

Greg Laurie: 'Rise of Skywalker' Emulates the True Story of Good vs. Evil

Warning: There are a few spoiler alerts in this column, so if you have not seen Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker yet, you may want to skip to the last few paragraphs.

Like many Americans this past week, I went and saw the new film in the "Star Wars" series, *The Rise of Skywalker*. I actually have seen all the "Star Wars" films, created by George Lucas, going all the way back to 1977.

I remember when the first films came out and the excitement they generated across America and the world. Along with *Jaws*, they were the first real blockbuster movies, and they forever changed Hollywood and our expectation when we go to the theater now.

If I'm honest, I have to admit I have lost my way as to what happens in the chronology of these films, and I have liked some more than others. (Like many of you, I never cared much for Jar Jar Binks.)

But this latest edition, directed by J.J. Abrams, brings clarity to the whole series along with some surprise appearances from Han Solo (Harrison Ford), Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams) and Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill). There is also a fitting send-off of Princess Leia, played by the late Carrie Fisher.

The new lead character, Rey, has been the point of reference to a whole new generation of Star Wars fans along with her friends and fellow fighters Finn (John Boyega) and Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac). The beloved characters of the Star Wars franchise Chewbacca, C-3PO and R2-D2 are there, along with

some new droids.

What I love about this new film, *The Rise of Skywalker*, is that it has a classic good vs. evil plot with some surprising spiritual overtones.

There is an evil character known as Emperor Palpatine who is ultimately defeated by a courageous Jedi who dies in the process and then is resurrected.

Sound familiar?

That is the story of redemption as presented in Scripture, which we all reflected on just a few days ago during Christmas. The Bible even uses symbolism that resurfaces in fairy tales—including a dragon that wants to consume a child.

In Revelation 12:3 (NIV), we read of “an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads” who wanted to devour a child that was about to be born. We have any confusion cleared up with the fact that this dragon is none other than Satan, and the son he wants to destroy is Jesus Christ.

That is the Christmas story in a nutshell: Satan trying to stop the arrival of the Messiah, who was to be born in a manger in Bethlehem. But somehow, a red dragon trying to eat a baby does not seem like the best Christmas display in front of your house, yet it actually is biblical.

Of course, the dragon, or the devil, did not succeed.

Though he master-minded the crucifixion, even infiltrating the ranks of the apostles by possessing Judas Iscariot who betrayed Christ, it all blew up in the devil’s face.

If you think about it, the crucifixion was a rare moment in time when Satan and Almighty God were working toward a single event with different objectives.

Satan thought that by having Jesus put to death he could bring an end to His life and ministry. But the Father knew that Christ had to die for the sin of humanity in our place. Paul reminds us Jesus, “having disarmed authorities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:15, MEV).

Christian apologist and author C.S. Lewis is well-known for his “Chronicles of Narnia” series.

Lewis understood the power of a story, and was quoted to say, “Some day you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again.”

The “Star Wars” series is a fairy tale—nothing more and nothing less. But the reason it resonates with us is because it reminds us of a greater story. And deep down inside we know that story—the story of the Son of God defeating Satan and death itself at the cross and resurrection—is true. The others are just imitations.

The wonderful truth about the story of Jesus is that it means you do not have to be afraid of death, because death died when Christ rose, and the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is in you (Rom. 6:11). This is not some fictional “Force” I’m talking about, but the Holy Spirit Himself living inside you.

So, I hope you enjoy the new “Star Wars” film, but remember that the original story is in the Bible. And may the Holy Spirit guide, empower and use you for God’s glory in this coming year. {eoa}

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