



His “hands” (Luke 24:40; John 20:20,25).

The movie ends with the light and shadow of the stone being rolled away from the tomb as the camera pans into the tomb and the grave clothes of Jesus “deflate” as if He had just come out of them. Some commentators understand John 20:8 to suggest that something about the appearance of the grave clothes themselves explains why John “**saw and believed.**” As the camera pans out one sees the silhouette of the resurrected Jesus, no longer marred and bloodied but renewed and living again.

Conclusion. The movie, of course, is no longer in the theaters but is still available on DVD, and rerun on television from time to time. When I saw the movie in the theaters years ago, I, like so many others who watched this film, was deeply moved by what I saw. Many

² In the Second Century worked known as the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the writer speaks of the cross in the shape of a T (9.8).

times while in the theater I wept and I left deeply disturbed by what the movie reminded me that my Savior endured for me! When I got home I couldn’t even tell my wife about some parts of the movie without being moved to tears again. I have felt, personally since seeing the movie, if I could retain such an acute awareness everyday of what my sin cost, I could never again do wrong. In addition to the shocking scenes of Christ’s death, the *Passion of the Christ*, more than any movie of this type I have ever seen taught as it progressed. Throughout the scenes of His trial and crucifixion there were flashbacks to scenes of His teaching that related directly to what He was enduring. These included scenes from the Sermon on the Mount, washing the disciples’ feet and the establishment of the Lord’s Supper. In most cases these scenes utilized direct quotes from the Biblical text. The use of ancient languages also gives the viewer a bit of the feeling they are looking back in time and seeing what really took place. The disciples and Jesus were not “white male Europeans” as paintings and movies have so often portrayed them. These were middle-eastern Semitic peoples of a time and place different from our own. Unlike so many movies and paintings from the past that have portrayed Jesus as frail and almost effeminate, Gibson portrayed Christ as strong and masculine.

With that said I must say, this movie is not for everyone. Some may not be able to separate the “artistic additions” from the Biblical facts. Others, with tender hearts might find such images haunting and paralyzing rather than inspirational. The unbeliever, rather than being moved to faith, might find some perverse thrill in the blood and gore, not understanding that Jesus laid down His own life for his sin. I am glad that the movie was made and I hope that it can affect some viewers in a positive, motivational way. I appreciate that finally someone has devoted the artistic and technological capabilities of Hollywood to the production of something real and significant. Even so, Christians must always recognize that our own faith does not rise and fall because of a movie. **“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Romans 10:17). (*The Passion of the Christ*. Directed by Mel Gibson. New Market Films. 2003).



ISSUE

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BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

December 1,
2013

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Steve Dixon
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Andrew Dow



The Passion of the Christ: A Movie Review

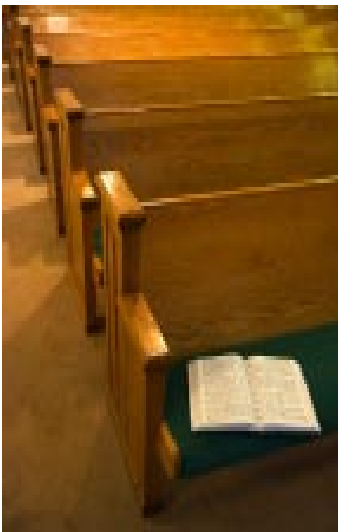
By Kyle Pope

In 2004, Mel Gibson personally funded a movie entitled *The Passion of the Christ*. The controversial movie generated more controversy and public discussion about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus than any motion picture on this subject within this generation. Many films have stirred controversy and discussion, but Gibson’s attempt to utilize modern cinematic effects to convey the brutality of Jesus’ torture and death left some disgusted others defensive, and many viewers moved to tears as they witnessed the portrayal of Christ’s horrific execution.

The movie begins with the simple words, on a black screen from Isaiah 53:5 - **“He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.”** Beneath this introductory statement is the Scriptural citation and a date—“700 BC.” In a world where most “scholarly” documentaries try to dismiss the force of prophecies made before the fact, I was impressed with the fact that Gibson boldly began by asserting that Jesus’ death was prophesied centuries before it happened. The scene then moves to the garden, where Jim Caviezel (star of the *Count of Monte Cristo*) portrays the anguished Christ. While the subtitled movie largely utilizes the Biblical text, Gibson does utilize “artistic license” in a number of places. The first of these, that runs throughout the movie, is the portrayal of Satan in the garden. “It’s too much,” the figure of Satan says, “One man can’t take on the sins of the world.” If we take this literally, Gibson is mistaken in thinking that Satan understood what Jesus’ death would accomplish. Paul tells us that if the **“rulers of this age”** had understood this mystery, **“they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”** (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). Gibson never has Jesus directly address Satan, so it may be that this is simply to symbolize the battle that Jesus fought as He prayed **“let this cup pass from me”** (Matthew 26:39). After the crucifixion, Satan is portrayed as shocked, at what Jesus’ death accomplished. As Jesus prays, a serpent slithers from underneath the cloak of Satan, and Jesus rises, looks at Satan and crushes the serpent. This clearly symboliz-

es the fulfilling of the first Biblical prophecy about Jesus. In the curse of the serpent in the garden God says of the Seed of woman—**“He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel”** (Genesis 3:15).

The movie then proceeds with Jesus’ arrest. Gibson leaves out some details the Gospels record about this. The troops do not draw back and fall to the ground (John 18:6) and Judas, acts reluctant rather than premeditated in his kiss of betrayal (Mark 14:43-45). Even so, Gibson does portray the healing of Malchus’ ear (John 18:10, Luke 22:50,51) and the young man (some think may have been Mark) fleeing as they grab his outer garment (Mark 14:51,52).



