

# “The Passion”

## Religious Movies and Faith



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Before I get started, I know that my position as stated herein, will be controversial with many. I know that many of those who name themselves as fundamental, independent Baptists have seen this movie. Many, including pastors and missionaries will advocate seeing it. I also know that many have written against this movie and it is not hard to find various reasons stated for not viewing this film. However, I wish to approach this movie from a point of view that I have not seen expounded upon – the point of view of faith. My position is based solely upon the word of God. After careful searching of the sense the Lord gave me about this movie (It is a Catholic movie with a Catholic Jesus, based upon corrupt scripture and writings.), I found that there was actually a stronger reason than the fact that it is Catholic for not seeing it. In fact, what I found was a bit disturbing.

To begin, there are some questions I would like to pose for your consideration.

1. Why does the Scripture not describe the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ in graphic detail?
2. Why does the Scripture not describe the Lord Jesus Christ’s physical features in detail (or enough to positively identify Him were He to appear in front of us)?
3. Why did Abraham, who had seen the Lord Jesus, not make an image (drawing or painting) and tell his son Isaac

what the Lord looked like?

4. Why did John the Apostle not describe the physical features of the Lord Jesus in both the Gospel and in Revelation?
5. Is the Lord Jesus Christ Almighty God? Really?

To begin answering these questions, and see the perspective that I am coming from, I have included a number of passages from Scripture that are all linked by a particular commonality.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John, the challenge to Thomas is related to us. Apparently, Thomas had a common problem – he would not believe unless he saw in person – the Lord Jesus Christ and the peculiar identifying marks of His suffering.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and yet have believed. (*John 20:24-29*)

Please note in the above passage the rebuke the Lord gives Thomas when He told him “and be not faithless, but believing.” Thomas’ problem was one of failure to exercise the faith he had been given by the Lord. However, we should also note what the Lord said immediately following His rebuke of Thomas, and

Thomas' confession to the Lord: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed." It is this statement that should frame any desire we have to see any depiction of the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ outside the confines of the Scripture.

A failure to identify the Lord Jesus Christ and who He is, is nothing new on this earth. When the Lord Jesus was in the midst of His earthly ministry many people did not know who He was, and expressed it to the Lord quite plainly. One such incident happened at the feast of the dedication:

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one. (*John 10:22-30*)

There are many things I use this particular passage for: I frequently use it to demonstrate that salvation is eternal and cannot be lost because the Lord holds those who are born again in His hand and no one (including that person) can remove them from the Lord's hand. I also use this passage to demonstrate that only those who belong to the Lord can 'hear His voice' in the Scripture. However, this particular time I would like to focus on the question and challenge raised by the Jews:

*"Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell*

*us plainly."*

It is apparent that the Jews were looking right at the Lord Jesus, but could not discern that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. The reason why is given in the Lord's answer to them, and by extension – to us:

*"Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you."*

The terrible thing about this is that He had told them repeatedly who He was, and had proved it by His life and work – yet they could not believe that the man they were looking at was indeed the Son of God.

Why not? Is it strictly because they would not believe? To whom is it given to be able to identify and know the Lord Jesus Christ? Shouldn't everyone be able to identify the Lord Jesus Christ? Doesn't the Lord want to save everyone? Of a certainty the Lord does desire the repentance and salvation of everyone. However, he will not reveal who He is to just everyone, and he does not use worldly methods to provide that revelation.

One of the most important passages in Scripture about the foundation of the church also contains a very important spiritual truth about knowing who the Lord Jesus Christ is. In Matthew, chapter 16, the Lord challenges His disciples as to His identity:

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say *that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter

answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (*Matthew 16:13-17*)

The key in the above passage is the fact that Simon Peter knew who the Lord was because God the Father had revealed Jesus' identity to him by faith. This provides quite a contrast to the witness of the Jews in John, chapter 10, who could not at all discern who the Lord really was. To understand this dichotomy, it is necessary to note the exact wording of the Lord's reply to Simon: "for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Of all things, this is the practical description of the operation of the instrument called faith. It is essential to understand that nothing earthly, or worldly is at all able to reveal to anyone who the Lord Jesus Christ really is. No, that understanding and knowledge is strictly confined to the operation of faith.

The necessity of faith and its effectiveness in revealing spiritual truth is given in Hebrews, chapter 11. For the sake of brevity, only the first six verses of the chapter are shown as they particularly pertain to this discussion.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith *it is impossible to please him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that

diligently seek him. (*Hebrews 11:1-6*)

Even though none of us were there, if we use the faith the Lord imparts to us upon the hearing of His word, we will understand and know the truth of how this world, and the surrounding universe were made. Through the instrument and operation of faith, Abel knew that the proper means of honoring the Lord was by offering a blood sacrifice from the flock to show a picture of the sacrifice of the Lord that was to come in the then distant future. Cain, not having faith, offered a sacrifice that pleased him, instead of the Lord. Cain, by earthly reason, offered what he thought would honor the Lord, not discerning the reason for a specific blood sacrifice. Though we are not told much about Enoch, it is clear that faith, and its operation were essential to his ability to please the Lord. Finally, we are warned, if we do not use faith to know and understand the truth that God has put before us in His word, we cannot please Him at all. Rather, without faith and its operation, it is impossible to please God, no matter how good it looks to men.

