

## What If...?

The What if game has been played many times. Movies and television shows are dedicated to playing out hypothetical situations. By changing one event, one moment in time, everything else changes. I got to thinking what if Jesus had not died on the cross? Please indulge me as I think of the drastic changes if that event had never occurred. Some have called the results of changing one event “the butterfly effect.”

We would not have the Gospel of Christ. “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) One cannot have a burial and resurrection without His death. We don't bury people who are alive but those who are dead. The very basis of the Law of Christ would not exist without His death. He would not our risen Savior without His death. Paul could not preach about our hope of the resurrection as he did in 1 Corinthians 15 since his whole argument was built on Jesus' resurrection being the “first fruits” of the future resurrection. “But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.” (1 Corinthians 15:23)

There would be no baptism. “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38) Before the Day of Pentecost, Jesus gave to His disciples “The Great Commission” as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16, and Luke 24:47. Each spoke of preaching the Gospel of Christ and included the command to be baptized. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter and the other eleven commanded the people to be baptized for the remission of their sins. Baptism was not part of the law of Moses as no one was commanded in the Law to be baptized to be a Jew or to be saved. Only in the Gospel of Christ is such a commandment found. That baptism, immersion in water, is into the body of Christ. “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into

death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4, emphasis mine, D.T.) There is no newness of life without death. Just as Christ was buried due to His death and raised in newness of life, we are buried in the watery grave due to our spiritual death and raised as new creatures. But without His death there is no baptism for there is no newness of life.

There would be no blood to wash away our sins. “But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins... By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10:3-4, 10) On the cross the side of Jesus’ body was pierced with a spear, blood and water came out from His side, see John 19.34. His sacrifice was for our sins. Therefore, without His death there would be no blood shed for our sins, there would be no remission of our sins. Baptism without His blood is an empty, meaningless ritual.

We would not observe the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matthew 26:26-28) The Lord’s Supper is a remembrance of Jesus body being nailed to the cross and His blood being shed. In Acts 20.7 we read of the disciples doing such an observance on the first day of the week, Sunday. There would be no basis for such a remembrance without His death. Once again, I point out the Law of Moses does not have such an observance. The disciples did not do such a thing before Jesus’ death. It was only after His sacrifice and after the Gospel was preached that they did such a thing.

His church would not have established if He had not died on the cross. He promised to build His church in Matthew 16.16-18. You will notice in our passage the church is in the future tense as Jesus said He would build His church. It was only after His death, after the Gospel was preached and after people were baptized that we read of the church. And the Lord added to the

church daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47b) Later we read, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28) I think by now you see the “butterfly effect” of Jesus not dying on the cross. He would not have shed His blood, He would not have redeemed us, we would still be in our sins, and the church would not exist.

One last thing I will mention in this article, Jesus would either be a liar or mistaken about His mission on earth. “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.” (John 10:15-16) Laying down His life means to voluntarily die for us. Early in His ministry Jesus spoke of His death on the cross, John 3.13-15. Jesus pointed toward being betrayed, handed over to the Romans, and being nailed to the cross. If such had not occurred then Jesus would either be intentionally lying or totally mistaken about future events.

We should be thankful Jesus willingly died for us. -- Dennis Tucker