Christ Catches a Case

The Message by Destra Hadnot

Walking through a packed area of Municipal Court, I overheard a voice of disappointment say, “I’m already on paper and shot another case last week.”

Now think about Jesus Christ and the case he caught that led to him being arrested, quickly tried, flogged and nailed to a cross. In less than 18 hours, Jesus was accused and hung on a cross to die. That is truly an open and shut capital punishment case even by today’s legal standards.

There was no time for Jesus to discuss the case or the charges against him. There was no arrangement or formal plea entered. No motion to dismiss the case, or request for more time to prepare for trial. No counsel for the defense. Following a traitor’s kiss, Jesus was hauled out of the Garden of Gethsemane by temple guards. No Miranda rights were read to Jesus before he faced prosecuting Jewish elders and the Chief Priest of the Sanhedrin. They wasted little time handing down a death sentence.

A Political Case?

So why did Jesus catch a case? Why was he railroaded through this first century travesty of justice? Why the absence of due process?

One might conclude that Jesus caught a case for a political reasons. Jerusalem was a cauldron of unrest while under Roman occupation. Jesus was viewed as a subversive rabbi, whose radical message of repentance, lured thousands of Jews into a new way of thinking. Jesus was using a gunning rod who could have easily started an uprising. For that reason, Jesus was branded an enemy by Jewish religious leaders and the Romans. Jesus caught a case and had to die.

Violation of Jewish laws, provide what some believe an obvious reason Jesus caught a case. Jesus healed and forgave sins on the Sabbath. Doing any kind of work on the Sabbath was a definite no-no according to Jewish religious tradition.

Jesus also publically chastised Pharisees for not keeping their own laws. Finally, Jesus’ referral to himself as the Son of God was the last straw for the Sanhedrin’s leaders. They made a case against Jesus and they plotted to arrest and kill him.

For those of us who believe in Jesus, there is a less speculative all encompassing reason why Jesus caught a case. God required that his son die.

Continued on back page

Can Christian Cinema be Catalyst for Spiritual Healing?

By Ira Alexander

The Mustard Messenger Editor

Jesus is Hollywood’s leading man – a super star at the box office. At this time last year, with 78% of Americans identifying themselves as Christians, films about Him are likely to draw cash and controversy.

Timel town has been trying to tap into the Jesus phenomenon since Cecil B. DeMille’s “King of Kings,” released in 1927.

Therefore, it is not a coincidence that Jesus is the cinematic centerpiece leading up to the advent season on the Christian calendar. It’s a marketing move that no producer or studio could miss. And neither could Christian leaders who see these movies as a means to motivate compliant followers and to convert nonbelievers.

The script for using Christian movies as evangelistic tools was written and tested on “The Passion of The Christ.” The effectiveness of all that outreach and group ticket sales, special events and merchandising drove “Passion” to a whopping worldwide take of more than $370 million. Opening weekend in America brought $83.8 million.

Ten years later, those behind “Son of God” have also gotten religion. Church involvement equals success.

But does that involvement also ignite the spirit? Can movies about Jesus be a catalyst for wounded souls? Do they have the power to strengthen faith and invigorate belief? If so, would The Bible become obsolete?

“I think some of these films can help people in their spiritual connection with God,” writes Dr. Freck L. Bakker in an online interview. “The Bible was almost never sufficient,” the author of The Challenge of the Silver Screen: An Analysis of the Cinematic Portraits of Jesus, Rama, Buddha and Muhammad observes. “People seriously going the way of Jesus were probably more important because of the example they gave. Indeed films can help, in particular people who cannot read — still millions in our world” writes Dr. Bakker, a senior lecturer in Intercultural Theology at Utrecht University, the Netherlands.

Christian films that are well made can have spiritual value, according to Dr. Greg Garrett, an English professor at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He is the author of The Gospel According to Hollywood and a forthcoming book, Entertaining Judgment: The Afterlife in the Popular Imagination. “All great stories provide some spiritual meaning to the people who consume them. Whether the stories themselves are consciously religious or not,” Dr. Garrett answers an online question. The litmus test is not whether Christian cinema should support only Christian viewpoints but how good it is in drawing others into the faith.

