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John 1:14

WHY CHRISTMAS IS BETTER THAN STAR WARS

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If I were a betting man, I would bet that there would be many sermons this year comparing Christmas and Star Wars. I would guess that there would be at least 10,000 of them this Christmas. Some would be pretty good; others would be horrible beyond belief. Some churches would have all kinds of props and special effects. They want to be cool and trendy. Some churches might have a whole series of sermons for two months on the subject. I think that many pastors will have at least a passing reference in a sermon or two.

Christmas sermons are not about gimmicks. We really can't make Christmas bigger or better than it already is. God himself came down from heaven and became a human being. That is a miracle that cannot be topped. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. He literally pitched his tent among us. He did this in order to restore us to a place in God's family. He did this in order to bring us life, light and the forgiveness of sins. He did this because he loved us with a love that we can never comprehend. This has an impact upon every man, woman and child on the face of the earth. This has an impact upon every person who ever lived: past, present and future. That impact will last much longer than a movie. We can take a few comparisons and see WHY CHRISTMAS IS BETTER THAN STAR WARS.

First of all we must remember that Christmas is real history. It did not take place a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. It took place right here on planet earth. It is not a story. It is not fiction, fable or myth. It is real. It actually happened. Everything in the Scriptures is real history. It can be authenticated. Great care was taken to trace the lineage of the Christ child back to his roots. St. Matthew traces his ancestry back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. St. Luke traces it back to Adam, the father of the human race, the first man and the first sinner. St. Luke also pinpoints the time. There was no sloppy scholarship. God wanted us to know that this was true.

If we go back even farther, we go all the way back to eternity. There was no universe, no planet earth, no anything. There was only God. Our human minds cannot begin to comprehend the concept of eternity, but God existed. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." St. John turns our attention to "the Word." He will later identify him as our Lord Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity. We hear that the Word was God.

Not only was the Word God, but the Word was with God. This is a special and unique dynamic. He was distinct from, yet one with the Father. We have two divine and distinct Persons interacting. What the Word was, God was also and what God was, the Word was also: the same essence. The Scriptures are clear. The Word was God! Jesus was not some mere human being who came to tell us some elementary truths about spiritual matters. He was not merely some special man that we should follow. He was the eternal God.

He would come into the world because of our need. Our first parents rebelled against God. They felt that they could no longer trust him, even though there was no reason to do so. Satan convinced them that their lives would be better off without God. They could be like God, knowing good and evil. And so Adam and Eve did the unthinkable. They traded all the goodness of God for a piece of fruit and sin and death came into the world.

Star Wars has had some evil villains, but no one compares with the prince of darkness, Satan or the devil. Satan is real. He desires you. He desires your soul. He is like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. If left to our own devices, we would be doomed. But the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. God knew that there was nothing that we could do. We were helpless. We lacked the righteousness or holiness that God's Law demands and we are infected and infested by sin. And there is nothing that we could do about it!

God could do something and he did. He promised and planned our salvation. People may have been waiting a long time for a movie, but they waited a much longer time for a Savior. God announced the first promise in the Garden of Eden. This Savior would crush the head of Satan. God would continue to flesh out the promises. He would come from the line of Abraham. He would come from the royal line of King David. He would be a prophet greater than Moses. He would be a high priest greater than Melchizedek. He would be born in Bethlehem. He would be born of a virgin. Hundreds of prophecies that would need to be fulfilled, and then...

"When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The anticipation was great. Believers throughout the centuries waited for God to fulfill his promise. And then on one quiet night in Judea, Joseph brought his pregnant wife Mary to fulfill the census demanded by Caesar Augustus. Mary was ready to deliver, but there was no room for them at the inn. So Mary had her child quietly in a stable, a barn. She laid that child in a manger, a feeding trough for the animals. Yes, that child was the eternal Word, the Word now made flesh.

Christmas Day is a wonderful one for me. I love to get up early and go into the sanctuary, turning on only the Christmas tree lights and the cross. I quietly bow my head and contemplate the miracle of Christmas. This is a time to ponder. This is a time to think about what God has done here. He became one of us. That child in the manger is the eternal God.

Think once again about what the Scriptures tell us: "Through him all things were made and without him nothing was made that has been made." Yes, as we lie down on the ground and look at galaxies far, far away, we are reminded that he is the one who made them, every one of them. When we contemplate the atomic structure of things, we are reminded that he created that. He created the working of the human body and the brain and all its parts. He was God and he is God and always will be God.

He never stopped being God. But now he would also become something that he was not. He became man. This all powerful God would become weak and dependent upon his mother. The creator of the universe would leave the glories of heaven and become a servant. He would take on human flesh and all its frailties. He would have human emotions and human needs. He would get hungry and thirsty and tired and suffer pain of every sort. He would be like us in every possible way except one. He would be without sin. He would possess righteousness. That would make all the difference.

He came to do what we were unable to do. God's Law demands absolute perfection from us. You know that you are not perfect. You may wish that you were, but our wishes are not good enough. We need righteousness or holiness. Jesus came to be our Substitute. He came to give us a gift that we could never buy or earn. He would provide his righteousness for us. And because he was God, his righteousness could count for every person on earth.

But there was more. God says that we cannot have any sin in us. Just a single sin is enough to disqualify us. Sin must be removed. Jesus also came then to undo what our sin had done. He would have to take our sin into his own body. God could not merely overlook sin. If he is a just and a holy God, sin must be punished. And so Jesus would take our sin. He would take it to the cross. He would suffer and die for you and for me and for the sin of the world.

As I sit in church Christmas morning, I look at the nativity stable and then I look up. There is a large cross that is always in the background. The shadow of Good Friday always hangs over Christmas. We cannot forget that the child came to die for us. The birth of Christ brought God to man; the cross of Christ brought man to God.

Star Wars cost millions to make and millions more to advertise. Christmas cost God everything. It cost him the life of his only-begotten Son. That was love, a love so great that we can never comprehend it. Our sins are forgiven, covered with the holy, precious blood of our Savior. We once again have a place in God's family. Christmas is family time and we spend it with our family of fellow believers. We will spend it in the eternal mansions of heaven.

It seems as though we really can't go anywhere without seeing some Star Wars tie in. We hear the music. We see it being used to sell everything from soup to cereal, from children's toys to automobiles. It is trendy and popular. One could say that it lived up to the hype. Long lines of people were there at almost every showing. People bought tickets months ago to be able that they saw it opening night or at least opening weekend.

We had no long lines this morning. People weren't standing at the doors at 6 a.m. I'm guessing that was true of most congregations. Yet that doesn't matter. This is a message that is more important than any other message. This one has eternal consequences. If you went to see Star Wars a hundred times, would it keep you from death? Would it deal with your sins and status with God? Would it bring you life and love and peace and joy and salvation? Only the Christ child can do that. Christmas fills a need, not a need that comes from believing advertising hype, but a real need that comes from our natural condition and inability to do anything about it.

The world does not want people to know what Christ has done. Darkness does not want to be exposed by the light. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. The world will try to suppress the Christmas story and say that there are other things that are more important, but there is nothing more important. Star Wars may offer a few thrills, a few laughs and something to watch for a couple of hours. Does it deliver? I suppose that most people would say "yes!" Christmas offers the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, a clean conscience, an eternal home and everything we could ever need. Does Christmas deliver? Absolutely! It delivers us from sin, death and the power of Satan! We marvel at the Word made flesh. Have a blessed Christmas! AMEN.