Olsen Park church of Christ

The main criticisms of the movie have involved four things:

1. Gibson’s “unfair” portrayal of the Jews’ role in Jesus’ death. In my appraisal of the film most of this criticism is unfounded. Gibson, suggests (what may have been the case but is not recorded in Scripture) that some of the Jews before whom Jesus is tried dissented, were forced to leave or were not allowed to be present. We know two council members, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus felt different than the other leaders (Mark 15:43; John 19:38,39). However, there are two scenes where I can understand why some are critical of Gibson’s portrayal of Pilate’s role in contrast to that of the Jews. When Jesus tells Pilate—**“The one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin”** (John 19:11), Scripture describes this event occurring at the Praetorium (John 19:9). Gibson portrays it as if it occurred on the Pavement (or Judgment Seat) with Jesus and Pilate whispering to one another in front of the crowd (see John 19:13). Second, while the Bible, tells us that Pilate’s wife warned him to avoid condemnation of Jesus because of her dream (Matthew 27:19), Gibson imagines that she even brought towels to Jesus’ mother to clean up the blood of his scourging.

2. The emphasis upon Mary. Gibson was a member of a conservative Roman Catholic sect at the time the movie was produced. He opposed many of the positions the Vatican had taken since Vatican II. Some of Gibson’s Catholic leanings clearly come through in the movie. The film is done in Aramaic and Latin with no Greek. This may betray a leaning towards the Catholic argument concerning Matthew 16:18 that the Aramaic makes Peter the rock upon which the church is built.¹ The languages of the inscription on the cross, Greek, Latin and Hebrew (Luke 23:38) make it clear that Greek and Hebrew were spoken along with Aramaic in Jesus’ day (Mark 15:34).

For those from a Catholic background, the prominence of Mary may seem to border upon “Mary Worship.” Not coming from this background myself, I was able to see this as simply the portrayal of a mother (who knew that her child was the **“Son of the Highest”** Luke 1:32) struggling as she witnessed her child being so horribly abused. I personally was very moved by her flashbacks of caring for the child, she was presently forced to see suffer and die as an adult. We know that Mary, Mary Magdalene, two other women Gibson did not portray,

¹ To study more on this issue see a study I did on this entitled “On This Rock” available online at: <http://www.ancientroadpublications.com/Studies/Biblical-Studies/OnThisRock.html>.

and John were at the cross (John 19:25-27). Gibson, like other filmmakers, has made the supposition that Mary Magdalene is the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-12. Scripture does not state this.

3. The “stations of the cross.” Another way in which Gibson’s Catholicism shows through is in his depiction of the so-called “stations of the cross.” These fourteen scenes that Catholics specifically commemorate from the judgment seat of Pilate to the tomb have varying weights of Biblical or historical authority behind their accuracy. It is likely that Jesus fell as he carried the cross. We don’t know if he made contact with his mother on the road to the cross. Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross and may have been the father of two Christians later prominent in the church in Rome (Mark 15:21). The Bible, however, says nothing about him intervening to prevent Christ’s further abuse. Gibson even portrays the sixth “station of the cross” in Catholic tradition, which has the least historical authority of any of them. A woman named Veronica (later explained in Catholic tradition to mean *Vera* “true” *Eikon* “image”) gives Jesus a cloth on which His bloody image is impressed. In later traditions this cloth could heal the sick. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, the Veronica legend in its present form dates no earlier than the 14th century and is probably of French origin (p. 1433).

4. The bloody and brutal treatment of Jesus. The original film has rightly been given an R rating because of its graphic portrayal of the brutality of Jesus’ persecution and death. No movie that I am aware of has ever even attempted to portray this aspect of Jesus’ life so graphically. Is this portrayal accurate? Immediately after Jesus is arrested, Gibson portrays the soldiers taking Him in chains to the Jewish Council. As they proceed, the film shows them allowing Him to fall and hang suspended by chains from a wall. There is nothing in Scripture that suggests this happened. In most other respects, from what the Bible records and what we know about Roman scourging, the movie is frighteningly accurate. The Bible records that the Jews beat Jesus and spit upon Him in connection with His trial before the council (Matthew 26:67,68; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:64; John 18:22). All four gospels record that Jesus was scourged by Pilate (Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke Luke 18:33; John 19:1). This is by far the most disturbing image in the entire movie. As Gibson portrays the Roman guards callously beating Jesus with the infamous Roman *flagellum*, a device with a wooden handle, multiple leather straps, and metal, bone

or stone fastened to the ends, the viewer witnesses the first few blows as they tear away the flesh of Jesus’ back. In spite of the criticism some have offered that this is unnecessarily graphic, in all fairness to Gibson I must say he could have made this much more sensational if his intent was simply to show gore. Once the viewer sees what is going on, the scene cuts away to Jesus’ mother and then goes back when the scourging is almost over revealing his torn and bloody body with ribs exposed and laying in a pool of blood. Is this accurate? Many people who received the Roman scourging died from that alone. This may explain why Jesus died so quickly on the cross. Isaiah prophesied - **“His visage was marred more than any other man”** (Isaiah 52:14).

Some have been critical of the traditional t-shaped cross Gibson portrays Jesus carrying, suggesting that Jesus would have carried the cross-beam and then be lifted into place. While the Bible doesn’t record the shape of the cross, early church writers in general agreed that the form of the cross on which Jesus was crucified was the the so-called *crux immissa* i.e. one beam upright and a cross-beam set with space above it for the inscription (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 91; Tertullian, *Answers to the Jews*, 10).² The movie portrays the nails driven through the palms. After the resurrection Scripture refers to the marks on