

## “Redemptive Journey”

A common literary trope found in Christmas books and movies is the redemptive journey. In the redemptive journey, the main character leaves home but returns later as a changed person. For example, Charles’ Dicken’s *The Christmas Carol* is the story of a miser who resents his place in life, telling others “Bah humbug” at the mere mention of Christmas. He is taken on a journey by the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future. When he returns, he has learned the grace of liberality, joining his nephew for a Christmas feast, and exceeding the needs of his faithful employee, Bob Cratchit. Scrooge is now a hopeful man.

Frank Capra’s classic *It’s a Wonderful Life* is a modern retelling of *The Christmas Carol*. At first glance, we may not think that George Bailey is a miser, but there are clues that demonstrate his resentment for place and life. He forgoes a trip to Europe and school to help the family business after his dad died. Four years later when his brother returns and should take over the family business so that George can leave for school and become an architect of great skyscrapers in the city, Harry instead returns married and takes a job in another town. George remains in Bedford Falls. He stays in Bedford Falls working at the Building and Loan because of his deaf ear, which he got when he rescued Harry from an accident. During a financial collapse, he spends his money to help the Building and Loan rather than going on his honeymoon. When his uncle loses the great sum for deposit, he goes to Potter, the owner of the bank and many other businesses in town, who tells George the sobering truth: you hate this town and this life. Like Scrooge, George goes on a journey, but by the angel Clarence, returning as a man filled with hope.

These examples of a redemptive journey resonate with us because they speak to our longing for hope in a time of discouragement and despair. We can resent our place in life, saddened by circumstances, choices we’ve made, and desperate for the next big fix. We live in chaos with the news of shootings, war, and strife among the people of this nation.

While many solutions are offered, the Scriptures reveal the only source of redemption that comes from outside of humanity. The journey of redemption begins when the Lord creates enmity with Satan (Genesis 3:15). It continues through the pages of the Old Testament and climaxes in the birth of Jesus. The eternal Word of God was born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, and died. Yet, “in him we have redemption through his blood” (Ephesians 1:7).

The redemptive journey is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He takes on our sin so that we may be born again to a living hope. Merry Christmas!

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