Bible literacy is low tech use is high: studies

The Mustard Messenger

It is still breaking publishing and sales records more than 400 years after its debut. The King James Version of The Bible delivers like no other translation. Conservative estimates are that more than half a billion in sales annually.

With American households owning 4 Bibles, why is it also the most misquoted text? Because biblical literacy is on a downward slide. A majority of people are not reading God’s Word in print on a regular basis. They are, however, tuning into audio and turning to tablets and smart phones.

In three years, the use of personal technology rose from 18% in 2011 to 35% in 2014, according to a recent study commissioned by The American Bible Society. Results of the study, done by the Barna Research Group Ltd, were released in March. The statistics provide a profile of American adults’ habits and feelings toward The Bible.

Technology is seen as a plus because people say they are too busy to take time out to read. For those who cannot read, it provides the ability to hear scriptures and participate in online services. Nearly 82 million Americans use the Internet for spiritual or religious activities.

Consumed by technology, like personal computers, is what television was to the evangelicals in the 1950s: A growing medium that provides accessibility in a mobile age. One Barna poll found that:

- 50% of Americans read some form of scripture in the past year
- 48% of those read The Bible
- 4 in 5 read at least once a month
- 9% say they read The Bible daily.

Bible literacy levels reflect what is happening generally. Low literacy documented by the US Department of Education indicate 43% of Americans function at below basic literacy levels. An additional 11 million are considered non-literate in English, according to the department’s “Assessment of Adult Literacy.”

While literacy rates are poor, people still regard The Bible as sacred and rely on it for comfort during times of personal crisis, the Barna/American Bible study found. The Bible is viewed by 8 in 10 Americans as the inspired Word of God, according to the General Social Survey.

It was part inspiration and part politics that drew King James into one of the most massive and complex editing projects — unifying the divisive religious movements after one ever the death of Queen Elizabeth I. King James spent most of his reign on The Bible that is commonly used today.

King James’ age was rife with religious discord. Henry VIII had separated England from the Roman Catholic Church when the pope refused to grant him a divorce from his Catholic queen so that he could marry Anne Boleyn.

King James drew some 50 scholars and clergymen from Oxford, Cambridge and London to the task of composing several different bibles that were in use.

According to the General Social Survey, 43% of Americans as the inspired Word of God, according to the General Social Survey.

The King’s love of language gave the prose a poetic touch. His version of The Bible not only became the “national book of fiction and of all English-speaking people.” According to Nicholous, The Puritans brought it to America. Nicholous observes, shaping this country’s theology, literature and political dialogue.

At the height of the Jacobean Age, King James’ time, England was experiencing a richness in its architecture, fashion and literacy rates were high. The Bible’s literary value could be appreciated.

“The King James Bible,” Nicholous writes, “gave the English, more than any other book, a sense of the possibilities of language, an extraordinary range of richness, more approachable than Shakespeare, more populist than Milton, a common text against which life could be read.”

Published 10 years ago, God’s Secretaries is still a seminal work on the history of The Bible and King James’ influence. In more than 400 years, The Bible has not lost its literary luster. An anthology of many books, it was written to be read and to house the spirit of God’s Word.
Sewing Seeds of Faith in God's Word

April 18, 2014

**Christ Catches a Case**

*Continued from front page*

A sacrifice by God was the only way humanity would have a chance of being redeemed. Under the terms of God’s plan Jesus could not be spared from the cross. Everything from the kangaroo court, to Jesus being nailed to the cross, veiled God’s higher purpose.

**Jesus on Paper**

Chapter 53:5 of the Book of Isaiah reveals God’s purpose for the case Jesus caught by the following.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

In the Gospel of Matthew, 20:18, Jesus is talking to his disciples and informs them about what is waiting ahead and the outcome of his case.

“We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death.”

God’s purpose for the case against Jesus is well documented in New and Old Testament scripture. So we can say that Jesus was on paper before and after he caught the case.

As we continue to consider the case Jesus caught, the persistent thought and belief should be in the eternal opportunity we now have, and not so much the statement of injustice that took place against Jesus.

**Case Reopened**

When Jesus hung his head and died on the cross, some thought the case was closed. Jesus was placed in a tomb and not to be heard of again. But three days later the tomb was empty. Jesus rose as he said he would with all power and authority in his hands. He is now seated at the right hand of God.