In the following passage, we find that faith is essential, even for the believer, to discern when the Lord is telling us something through His word, and to know that it is indeed the Lord who is revealing things to us, and putting verses in our mind. After all, Satan knows the Scripture far better than we do, and has no problem using Scripture to deceive us into doing things for him, and to the detriment of the gospel.

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. (*Luke 24:13-16*)

It is interesting that these two are disciples that walked

with the Lord for quite some time prior to His crucifixion. Now, only three days later, they cannot identify Him when he walks up to them on the road to Emmaus. The Scripture plainly states that their eyes are holden, and they cannot not perceive who He is. Instead, they are somewhat incredulous at the question posed to them by the Lord Jesus about the reason for their dispirited attitude. In the verses following this passage, we are told that The Lord upbraided, or rebuked them for their hardness of heart.

It is this hardness of heart that prevented the Lord's disciples from discerning who He was at that moment. Thus, we can see the Lord is under no obligation to reveal Himself to those who will not believe. More than that however, what is also shown here is that the Lord's appearance was something that was not readily discerned, or remembered. I tend to find it somewhat strange that only three days after the Lord was crucified that His own disciples that walked with Him virtually every day for three years, could not identify Him.

What this tells me is that any depiction of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether drawing, painting, play, or cinema is going to be inaccurate – in the extreme. Moreover, it is not going to help people identify and come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Why?

Because of the following testimony of Nathanael.

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and

saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. (*John 1:43-49*)

We must ask the question: How did Nathanael know it was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God? The answer is simple, and has nothing to do with appearance or emotion. Rather, it has everything to do with the instrument of faith. Nathanael discerned the identity of the Lord Jesus by the instrument and operation of faith.

It is faith that will reveal the person of the Lord Jesus Christ – from the Scriptures. What Abraham told the rich man in hell is vital to understanding why so many “revivals” and evangelistic efforts based upon emotional appeal never work, nor do they seem to produce any long-lasting effects.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. (*Luke 16:27-31*)

The rich man’s logic is typical of what most everyone thinks – that a powerful emotional experience will shake up his brothers and they will repent and believe. However, the disapproval of that method by God (and thus Abraham) is readily apparent. Abraham’s reply is critical to those wishing to “shake someone up” and thus “get them to believe” the gospel – it won’t work. God may use certain events that He has brought about in a person’s life to move them to hear the



gospel. However, for us to manufacture emotional events to attempt to achieve a certain state in a person so that they will listen, is not given to us by the Lord. Only the Lord knows what will properly move a person towards Him, and what will not. We do not.

What the children of God are given to do is preach the word, live godly and holy in this present wicked world, and be obedient to the Lord. That is all. The Lord's children are ambassadors, not actors. It is the Lord that will use His word that we preach to move the hearts of people. As He has plainly stated in the Old Testament:

For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it. (*Isaiah 55:8-11*)

Thus, the power is in the word, not us. The only thing we can do is hinder the person from hearing the word if we do not present a right and proper witness. It is imperative that we remember that Moses and many (if not all) the prophets were long dead when Abraham told the rich man "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

There is a final thought from the word of God before addressing how doctrine is built, and the witness of three godly men; it is centered on the fifth question at the beginning of this (now lengthy) article: Is Jesus Christ Almighty God?

If He is, is it permissible to make any image at all of Him,

even when He has taken the form of man? After all, His earthly ministry of being born in the flesh was not the first time He had appeared to men, in the form of a man. Yet, nowhere in Scripture do I find any detailed description, or depiction of His appearance that would enable anyone to make any model, painting, drawing, or any other depiction of Him that would be at all accurate. Why not?

Perhaps the following passage explains and sums up the reason why.

And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; (*Exodus 20:1-5*)

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. (*I Corinthians 10:14*)

## **Building Doctrine**

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (*John 6:40*)

The above passage from the mouth of the Lord Himself is very express, "every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life:" Thus, it is clear that the early church erred in not making drawings and paintings of the Lord Jesus so that everyone would see "him" and believe.

Really?

No, not really. One can, and the Catholics do, misinterpret passages such as this (as in the case of foot-washing) to build doctrines that are not at all pleasing to God. In fact, much of the doctrine that exists in "Christianity" today, does not please God. Why? Because it is built upon some other foundation that was not laid through the operation of faith. The operation of faith confirms what is written in the word of God, and for those things that are not express, faith will reveal the Scriptural principles that direct us in the way we should go. Faith tells us that the Lord will not ever violate His word.

Thus, we can see that the passage of verse 40 is not literally, physically telling us that someone must "see" the Lord Jesus Christ, or His image (Does the Scripture really give us His description?) So they can be saved. No, far too many passages reveal that looking directly at the Lord Jesus in the flesh was not, and is not a guarantee that anyone would know who He is. This is also plainly illustrated in the same incident as verse 40.

