

Into the Dark of the Day

Stu Jones

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This gritty Christian dystopian novel is powerfully dark at times and hopeful at others.

A grim and bloody end-of-the-world story is not the first place most readers would expect to find Christian inspiration, but that's exactly what author Stu Jones sets out to create in *Into the Dark of Day*. Mixing a bit of *Mad Max*, a bit of *The Stand*, a lot of *The Walking Dead*, and a biblical message of hope into a gritty, gore-splattered novel, the author ambitiously blends postapocalyptic science fiction, contemporary Christian fiction, action, and horror.

The sequel to *Through the Fury to the Dawn*, *Into the Dark of Day* continues a tale of survivors in a world gone mad. As the story begins, a vicious plague has nearly annihilated the human race, leaving hordes of mutated flesh-eating ghouls. Jones names them "Sicks" and takes efforts to say they are not undead and, therefore, not zombies, but this distinction hardly matters to the reader. The remaining nonsick humans have banded together, forming groups and gangs.

The protagonists of *Into the Dark of Day* are a handful of generally good-hearted Christians, led by the troubled Kane Lorusso, a dark and hardened man whose faith in God is seriously shaken by the horrors he's seen. Along with Kane are an enormous, benevolent man named Courtland; an implausibly pure woman named Jenna; a Native American child warrior named Tynuk; and a suicidal former gang leader named Dagen. Together they fight against vicious gangs and try to rescue Kane's wife and children. Along the way, they run afoul of an evil being with supernatural powers named Malak, who joins forces with the most destructive gangs. Throughout it all, Courtland tries to rekindle Kane's faith, and Jenna seeks to turn Dagen's heart toward the love of God, even though Dagen once brutalized and left her to be gang-raped.

Jones maintains an action-rich pace, bolstered by visual descriptions and well-developed characters (with the exception of Jenna, who seems to have no traits other than benevolence). His dialogue generally works, but it feels a little stilted at times, especially when switching from the grim and gritty to the evangelical. Because the author is both a man of faith and a police officer and SWAT team member, the action and elements of religious inspiration come across with the greatest authority. The science-fiction and horror elements are less compelling.

Into the Dark of Day is a well-designed, readable book. With a quality binding, a suitably menacing cover image, and good paper quality, it could withstand sharing and rereading. The author's stated aim is to show that Christian fiction doesn't need to be "sanitized." In that, he certainly achieves what he set out to do. The theme of God's power and redemption is a strong current throughout, hopeful and spiritual in contrast to all the graphic bloodshed and grisly monsters. It's powerfully dark at times, heartfelt and hopeful at others, and nothing at all like sanitized Christian fiction.

JASON HENNINGER (March 13, 2014)

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