

The Passion Of The Christ: A DVD To Avoid

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Much was made of *The Passion of the Christ* when it was released in theaters. Now the DVD is available. This motion picture caused great controversy in the church because so many evangelicals and others praised it so highly while a few discerning Christians utterly condemned it. But for the Christian who claims the Bible alone as his or her authority for belief and practice, there should be no controversy. I intend to cover as many points as possible in a short space to show why this movie is not only unsuitable viewing for Christians, but is in fact blasphemous and a tool, not for bringing people to Christ, but for preparing them for Antichrist.

1) Any actor attempting to depict Christ makes himself an idol. Jesus Christ was not only a man, but also God (John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 1). Attempting to depict Him becomes an attempt to depict God. This is an idol. Paul wrote, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Romans 1:22-23).

2) Any attempt by a man to depict Christ is immediately a blasphemous lie because a mere man cannot picture Christ. Christ was God and man, but a man can only attempt to portray Christ's human nature and not His God nature. Anyone trying to find refuge in the excuse that the actor is only trying to portray the humanness of Christ commits the heresy of Nestorianism, which said that Christ's divine and human natures were separate. Christ's divine and human natures cannot be separated, even in His flesh.

3) Remembering Jesus' death by acting it out is contrary to Jesus' own instructions. The only tangible and visible symbols Jesus gave us by which to remember His death are the bread and the wine (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Any other means, including acting out His death, violates His instructions.

4) This film does not contain a statement of the Gospel. Therefore, God will not use it to save anyone. A gory acting out of scourging and crucifixion will work salvation in no one. The Gospel is spread by words, not by sight. Paul wrote, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing

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by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Addressing Thomas's lack of faith, Jesus said, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). A couple of verses later, John wrote concerning the accounts of Jesus' works, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31). God does not spread the Gospel by sight, but by written and spoken words (see also Romans 10:14 and 1 Corinthians 1:21).

5) The man behind this film, Mel Gibson, could not present the Gospel even if he wanted to because he does not know it. In a publicity statement, Gibson is quoted as saying, "My new hope is that *The Passion of The Christ* will help many more people recognize the power of His love and let Him help them to save their own lives." To Gibson, Jesus Christ only helps us save our own lives. That is a false gospel. As Paul wrote, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

6) This is a Roman Catholic film. Both Gibson and Jim Caviezel, the lead actor, are Roman Catholics. Gibson had a priest on the set to perform the mass each day of filming. Caviezel told Gibson, "I think it is very important that we have mass every day--at least I need that to play this guy." Caviezel also carried on him during filming a supposed piece of the true cross as well as relics of various other Roman Catholic saints. He is quoted as saying, "This film is something that I believe was made by Mary for her Son."

7) *The Passion of the Christ* is not even close to being an accurate reenactment of the Bible's account of the last hours of Christ's life or a presentation of the Gospel. It was not intended to be. Although some is based on the Bible, much is also from the visions of two Roman Catholic nun-mystics, Anne Catherine Emmerich and Mary of Agreda. According to Gibson, Emmerich, in her *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, "supplied me with stuff I never would have thought of." Another source of extrabiblical inspiration were the apparitions of Mary of Medjugorje (in Bosnia and Herzegovina). Jim Caviezel told a priest in Medjugorje, "The catharsis for me to play this role was through Medjugorje, through Gospa [Slovenian for "Our Lady"]. In preparation, I used all that Medjugorje taught me." Also, Gibson did not intend the film to closely follow the Bible, but to be a reenactment of the Roman Catholic Mass. As Scripps Howard News Service columnist Terry Mattingly said, "It is crucial to realize that the images and language at the heart of *The Passion of the Christ* flow directly out

of Gibson's personal dedication to Catholicism in one of its most traditional and mysterious forms — the 16th century Latin Mass.... The goal of the movie is to shake modern audiences by brashly juxtaposing the 'sacrifice of the cross with the sacrifice of the altar — which is the same thing,' said Gibson. This ancient union of symbols and sounds has never lost its hold on him. There is, he stressed, 'a lot of power in these dead languages.'" ("The Passion of Old Words and Symbols," January 21, 2004). Also, as Richard Bennett and J. Virgil Dunbar point out in their excellent article, "The Passion of the Christ: Mel Gibson's Vivid Deception" (http://www.bereanbeacon.org/articles/The_Passion_Gibsons_Vivid_Deception.pdf), the role of God the Father is replaced by Mary. The film suggests that it is Mary who offers her Son, thereby denigrating the role of the Father.

One of the most disturbing aspects of *The Passion of the Christ* is the praise it has received from those who claim to be Evangelical, Protestant, or Baptist. How can these people lay sound judgment aside in favor of the emotions produced by this film's biblically inaccurate screenplay and special effects? Richard Bennett and J. Virgil Dunbar, in the article cited above, state: "The Evangelical church's acceptance of Gibson's movie gives shocking - maybe apocalyptic - insight into the state of popular Christianity today. Will history reveal this day as the time when Evangelicalism, on a popular level, merged with the Roman Catholic Church?" If you have been deceived into a favorable opinion of this movie, there is still time to repent (I certainly know what it is like to be deceived and then have God open my eyes). But I do believe that we may be seeing a line being drawn visibly separating God's elect from false Christians. We cannot ignore Matthew 24:24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." The implication is that, even though everyone else may fall into deception, the elect will not be deceived. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (1 John 5:21).