

## Film Review: Exodus: God's and Kings

Good morning Beacon, today's thought for the month is one for any of you film fans out there. It's a film review of one of the recent Bible themed movies to hit the big screen. Hollywood's latest take on a well-known Bible story namely, the life of Moses. You may note that several Christian films have been made recently. There's been the Noah film, the Bible series, 'Son of God' as well as 'Heaven is for real'. Some have said 2014 was the year of the Bible. So how does this one fair? It's been called Exodus: God's and Kings and was released on Boxing Day last year. In case you've not heard about it I've got one of the trailers to play to you now.

When I first saw this trailer I was certainly impressed and was keen to see it. In the end I went with the family along with the White family. The film is directed by Ridley Scott who's famous for films like Gladiator, American Gangster and Blade Runner. It features Christian Bale as Moses and Joel Edgerton as Ramses. It's fair to say I had high hopes for this film as I took my seat in the Odeon cinema. But unfortunately I was deeply disappointed. The trailer does a good job of convincing you that the Bible text has been honoured and accurately portrayed. But this is sadly not the case. Ridley Scott's reinterpretation of Exodus does more harm than good and I believe caused the downfall of this movie. So be prepared guys for a good film slating. But before I launch into that I will give it some credit and say what I thought was good. The scenery and setting as you saw in the trailer was incredible. Ancient Egypt is displayed in its former glory, the great pyramids and statues lining the streets, which all makes for quite a spectacle. You could tell that millions were invested in making it look believable. The graphics used in showing the plagues was also impressive. A negative though was their naturalistic explanations for many of them. Instead of the famous staff of Aaron and Moses striking the water and miraculously turning it to blood, we get these giant kamikaze crocodiles that decided to start eating people and then themselves, hence the blood. The scale of things in the movie was a positive point, like showing the number of Israelites as they were freed from Egypt. It's not just a few hundred shown but a great multitude. And this is certainly accurate as the Bible indicates it was in excess of one million, some have said up to 2.5 million Israelite slaves were freed that day.

So why was I disappointed with the film? Well how long do I have here! Oh yea sorry not long. There were two main flaws in relation to the main characters and the story. In terms of the story important details were often left out or blatantly ignored. In the film important characters like Aaron, Moses' brother hardly featured in the film. And yet from the Bible he was Moses's key spokesman who often instigated the miracles in Egypt. Another issue was Moses being portrayed as a freedom fighter in the film, attempting to free the slaves by force. His mind is almost set on doing things his way and ignoring the will of God. So you see him training up the slaves to fight against the Egyptians and doing raids against them. I got the impression Ridley Scott wanted to relive the Gladiator days, but this really didn't work and was not appropriate for the Exodus story.

The next major issue was the director's interpretation of the main characters, particularly Moses and God. Yea that's right, nothing too big. Moses from the Bible was a man who was humble and had great patience for the Israelites and willingly followed what God had planned. The character we get from the film on the other hand was rebellious, impatient and constantly questioning God. At one point he says to God referring to the initial plagues, "Is it meant to humble me, because it will not!" So one of the most humble guys in history yells at God, I will not be humbled! In most of the movie Moses doesn't actually believe in who God is. The man with a speech impediment in the Bible, who has confidence issues but then went onto become a great leader is not the same person in this film. In fact I'm not sure if Christian Bale really looked carefully at the Bible at all when he played the role.

Okay the next fault was the character of God, and boy was this a big let-down. You first meet God at the burning bush when Moses heads up the mountain. I expected a dramatic scene, God's presence and power,

his holiness attempting to be depicted on the big screen. What we got instead was God played by a little boy who looked about 10 years old, dressed like a Buddhist monk with an obsession for drinking cups of tea. It all appears a bit odd, especially with Moses trapped in mud right up to his neck in this scene. This whole encounter with God also takes place immediately after Moses is hit on the head with a rock giving the idea that the whole conversation could be one big delusion. In fact Moses' wife tries to convince him that he must have imagined seeing God because he hit his head. To say I was disappointed with this interpretation is an understatement. It only reflects the atheist viewpoint that God is just a delusion. But what's more annoying is the kid who plays God. He appeared cocky and irritating. I thought to myself it's no wonder Moses keeps getting angry with him. There was no great introduction of who God is; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This was some random kid, who was keen to show off his power and brag about it. There was no real connection between God and Moses, no relationship at all. When Moses finally submits to God it appears more of a reluctant following by the end. The love and respect that Moses has for God in the Bible appears lost in translation. Again I could go on but I think you get the picture of what this film does. Essentially it strips away all that is at the heart of Exodus and leaves it not really knowing what it is or which audience it was targeting. So if you're thinking of seeing it, I'd say don't bother, you're not missing much. I wasn't surprised to find out that despite all the millions spent on it, it hasn't done well at the box office and some have regarded it as a very expensive flop. If only they had stuck to the text I do not believe this would have been the case, although this should not be the motivation for the film. I think it's worrying that there will be families and kids that will watch it believing that this is what the Bible says. I would only hope that they would be prompted to check out for themselves the real story of Exodus and discover who God really is and this would in turn lead to a relationship with him through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

*Review by Dan Price*