

What Makes Tonight So Meaningful?

If someone were to ask you, “What sets Christianity apart from every other religion” what would you say? **It is the person of Jesus Christ!**

How do we know what we know about this Jesus? The Bible!

The gospels are the usual place we turn to b/c they tell us of the life of Jesus. They may emphasize different details, but they complement each other!

We have also discovered these past several weeks, **the amazing information & detail that the Old Testament gives about who this Messiah would be!**

And if we want to better understand what the life & the teachings of Jesus mean for those of us who follow Him, we can discover more in the letters and epistles of the New Testament.

Think about it in these terms:

- **In the gospels, we find the main storyline of Jesus!**
- **In the books of the O.T. we find the prequel stories to His life!**
- **In the Letters & Epistles of the N.T. we find the sequels to His life!**

When it comes to movies, prequels and sequels are hardly ever as good as the original storyline! But they can help us better understand & appreciate it!

A Star Wars analogy – there are a lot of similarities to the plot of the original Star Wars trilogy & the storyline of Jesus’ life!

- A New Hope, The Empire Strikes Back, The Return of the Jedi

But as much as I like Star Wars, **there is no comparison to the effect the real-life story of Jesus Christ has had on my life!**

And it’s not just my life! It’s truly amazing the impact the life of Jesus has had on countless lives, from the dawn of time until it’s completion!

An earthly life of only 33 years – but a life that changed(s) everything!

We’ve been looking at the prequels to discover more about Jesus’ coming - His birth, His life, and His death. But that is only the beginning of the story!

Tonight is Christmas Eve, **the night we celebrate Jesus’ origin story**, but as important as this part of His story is, it’s not the most important part (at least not by itself)!

And as important as Jesus’ sinless life, His perfect example, and His timeless teachings are, still these things aren’t the most important part of His coming

And as grace-filled & love-embodiment as Jesus’ death upon the cross was/is for each of us, still this isn’t the climax of the story! It would still be incomplete!

It is the Easter reality of the resurrection that makes Jesus’ birth, His life, and His death so significant and transformative in our lives.

If Jesus, who was born in a cave (origin story) and then buried in a cave (tragic ending), didn’t come out of that tomb on the 3rd day, **His “birth” story (Christmas) would have no lasting significance/meaning!**

If Jesus, who was the greatest teacher, greatest example, & greatest miracle worker, hadn’t conquered death, then all he would be is a memory & a famous historical figure!

And even if Jesus died a sacrificial death, the just for the unjust, but never came back to life, then what hope could we have that it made any lasting difference?

It’s the resurrection that gives eternal meaning to the life of Jesus, and to ours as well! His world-wide following & His everlasting Kingdom is a result, not of His birth, but of His re-birth (going from death to life)!

Christmas doesn’t have the power to change a life, provide lasting hope, establish true joy, or create everlasting peace! Christmas only points to the birth of the one who did conquer the grave & defeated our greatest enemies!

Only the resurrection of Jesus has the power to change our lives, & our eternity! And **this focal point of the life of Jesus was never left to chance**, it was never a plan B, it was always intended to be the main storyline!

Jesus was born to die, but He was also born to rise and overcome the grave! The significance of this night (Christmas) is forever tied to Easter morning!

And just as Jesus’ birth, life, and death were foreshadowed in the prequel stories (the O.T.), so too was Easter morning!

Psalm 68:18-20 – **Jesus ascended on high, leading a host of captives!**

Isaiah 25:8-9 – **Death has been swallowed up forever, in His salvation!**

How should we respond to Him for such a gift? **Psalm 16:8-11**

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