

Venomous Gospel Preachers

by Ray Comfort

We should use Christian media, even with artistic license, as a springboard to share the truth of the Gospel and rejoice that Christ is being preached.

Scripture: Exodus 20:4, Mark 9:39, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 9:22, Philippians 1:18, Colossians 4:5, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Gospel Preaching", "Christian Witness"

Description

Ray Comfort addresses the controversies surrounding Hollywood movies like 'The Ten Commandments' and 'The Passion of the Christ,' emphasizing the importance of focusing on the truth of the Gospel amidst artistic liberties taken in these films. He challenges Christians to use these movies as opportunities to share the message of salvation rather than getting caught up in criticisms. Drawing from Paul's attitude in Philippians, he encourages rejoicing in the preaching of Christ even when accompanied by imperfections or controversies.

Transcript

You may be aware that Hollywood has produced a blockbuster movie centered on the things of God. You may also know that it was directed and produced by a Roman Catholic. While the film was based on Scripture, it contained a number of scenes that cannot be corroborated by the Bible. The movie I am referring to is the ever-popular Cecil B. DeMille's "The Ten Commandments," starring Charlton Heston. Mr. DeMille was a Roman Catholic, and he took artistic license by portraying Moses as having a romance while he was in Egypt, and actually disguising himself as a Hebrew slave to tread out bricks. I am sure that when the film was released, most Christians rejoiced that from the pit of an immoral industry, godless minds were suddenly reminded that there was a God and that He had a holy Law.

Nowadays, most Christians are rejoicing that amidst the filth of Hollywood, suddenly another movie has been produced that flies in the face of everything for which Hollywood stands. That movie is "The Passion of the Christ." But some are deeply concerned that it was also directed and produced by a Roman Catholic. It also contains artistic license. It has scenes that are from Catholic mysticism rather than from Scripture (the appearance of a raven at the cross, Judas being tormented by children, etc.). These are legitimate concerns. Our forefathers in the gospel shed their blood so that we could be free from the chains of Catholicism. But we must remember why their blood was shed. It was because they stood for the truth. So while it is legitimate to expose the error of Catholicism, it is even more important to stand up for the truth of the Gospel.

Another concern that some people have is that an onscreen depiction of Jesus is a form of "graven image," and therefore a transgression of the Second Commandment. Those who think that making an image of Jesus on film is breaking the Commandment should read it in full. We are not to make graven images of "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." That means that we shouldn't make film images (movie or still photos) of any person, animal, fish, flower, bird, mountain, etc. That doesn't make any sense...until we read the whole Commandment: "You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them" (Exodus 20:4-5). The Commandment forbids the creation of any image for the purpose of worship.

While we could argue about these issues, I would rather ask you an important question. If someone says, "I'm not a Christian, but I did see the film. Wow! What was all that brutality about?" are you going to reply, "I didn't go to the movie because it was directed and produced by a Roman Catholic. It's idolatrous and it contains things that cannot be corroborated by Scripture, and I therefore think it was evil"? I hope not. I should hope that you instead use the movie as a springboard to explain the way of salvation.

Think of Paul's attitude in Philippians chapter one. Some folks weren't just adding their own mystical thoughts to the message of the cross. They were downright vicious. They were hypocrites who preached Christ out of pretence, envy, strife and "contention." They were devious people who were so full of venom that they wanted to see Paul further suffer--hoping to "add affliction the [his] bonds." Yet what was Paul's attitude to such wickedness? He rejoiced that they preached Christ, despite the horrible baggage that came with the message. He said, "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice" (verse 18).

Do you remember what happened in Mark 9:39-40, when the disciples told Jesus that they had found a man who was casting out demons in His name. This man had a "ministry," but he wasn't with their group, so they took it upon themselves to rebuke him. But Jesus told them to leave him alone. This is because God doesn't need bouncers to help Him carry out His purposes.

If I had had a hand in the making of "The Passion of the Christ," I would have dropped all mysticism, and based it purely on Scripture. Also, (as in the epic movie "Ben Hur"--a wonderful movie) I wouldn't have shown the face of the Savior. But I didn't write, produce or direct it. So I tell myself that this isn't a movie about Jesus being a homosexual. It isn't about him having sexual relations with Mary Magdalene. It doesn't depict Him as merely a man--as did "Jesus Christ Superstar." Instead "The Passion of the Christ" is based on Scripture, with some artistic license. It begins with a powerful Scripture. The whole movie is full of Scripture...and it even ends with the resurrection. Christ is preached, and we should therefore rejoice and be thankful that millions have been graphically reminded of the cross of Calvary in a way they will never forget. That means we can either take advantage of an unprecedented opportunity to use it to speak further with them about their salvation, or we can whine. I choose the former, and I hope you do also.

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