



**DUCK COMMANDER®**  
**FAITH & FAMILY FIELD GUIDE**

# Exploring the Joy of **CHRISTMAS**



**STORIES, RECIPES, CAROLS & MORE**  
from the Stars of A&E's *Duck Dynasty*

**PHIL & KAY ROBERTSON**



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**PHIL & KAY ROBERTSON**

with Bob DeMoss



REGNERY  
FAITH

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*To our sons, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, and  
great-grandchildren, all of whom bring Christmas joy  
to us 365 days a year.*



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# The First Sunday of Advent

WHAT IF JESUS HADN'T BEEN BORN?



*Courtesy Russell Graves*

## READ ACTS 2:38–39

*“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*

**C**hristmas is my favorite season—even ahead of duck-hunting season. You say, “Why, Phil?” At Christmas we celebrate the Almighty’s decision to send a Savior, the One who brings hope and purpose to us little lumps of clay scurrying around planet earth. Think about it. Without the Christ Child, none of us have a prayer of making it to heaven. You might want to read that again.

Miss Kay can confirm that during the first couple of decades of our life together I was preoccupied with my selfish whims. Man, I was a first-class mess. I’m surprised she didn’t give up on me back in my rompin’ and stompin’ days. Thankfully, the birth of Jesus changed all of that for me. If He can change my heart, He can change the heart of anyone who is willing to let go of their evil ways, too.

That’s the power of the Christmas story.

I’d say that’s worthy of celebrating, wouldn’t you?

Have you ever wondered, “What if Jesus hadn’t come to earth and we didn’t celebrate Christmas?” “What if the angels never lit up the evening sky?” “What if they never

announced to the shepherds the incredible news that the promised Messiah had finally come?” “Instead of Mary and Joseph welcoming their newborn baby, what if the manger was filled with nothing more than a few tired, raggedy old farm animals?”

I’m intrigued by the historical implications that go along with that line of questioning because I’m a “What if \_\_\_\_\_?” person. I’ve often considered how the course of history would have changed if just one person had acted differently. Put it this way: if one piece of information had been known, one decision had been made, or one action had been taken sooner rather than later, the outcome of any given event would have been very different.

With that in mind, let me direct your attention to Matthew 13. Here we’ll explore several parables of Jesus’s that lead us ultimately to the joy found in the greatest story ever told. Afterward, I’m gonna play the “What if \_\_\_\_\_?” game with those stories. Jesus begins with “The Parable of the Sower” (Matthew 13:3–23), which is about the obstacles in life preventing the “seeds of faith” from taking root in our hearts. He follows that one with “The Parable of the Weeds” (Matthew 13:24–30) in which an enemy intentionally sows weeds in order to ruin the harvest—and the fact that the good and bad plants will grow side-by-side until the day when they’ll be sorted out, with the weeds being tossed into a “blazing furnace” (Matthew 13:50).

There’s another parable, called “The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast” (Matthew 13:31–33). The

idea there is that something very small, when blessed by God, can grow into something very great. That's what faith does in the hearts of people. Then we come to two little bitty short parables. In Matthew 13:44, Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

You say, "Phil, why would anyone in their right mind hide the treasure again? If he found it, why doesn't he just go and celebrate? Finders keepers and all that, right?" I'll admit that's a little bit quirky for us with our twenty-first-century mindset to understand, especially if you're living in Yuppieville. You've got to remember when Jesus told the parable, He was talking to a crowd who lived in an agrarian society that had its own set of rules. If you're out working in a field, you're working for someone else—and whatever's in that field rightfully belongs to the owner.

What was His point? The only way the man could keep the treasure was to make the sacrifice of selling everything in order to buy the field and become the owner of that great treasure. Then, to drive home the message, Jesus added a second parable, saying, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45–46). Same basic idea, just told a little bit differently.

"Wait a minute, Phil," you say. "What does all of this talk about buried treasure have to do with Christmas?"

Hang on, I'm fixing on connecting the dots. You see, when we talk about the kingdom of God, it's about searching and finding something of extraordinary value. It's being willing to give up everything for that gift. You might say these parables are two sides of the same coin: In both stories, Jesus is the priceless gift. When He's found, there needs to be a willingness on our part to give up everything in order to possess the gift of Christ.

Are you with me so far?

On the heels of these parables, something worthy of note happens.

In Matthew 13:53–54, we read: “When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?’ they asked.” So, after delivering five or six powerful parables, Jesus heads back home, where He speaks to the local crowd. They're equally astonished by His teaching and miracles—at least they were at first.

That's when folks recognized Him and began to question His pedigree.

