

Sequel (John 1:1-14)

How do we escape the same pattern and stories of greed, lust, arrogance and anger generation by generation? At the heart of Christmas is the answer!

2022 - The Sequel

I wonder what your favourite film sequel is?

- Mamma Mia: Here we go again!
- Star Wars: The Empire strikes back!
- Terminator 2: Judgement Day!

Some people are thinking that the year 2022 will be a sequel to 2020 as in: 2020: 2, the sequel. In other words the follow up to the year 2020!

But what kind of sequel do you think 2020: 2 will be?

Many film sequels simply repeat the basic formula of the original.

So you might call it:

- 2020: 2 - Here we go again!
- 2020: 2 - The Virus returns
- 2020: 2 - The Wrath of Covid

But some sequels are the next stage in the story and turn a bad ending into a good ending a tragedy into a comedy. So you might call it:

- 2020: 2 - The Vaccine strikes back
- 2020: 2 - A new Hope
- 2020: 2 - Covid: Endgame

So are you pessimistic that 2022 will just be like 2021 and 2020 with new variants of the virus causing further waves of illness and death.

Or are you hopeful that 2022 will see the end of the Pandemic and a chance to return to life without threats of illness or worries about lockdowns.

What kind of sequel do you think 2022 will be?

History - Repeating the Pattern

When we look at history, we find that in many ways it is a series of sequels of the kind that follow the basic formula or pattern of the past. Times of peace and prosperity followed by times of war and poverty. Humanity seems to keep making the same mistakes, the same stories of greed, lust, arrogance and anger play themselves out again and again at a personal and national level. History repeats itself. Yes, there are different characters, yes the technology improves, but the basic formula and story format remains the same. Each new generation simply repeats the mistakes of its forebears.

The Bible calls this sin and says it goes right back to the first man and woman and their decision to decide for themselves what was right and wrong, rather than follow God, the one who made them in his image. Generation by generation, we all follow the same formulaic story.

But how can this pattern be broken? If every generation is at heart just as corrupt as the previous generation, then how can there be any hope of a different kind of sequel? How can there be a happy ending?

Jesus - The Same but Different

This is where Jesus comes in. This is the point of the virgin birth. This is the heart of Christmas. It introduces a new start a new kind of humanity.

The virgin birth makes Jesus unique. Everyone else is born of a father and a mother, they inherit the same wrong attitudes and tendencies that tend to make a mess of the world.

Jesus is the same. He is born of a woman and fully human.

Yet, Jesus is different. He has no human Father, rather he eternally existed as the Son of God and the Word with God as John puts it

To sum these two ideas up, it says in John 1:14:

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (John 1:14)

Like all humanity he bears the image of God, but unlike the rest of humanity it is not corrupted. Jesus brings a new start free from the sin of Adam, a humanity that is fully connected with God.

This is God coming to show us how humanity is meant to be, how we are meant to live, without greed, lust, arrogance and anger, but with pure selfless sacrificial love. Jesus was the same as us, but free from sin.

This became clearest when he willingly went to the cross. On the cross he took the judgement for the world's sin. He died to condemn our wickedness, but also to take our place, that we might find forgiveness and a way back to God. Jesus's selfless act of love creates a new Way, a new humanity and he invites us to become part of that humanity.

Do you want the same or different?

So, we are left with a choice. Do we embrace Jesus's new humanity or do we reject Jesus and all he has to offer?

In John 1, it calls Jesus the light in the darkness. Many people it says, wanted to stick to the old ways and the old stories. They wanted to continue with the sequels that just repeated the same age old patterns, the ways of darkness. They didn't want to change. So, they did not receive him. Is that how you treat Jesus?

Others, though it says did receive Jesus and they because of this something amazing happened. They became children of God. Children not from natural descent, but born of God. Not that we Christians become perfect or sinless. Not that we don't struggle with issues of greed, lust, arrogance and anger. Our old habits and old ways still cling to us, but with God's help we are being changed to become more like Jesus from the inside out, to start living out our new identity and the new humanity that he brings.

Finally we look forward to the ultimate sequel when Jesus comes and creates a truly new world, where sin and death are no more, where darkness is banished and we can shine with the light of Christmas.

2022 may not be a better year than 2020 in terms of Covid, but if you are willing to accept Jesus coming to change you, then it could be much happier year for you.