

MEL GIBSON'S THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

Summer Camp Conversion



STAR WARS

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.
2 Corinthians 5:16

A very worldly Jesus is about to be unleashed upon the world by the Christian community. It will be a spirit like that found at summer Bible camp.

Summer bible camp, with its emotional discussions about God. New friendships are made and commitments to God are encouraged and stirred up. From Hell houses during Halloween, to pageants at Christmas, events designed to present the gospel stir and heighten religious

emotions to win individuals to Christ. Churches will not resist the temptation to use *The Passion of the Christ* to increase membership. After all, most individuals in the church today came to know Jesus by the presentation of a worldly, emotion filled gospel.

Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is a movie for the church of our age. Today's church uses the flesh to motivate people to worship Jesus. Mel Gibson stated that he hoped that the graphic depiction of the crucifixion "moved" the audience. Like summer camp, it will move men and women to tears, but blind the church to how it should be really used. After all, most individuals who came to Jesus never sat down and counted the cost. In short, they are not disciples of Jesus, but mere travelers. Travelers that follow Jesus because they have been motivated by appealing to the flesh (John 6:26).

If people can turn the movie *Star Wars* into a religious experience, or learn the language of the Klingons from *Star Trek* it should not surprise us that many will become "Christians" as a result of this movie. The sinful nature of man follows the sensational and the church will market and milk this movie to the fullest extent. As churches rent and fill entire theatres, they will offer wide road altar calls. Though individuals speak and act with emotion, it will not result from the drawing of the Holy Spirit, but the spirit that fills so many summer Bible camps.

CRAVING FOR VIOLENCE

We should note well that Jesus did not come during a time when a movie could be recorded about His life and crucifixion. In fact, none of the stories of the Bible happened during a time when the very graphic nature of them could be filmed. God had a good reason for this—be-

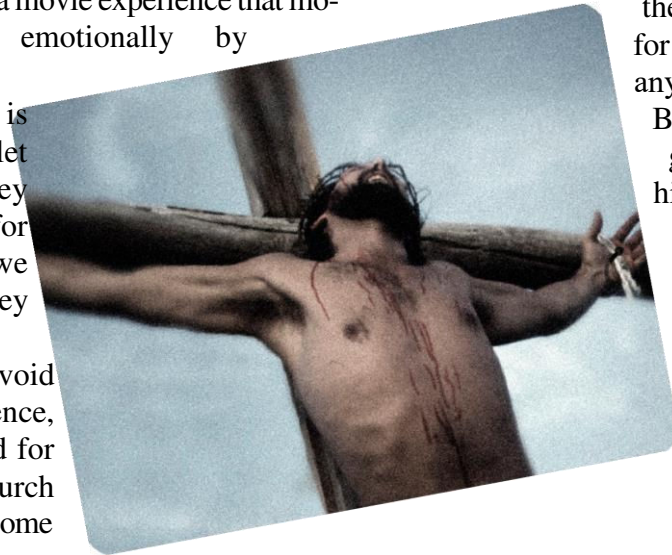
cause man has a craving for violence, for the sensational and for what he can see. Remember, we fell in the Garden of Eden because the fruit was "pleasing to the eye" (Genesis 3:6). I am not saying the movie *The Passion of the Christ* is evil in and of itself, but with all things concerning God, we must carefully make certain that the graphic depiction does not appeal to the sinful nature of man.

From the fruit of his lips a man enjoys good things, but the unfaithful have a craving for violence. Proverbs 13:2

God used words, the fruit of the lips of man, to cause him to think about eternity. When we read of David slaying Goliath we read nothing of the blood and gore associated with the task. After generations of blood, gore, violence, and warfare on the screen *The Passion of the Christ* comes at a proper time. The church has been unfaithful to the Word of God with its easy believism, so naturally it will crave violence in the presentation of the gospel. Look for the church to rejoice in the very graphic nature of this film and other books, movies, and items that will follow. More and more, the matter of following Jesus will become a movie experience that motivates people emotionally by letting others live

out the action. It is always easier to let someone else obey God for us, than for us to seek a God we too must obey (Hebrews 5:9).

This false Jesus, void of any real obedience, has been preached for years and the church will naturally become



excited about watching it on a movie screen. After all, I doubt very many will leave the movie thinking that they too must do what they just saw Jesus experience on the screen (1 John 2:6).

DON'T TELL

"Don't tell anyone" Jesus commanded the crippled man He healed. Jesus always told individuals He made well to be very sober and serious about what had happened to them—what they experienced. In the following incident Jesus wanted the man to focus back in on the Word of God, the Law.