The case caught by Jesus Christ was about faith, hope, love and obedience. The case is now reopened for humanity to be saved through the gift of grace from God.

Salvation is available to whoever repents and confesses faith in Jesus Christ as the risen savior. The question remaining is whether we will seek salvation through the gift of grace or continue catching cases and sitting in judgment under the law.

Dextra Hadnot is a Bible studies student and has a Journalism degree from Marquette University. He will be a frequent contributor to this column. Scripture quoted from New International Version.

**Some films can aid Spiritual Healing**

*Continued from front page*

“The question is whether people from outside a tradition will partake of a story that seems to them to be alien to their experience. Christian movies are almost completely consumed by Christians, and often conservative Christians are critical of Hollywood’s attempts to reach out to them. As an example, Dr. Garrett cited the recently released “Noah” the

**Top Grossing Films about Jesus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Original Date</th>
<th>Box Office Gross</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Passion of the Christ</td>
<td>February 25, 2004</td>
<td>$391,802,820 (weekend)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Son of God</td>
<td>February 28, 2014</td>
<td>$25,601,865 (weekend)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Robe</td>
<td>February 12, 1953</td>
<td>$36,000,000 (total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Greatest Story Ever Told</td>
<td>February 1965</td>
<td>$15,473,333 (total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>King of Kings</td>
<td>October 9, 1961</td>
<td>$8,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Last Temptation of Christ</td>
<td>August 14, 1988</td>
<td>$410,211 (weekend)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** Box Office Mojo, International Movie Data Base (IMDb)

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**The issue of Jewish identity would not be as much a factor in Jesus films today,**

Dr. Bakker writes in the online interview. “On the contrary, nowadays there is more awareness of Jesus’ Jewish background than before. It is possible to make a Jesus film and show the sharpness between Jesus and the Jewish leaders without becoming anti-Semitic. The issue of Jewish identity is more a problem in the US than Europe.”

Yet, directors have stayed away from direct encounters with belief, fearing the tag of being anti-Semitic or straying too far from biblical text and angering the powerful Christian audience. Even the role of Christ is risky – show him as a suffering servant, the Messiah or a revolutionary rabbi?

Spiritual healing is a matter of context, not simply content, the two writers express. A shared experience, without one faith claiming exclusive access to Jesus is key when evaluating movies. He would not pick any of the current films to evangelize, Dr. Bakker writes, labeling “The Passion of The Christ” as “too violent, having a level of violence not in keeping with the gospel.”

A potential for films to aid in spiritual healing, renewal should be broadened beyond a focus on Jesus and Christianity, they write: “A movie like ‘Heaven is Real’ will almost certainly give spiritual aid and comfort to those Christians who see it. Just as the various print versions of the story have been meaningful to readers,” Dr. Garrett writes. “And it is possible if any non-Christians are in the theater, they too will find the story moving. Much depends on whether non-Christians perceive stories as well made and more than merely attempts to evangelize them.”

The divine cannot be captured on celluloid.

“The God who cannot be expressed in words; can certainly not be reflected in images,” Dr. Bakker wrote in his book. Images are on a lower level of words. Thus, films are useful but always need are useful but always need verbal clarifications and addition.

“However beautiful and faithful to the gospel a film may be for Christians, it will never attain the status of The Bible itself,” he wrote.

“Jesus, who was a man, can be depicted, as an actor who plays him can be filmed.

But each portrayal will fall short...”

What the movies are missing won’t appear in a camera lens. It is a personal encounter religious leaders advise their congregations to seek. Emotions that arise from powerful film scenes – Dr. Bakker calls the healing of the crippled man in “The Greatest Story Ever Told” – have the capacity for spiritual healing.

It is the essence preachers sermonize from about The Book of Acts. It’s that Godly aura wrapped in humility that makes Jesus a celebrity among Christians. It also makes Him a super star beyond the box office.

Those who do not read and study The Bible are more apt to believe some of the popular misconceptions about it. When in doubt, look the phrase, saying or situation up. Here are a few checked by The Mustard Messenger and the website, www.biblegenius.com.

**Biblical Blunders**

Common myths and misquotes about The Good Book.

1 Timothy 6:10 (King James Version)

For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Money is the Root of Evil.

*Eye gave Adam an apple in the Garden of Eden*

Genesis 3:6 (New International Version)

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.

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