Him we would have no possible hope of enjoying the beauty of Your Kingdom. Yet Jesus grants us forgiveness of our sins as we confess our need for Him, and turn to Him out of our desperation, so that we might find release of all of the ugliness of this world. Give us the courage to let Him become our Savior, so that we might live for Him. And give us the courage to face the hatred and persecution that the world gives to us so that in the midst of it, we might help them to see the need for them to also receive Jesus as Savior and Lord. Thank You for Your love for us. Keep calling us to follow You each and every day, in the Great Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.