A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." Matthew 8:2-4

Jesus desired that the man tell the priest what God had done for him. "See that you don't tell anyone," Jesus commanded. But Jesus wanted the man to go to church and talk about his healing with those who knew about God's commands, ways, and heart. The man was to testify to what God had done and learn what God required.

Jesus desired that the man get past the joy, the tears, the emotion of the

situation, and with the greatest of seriousness worship God. It is easy to move individuals to joy or tears, to motivate them to do what you want. Many a dictator or social club proves that point. But God seeks to move the heart first, and is therefore very careful about not making the gospel of His Son an “experience.”

This easy, wide road gospel presentation has occurred all over the world for years. *The Passion of the Christ* will excite these millions of travelers that have trudged behind Jesus for a long time. In short, the false church will use Mr. Gibson’s movie to the max for their own selfish purposes and to gain more influence and increase the number of salvation experiences.

Jesus on the other hand, always sought to make people sit down and think about following Him—to consider very seriously what it means to become a disciple of Christ. Note well that Jesus said we must “sit down and estimate the cost.”

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? Luke 14:28

The wide road church fully rejects such contemplation as legalism and something contrary to the freedom they falsely think they have in Christ.

It is true that Jesus did the spectacular. From healings to raising the dead, from water to wine Jesus certainly created a stir. But the cross always stood before Jesus, in His teaching and by the example of His life. The suffering, sober cross that He said all who follow Him must pick up. A painful cross in our lives is needed for us to overcome sin (1 Peter 4:1). The church will completely whitewash and water down this aspect of the cross. After all, will not most individuals hear that they just need to ask Jesus in

their heart to be saved? All such teaching cannot be found anywhere in Scripture. In other words, the wide gate church will use this movie as they have other things to titillate the flesh in order to motivate a person to accept Jesus. Again, Jesus was not like this. He tried to talk people out of becoming a believer—just as we do at the church where I worship.

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” Luke 9:57-58

Jesus didn’t get all excited about the person coming up to Him declaring, “I will follow you.” Like many who walk along the road with Jesus, there are moments when human commitment and zeal prompt an individual to say to God, “I will follow.” God, by the cross, will crucify this human aspect that seeks to belong, to join, to be a part of something, or to find purpose and fulfillment. The life of a true disciple of Jesus denies and crucifies self, and surrenders all. It is neither easy nor quick and anyone who remotely thinks they want to become a Christian had better sit down and estimate the cost. Sadly a whole army of false Christians will swarm in and use *The Passion of the Christ* to win yet more shallow believers. Christians will market and use this movie to its fullest extent. Not only for its money market value but because it will increase discussion about God, and the church will seize this as a rattlesnake does its victim, in order to increase membership.

FROM HERE

Where should we go from here and how should a person respond to the multitude of multi-media presentations of the life of Jesus? For the vast majority a proper response is simply impossible, for they do not know, nor understand, the offensive message of the cross. The words of Isaiah are true for the vast majority of ministries, churches, and Christians today.

We were with child, we writhed in pain, but we gave birth to wind. We have not brought salvation to the earth; we have not given birth to people of the world. Isaiah 26:18

How can those who have never really experienced the sufferings of the cross against sin, the despising of money, or the humility that comes from the shame the cross demands, share the good news with others? It takes years to be seasoned in such matters of God and not enough teachers of God today walk that narrow road to show others the way. Few have experienced the hating of one’s life, family, and all aspects of this world, and can share how all those things and more are good news.

What will happen is this. Many who have experienced and accepted a shallow Jesus will burst forth to seize the opportunity to make more shallow followers of Christ. Eventually even more followers in the name of Jesus will whine that counting the cost is salvation by works or legalism. They must be fully ignored and rebuked.

We must return to the offensive message of the cross—not the lip service and shallow acknowledgement that currently fills the church. The church must pick up a cross that offends people to the point they will not naturally come to church or become Christians. Wheth-

er a person is religious and rigorous in their obedience for God, or liberal, they will feel offended and seek to actively avoid the true Jesus. In other words, you will have to accept a Jesus you do not want, like, or have in mind. If you have not accepted this kind of Jesus and if this not the Jesus your church preaches, then you do not know the true message of the cross. In short, the church presents two kinds of Jesus today. One, a circumcision Jesus, which stands for something man can do, and the other, less preached, Jesus crucified. Circumcision represents something done outwardly by the hand of man, such as movies, activities, motivational speakers, the sensational, and the seemingly miraculous. The other is a Jesus of the true cross that offends all, and I do mean all. All will feel offended; all will seek to avoid; all will desire a different kind of church, a different kind of pastor, if they seek the true God.

Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. Galatians 5:11

No one naturally accepts the true Jesus but becomes a disciple by the movement of the Holy Spirit. When men take the methods and the spirit of this world to win souls for Christ they unwittingly make disciples for the Devil.

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