

Battleground: Nativity

The War on Christmas and the Full Armor of God

SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 1: RUMORS OF WAR | 11.12.17 | FOLLOW ON FB @PASTORERICHUFFMAN TW @ERICTHESTORY

YOUR MISSION

1. To forget everything you thought you knew about the Christmas story - all the sappy, sentimental fluff - and to revisit the biblical Christmas narrative with a fresh perspective.
2. To deepen your understanding of spiritual warfare by familiarizing yourself with the Enemy's tactics against you, assessing the damage he's already done, and taking stock of the spiritual weapons God has put at your disposal.
3. To better prepare you for the spiritual battles you're facing.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU BEEN TOLD

Most of us don't think about it; many of us don't believe it exists. We read books about it and watch movies based on it, but we rarely give it a second thought in "real life." Whether we acknowledge it or not, the spiritual realm is always there. Deep down, we know it's true. That's why all our favorite stories are based on the struggle between Light and Darkness, Good and Evil, Love and Fear, Harry and He-Who-Shall-Not-Be-Named.

We'll pay \$50 for a movie ticket and a bag of popcorn to watch a movie about a dark lord and a hero who sacrifices himself to save others, but when it comes to acknowledging the deeper truth of spiritual battle, we'd rather not discuss it so we don't sound like *that* Christian.

But what if - just hear me out for a second - what if there really is an actual Light-versus-Darkness battle being waged all around us? What if there really is an Enemy scheming against us? Wouldn't he *want* us to not pay attention? Wouldn't he prefer we categorized this light-and-darkness stuff as fiction?

How often do you think about the spiritual realm: angels, demons, good, evil, light, and darkness? Do you really believe this stuff exists, or do you think it's just a fantasy world?

KEY TEXT: MATTHEW 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

ROGUE ONE

What’s the deal with John the Baptist? What was his mission? Why do you think he was so intense?

What is the connection between John the Baptist and the Old Testament prophets? What is biblical prophecy?

KEY TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-14

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist...

CAN YOU HANDLE THE TRUTH?

What is the difference between objective Truth and relative truth?

What does Truth-telling have to do with the cosmic struggle we’re in? What does telling the Truth do to our Enemy?

How have you been dishonest with yourself, with others, or with God recently?

BATTLE PLAN

We’ve always assumed that our struggles are with people - our parents, our kids, our boyfriends/girlfriends, spouses, co-workers, bad drivers, people from Dallas, etc - but the Bible says our real struggle isn’t with people. How does it change things to remember that you’re not fighting against flesh-and-blood, but against spiritual forces of darkness?

Keeping this in mind, how will you change the way you fight your battles?