

“The Passion”

Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" will move you to tears and to thought, a sobering introspection generated by a dramatic presentation on the screen of Jesus' love for you and for me. Lola and I were able to squeeze in for a showing at a Cleveland theater on Saturday evening. We came away with emotion similar to that expressed by evangelist Billy Graham:

"After watching 'The Passion of the Christ,' I feel as if I have actually been there. The film is faithful to the Bible's teaching that we are all responsible for Jesus' death, because we have all sinned."

As He took whiplash after whiplash during the scourging, I winced with an inner pain. And when the huge nails were driven into His hands and His feet, my soul felt the blows, because I knew that I deserved the punishment, and He did not. But He loved me enough to endure that for me.

In that regard, Gibson achieved one of his goals for the film. In making it, he said, "I wanted to bring you there and I wanted to be true to the Gospels." Indeed, his earnest desire to accurately portray Christ's suffering for humankind -- that one pivotal point in history -- with a mass audience is fulfilled.

A devout Catholic, Gibson has repeatedly emphasized that he feels called by God to bring "The Passion of the Christ" to the big screen. During one interview, he said, "I'm not a preacher, and I'm not a pastor. But I really feel my career was leading me to make this movie. The Holy Ghost was working through me on this film, and I was just directing traffic. I hope the film has the power to evangelize. Everyone who worked on this movie was changed. There were agnostics and Muslims on set converting to Christianity."

As was expected, there is a backlash against "The Passion of the Christ." Some Jewish leaders -- not all -- and the Far Left have labeled the movie as anti-Semitic. Dr. James C. Dobson, founder and chairman of Focus on the Family, had this to say: "Shaky charges of 'anti-Semitism' are really just a smokescreen. I believe that the real problem the liberal establishment has with this movie is that it has the audacity to portray Christ as He really was -- not only an historical figure, but as the Savior of mankind. That is an offense to the postmodern sensibilities of our morally relativistic culture. The fact that Mel Gibson actually hopes to use this movie as a vehicle for evangelism only adds fuel to the fire."

Columnist David Limbaugh put it best when he said, "How ironic that when a movie producer takes artistic license with historical events, he is lionized as artistic, creative and brilliant, but when another takes special care to be true to the real-life story, he is vilified. The moral is that if you want the popular culture to laud your work on Christ, make sure it either depicts Him as a homosexual or as an everyday sinner with no particular redeeming value."

(more)

But back to the theater we were in Saturday evening...

Throughout the movie, some sobbing by individuals nearby was noticeable, and not infrequently, some gasps of horror at the torment and punishment being inflicted upon Jesus could be heard.

When the film ended with the triumph of the Resurrection, a smattering of applause slowly evolved as people struggled with how to respond. But as the audience filed out, the crowd was eerily quiet. No one was speaking -- not even couples -- to one another.

All of us had been profoundly affected as we considered what Christ had done for us. It was a time for soul-searching.

--Beecher Hunter