

The Lakeview Lamp

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”-Psalm 119:105

March 7, 2004

Are You Honking or Helping?

Bob Dickey

Her automobile had stalled at the busy intersection, and she was having great difficulty starting the engine again. As the traffic began to back up, the irate gentleman (?) behind her began to express his impatience by blowing on his horn every few seconds. Eventually, the lady, worn out by his thoughtlessness, left her car and walked back to speak to the man who was honking so insistently. “Say, I’m having trouble restarting my car, sir,” she said politely. “But if you’ll go try to start it for me, I’ll stay back here and honk your horn for you.”

It must be said that a lot of people in some local churches do a lot more honking than helping. They often act just like the honker in the story above. They are content to talk, criticize, object, and let everyone know just how unhappy they are about how things are going. They know just how everything ought to be done. But it never seems to occur to them that they could stop and help. All many want to do is just complain about what is wrong. Are you helping or honking?

While “honking” is definitely needed and commanded at times to warn of danger (Ezek 33:1-6), we must first make sure that is the reason for our honking, and then set out to help make things as they need to be. Our honking must lead to helping.

“Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men.”—Psalm 66:5

Theater Theology

Steve Klein

Hollywood is about to crank out another movie about Jesus. Entitled “The Passion” and produced, written, and directed by Mel Gibson, the movie focuses on the last twelve hours of Jesus’ life, up through His crucifixion. This film follows a long line of other productions about Jesus that have made millions for actors and producers and spawned no end of controversy. Some of these efforts have been downright blasphemous, portraying Christ as not much more than a mere man whose most serious temptations involve the romantic designs of female disciples. “The Last Temptation of Christ” and “Jesus Christ Superstar” both fit this category. Other productions have been more noble, some even produced with the goal of being strictly true to the Biblical text. A film produced a few years ago and simply entitled “Jesus” uses as it’s dialogue the word for word text from the gospel of Luke, and a more recent production of “The Gospel of John” sticks strictly to the words of that gospel. Mel Gibson claims that he also tried to follow the Bible story closely, and even has his actors speaking Latin and Aramaic throughout the film in an effort to be authentic (there are plans for English subtitles).

Any theatrical production of the life of Jesus is going to have inherent problems. The clothing, hair length, and physique of the actor playing Jesus are all subject to the imagination of the filmmaker, because precious little is said about these things in Scripture. But beyond this, the way the scenes are acted will often convey messages not found in the text of Scripture (even IF the dialogue itself is 100% true to Scripture).

The reality is that any theatrical production about any historical figure will carry the biases and beliefs of its writer, producer, and director. It will convey THEIR view of the character. Obviously, caution should be exercised. Christians should ask themselves, “What can the likes of Mel Gibson or Andrew Lloyd Weber teach me about Jesus?” Gibson, for instance, is a Catholic. Would we be interested in attending a Bible study conducted by these men? And if we did so, surely we would not accept everything presented at face value; but we would “examine the Scriptures” to see if “these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

It occurs to me that if God had thought that the best way to tell the gospel story was by making a movie, He would have made one. But God sent

forth His Son at the perfect point in human history – in “the fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4). He inspired men to tell the story of His Son in words and to record the words in a Book (2 Timothy 3:16). One of those inspired writers assures us that “when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3:4).

Are we saying that visuals (including moving pictures) have no place as aids teaching the gospel? Not at all. What we are saying is that we must first consider the source. Second, we must compare what is presented with Scripture. And third, we must be careful not to confuse the media with the message – a picture may sometimes be worth a thousand words, but no picture can take the place of even one inspired word!

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"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"
(Psalm 118:24).