

Thoughts by your pastor on the movie, “The Passion of the Christ.”

I took two of our teens, Ryan and Lauren, to see “The Passion of the Christ” this week. I’ve read several reviews, listened to others, and now have seen the movie. It has been my experience that much of our understanding of the Bible has come more from Hollywood’s big screen versions than actual Bible knowledge. How many of us realize that the Bible makes no mention of animals hovering over the baby Jesus in the manger? There is nothing wrong with filling in the gaps as screenwriters attempt to recreate a powerful story. But Christians need to be biblically literate enough to know the difference between biblical fact and Hollywood drama. Sitting next to Ryan I whispered several times, “That part is not in the Bible.”

Given what we know about Roman torture and execution, the bloody portrayal of Jesus’ suffering may be accurate. But we also know that director, Mel Gibson, has a history of making righteous revenge movies laced with violence. My advice is to read the crucifixion stories in Matthew 27, Luke 23, Mark 15, and John 19 before seeing the movie. It can also be helpful to read what parts of Jesus’ life and teaching were emphasized at particular points in history. The early Christians did not lift up Jesus’ passion, but his resurrection. The passion of Jesus did not receive much widespread attention until the middle ages.

I do recommend watching the movie although care needs to be given to children under the age of 15. It would be a good idea to view this movie on Good Friday as a way to get in touch with Jesus’ final journey to the cross. You might want to check out the study guide for this film on our web site at www.stjohneagle.org.

Personally, there were powerful moments of emotion for me and times I needed to close my eyes. I was struck by the change in people who encountered him and whose hearts were already open to the truth of love. Simon of Cyrene, who carried the cross, was one example. But no one should feel guilty if they choose not to see this movie. The litmus test to true faith I trust is the one Jesus gave us, “Others will know you are my disciples if you love one another.”