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? (*John 6:41-42*)

Even though the Jews knew the history of Jesus and had seen the miracles done by Him, they could not discern who He really is. Thus, the crux of the whole issue of building doctrine comes down to this:

*The reason why the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ did not, and would not make any images of Him, or use anything to represent Him in any way – despite the fact that the Lord made the statement He did in verse 40, is because it would not guarantee that anyone would come to know Him personally. Instead, it would lead only to idolatry.*

## **Abraham's Example**

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. (*Genesis 18:1-5*)

It is noteworthy that Abraham never described the physical appearance of the Lord to his son Isaac. Neither did the Lord find it prudent to have Moses put any description of Himself in the first five books of the Scripture.

## **Isaiah's Example**

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. (*Isaiah 6:1*)

Neither did Isaiah ever describe the physical appearance of the Lord, though he undoubtedly saw Him.

## **John's Example**

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the

midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and *his* hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. (*Revelation 1:10-18*)

Again, John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, gives no description of the physical features of the Lord. Rather, he does describe the glory of the Lord and His humility – both of which can be spiritually discerned.

## **Satan's Deception**

This is what I fear: That in this late hour many are being deceived and led astray by emotion. Television and movies (in fact all visual stimulation) can be emotionally powerful. The individual that stated "A picture is worth a thousand words." never quite told the whole story. Indeed, if the picture is distorted, the story it will convey will be distorted as well. I am very familiar with the use of propaganda and the fact that photojournalists are frequently used by one side or the other to create emotional upheaval and sway persons to support one side or the other in a conflict. Why? Because pictures have the power to stimulate the emotions, and can be used to selectively illustrate a wrong. It is easy to isolate a subject and remove it from the proper context with photography. The same applies to cinema.

In the context of the above discussion, I would like to pose a

question for consideration:

*Outside of the fact that Jesus is God (and thus depicting Him is questionable), what Jesus is Mel Gibson depicting in this movie?*

The reason I pose this question is due to the following passage of Scripture:

Would to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*. (*II Corinthians 11:1-4*)

Why was the apostle Paul so concerned? In the following passage from the same chapter, he clarifies:

But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (*II Corinthians 11:12-15*)

We must remember that Satan is all too willing to imitate the Lord for the express purpose of leading people away from salvation. The most effective means of doing that is to get them to believe in a false Jesus – one that only enables you to do the “good works” necessary to get to heaven. Instead of

preaching the true Jesus that totally paid the price for our sin on the cross. When the Lord Jesus stated "It is finished." and gave up the ghost, that meant that I did not need to do any works at all for salvation (not that I could anyway) (By the way, did Mel leave that line in the movie? Did anyone even notice in the emotion of the moment?).

For those who are believers, it is essential to remember that Satan has counterfeited virtually everything about the Lord's work – including redefining faith to make it a work only. As believers we should also remember that Satan knows the Scripture far better than we do. (After all, he attempted to use the Lord's own words against Him.)

## **The Lord's Commandments**

As a child of the Lord, I am aware that the Lord has instructed me that if I love Him, I am to keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21) and he will manifest Himself to me. One of His commandments is found in II Corinthians concerning unclean things. In understanding this particular commandment, I looked up the word "clean" so I would know what "unclean" was (after all, if something is not clean, it must be unclean). What I found is that "unclean" meant that something is impure, tainted, unclear, or sullied. In other words, we could say that an unclear, or distorted gospel is unclean. Even more so, a deliberately distorted gospel is unclean.

In the Scripture, it is very express what the gospel is. Thus anything that does not adhere strictly to the Scripture's description of the gospel is an unclean gospel, an thus an unclean thing. It is very cut and dried, so to speak.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with

an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (*II Corinthians 6:14-18*)

Now, what is touching? If we sit and absorb a message into our minds, that is certainly more than touching, isn't it? How then, can the Lord be pleased with me if I disobey His direct commandment? Do you think the Lord should bless anyone for their disobedience?

## **Conclusion**

For me the Scripture is quite express and clear concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. I know who He is by faith. I knew who He is the night I was saved by Him and His work on the cross. How did I know? By the instrument and operation of faith. I know of His sufferings by faith, and I do not need a movie to "make it real" to me. I know that in the Scripture I am told that to walk by faith and not by sight, as it is written: "(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)" (*II Corinthians 5:7*)

I also know that I am to flee idolatry, not tolerate it. I am told by implication that I will not be strong enough to withstand the temptation of idolatry; that is why I must flee it, as it is again written: "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." (*I Corinthians 10:14*)

Finally, I am told not to glory in anything save the knowledge of the Lord. I am to be humble, and not proud of the knowledge and understanding of His word that He has given me, as it is also written:

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the



rich *man* glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD. (*Jeremiah 9:23-24*)

Thus, this movie, and religious films in general are injurious to faith and its operation. Because of these things I cannot see this movie, or any other movies or plays depicting the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it is plainly displeasing to the LORD.

*Finis*