His neighbors said, “Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” (Matthew 13:55–56). Faster than you can snap your fingers, their amazement took a nasty turn. I mean,

they're cutting Him down basically saying things like, "Who cares about this guy? What makes Him so special? Don't we know His family? What's the big deal about Him?" In other words, they were asking, "Why should I care about this guy or His message?"

Look at the next line: "And they took offense at him" (Matthew 13:57a). I like the way one translation puts it: "They got their noses all out of joint" (MSG). One minute He's a miracle worker in their eyes, the next minute that bunch of rascals had no use for Him. Jesus, in turn, said to them: "'A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home.' And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith" (Matthew 13:57b–58). This got me to thinking... since Jesus was fully God and fully man—complete with the emotions and feelings that you and I have—the words His neighbors hurled at Him *had* to have been hurtful to hear.

Keep in mind it's not a sin to have your feelings hurt.

For thirty years Jesus lived next door to them. These were His friends. Some of them were people whom He worked for as a carpenter. Without a doubt, Jesus hand-crafted, built, and sold things to them. They should at least have recognized there was something special about this man. I mean, everything Jesus made displayed perfect craftsmanship. Zero mistakes, right? Jesus was a flawless man, which means He never made a mistake.

He didn't cut corners. He didn't sell second-rate goods.

Instead of praising Him—or at least tipping their hats in His direction—they said, in essence, “What’s so special about you?” Noticing how they failed to recognize His divine nature, I got to thinking: If the God of the universe—who created all things, who made a decision to send His only Son to this old dust ball we call earth to become a human being—if the Almighty had looked down from His throne in heaven and seen this moment in time, what if He had said, “If Jesus is going to be mocked, disrespected and treated like that by the human race, I’m not sending my Son down there. It’s not worth it”?

I’ll tell you what—we’d all be in a heap of trouble if the Almighty had moved on that line of reasoning. Which is why it’s instructive to weigh the implications for us if, for whatever reason, Jesus had never been born. You see, if He had chosen not to be born, certain things would not have happened. Of course, the world wouldn’t be celebrating Christmas. On a deeper level, there’d be no hope for God’s empathy. None.

You see, there’s a world of difference between *empathy* and *sympathy*.

Sympathy is to look at someone and to have compassion over their loss, their pain or suffering, or some other personal hardship. You’ve probably offered sympathy to a friend when their loved one died. But empathy is to be *in* that experience—to know and to have a level of understanding where you see and feel exactly what someone else

is seeing and feeling. If Jesus had not come to earth, then we would have no hope for His empathy.

It's an undeniable fact that we needed Jesus to become one of us.

You say, "Why is His becoming one of us so important?"

Jesus was born in that manger two thousand years ago so that He would be made like us *in every way*—I'm talking from cradle to grave, complete with emotions, feelings, and the ability to experience the temptations we all face. Why? In order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God as He makes atonement for the sins of the people. Put another way, because He was tempted, Jesus knows from firsthand experience what it's like when we are being tempted. Having been fully human, He now can empathize with our struggles. If Jesus had not become flesh and become one of us, we would not have received this gift of His empathy.

We also wouldn't have had a clear view of God's eternal nature.

The only way we can understand the eternal nature of God is to see Christ and for Him to come and become one of us. He told His disciples, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Paul says in Colossians 2:9, "For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form," and the power of the resurrection was there as our glimpse of eternal nature of glory and flesh.

If He had not come to this earth, we would have no clear view of what eternity is really all about.

So, if Jesus had never been born, there would be no hope for any of us. None. In fact, Jesus *had* to come to this earth to show us the way to heaven. If He had never come, then He wouldn't have been able to die on the cross as payment for the sins of the world since there is nothing you or I can do to take away the stain of our sin. Which leads us to the quintessential question...

What if Jesus had never died on the cross?

What if Jesus hadn't walked out of that tomb after three days?

What if He hadn't shown Himself to five hundred witnesses before leaving this world to go back to the Father? Answer: I would have no representation in heaven. I would have no one there who really understands what humanity is all about. I would have no one standing at the right hand of God saying that I am one of His children. And yet Jesus is there in heaven today mediating for you and me.

Here's our dilemma. Every one of us winds up in a six-foot hole in the ground with no way out. Jesus came to earth to be available to die on that cross and rise from the dead to give you and me hope of life eternal. Which is why I said at the outset that Christmas is my favorite time of year. I no longer have to fear death. Nor do you—that is, if you confess your need for a Savior, repent from your sin, and put your faith in Jesus.

What if you do that? You'll be eternally good to go!



*Glory to God in the  
highest heaven, and on  
earth peace to those on  
whom his favor rests.*

**LUKE 2:14**

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