

BENNY HINN



CLARION CALL MARKETING

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

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Published by:
Clarion Call Marketing, Inc.
Dallas, TX

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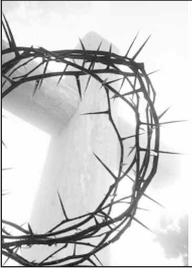
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ISBN: 1-59574-000-7

www.BennyHinn.org

Printed in the United States of America.

08 07 06 05 04 1 2 3 4 5 6



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Introduction: A *Special* Invitation

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suff'ring and shame;
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down.
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
and exchange it some day for a crown.

—GEORGE BENNARD¹

T

HAT MOVIE CHANGED MY LIFE!”

People everywhere seemed to say the same thing after seeing Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ*. The scenes are unforgettable. Jesus is beaten, bloody, dirty, almost beyond recognition, with matted hair and ripped garments. He literally gasps and sobs in Gethsemane, doing battle with Satan. When Judas kisses Him, the look in the eyes of Jesus cannot be described with words as He says, “Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” After Peter's third and final denial, no one can put into words the face of the Savior as He glances toward His defeated disciple, revealing a heart filled with such deep disappointment and utter sadness, so much so that Peter breaks down in wracked sobs of self-hatred.

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It's a motion picture that doesn't allow you to be a spectator. It engulfs you completely. Everywhere, the response has been the same:

"No one clapped. People sat sobbing. It's like you didn't know what to do, but you knew your life would never be the same."

"Total strangers were walking up to each other, hugging, praying together. It was the most remarkable thing I've seen in a theater."

"I went to the movie only to see what all the controversy was about. I still don't know exactly what I believe, but I do know that something touched me very deeply while I watched the screen, and I feel compelled to begin asking questions I never wanted to ask before."

To his credit, Mel Gibson did what nearly everyone said couldn't be done. Despite breaking many of Hollywood's cherished traditions and the sometimes-gleeful doomsday predictions of virtually every film-marketing expert around the globe, this blockbuster movie will undoubtedly be viewed historically as a major watershed event. Not only has it become one of the biggest theatrical moneymakers of all time, by any standard, it has also touched a worldwide nerve across all cultural boundaries, causing intense and outspoken thoughts by virtually everyone who viewed its brutal torture scenes. It continues to trigger these forceful feelings around the world, from world leaders to the next-door neighbors and workplace people with whom you talk every day. And if the impact has not been monstrous enough, the movie will certainly become a must-see cinematic classic, year after year, especially during the Easter season.

Dr. Billy Graham spoke point-blank: "Every time I preach or speak about the Cross, the things I saw on the screen will be on my heart and mind."

Tim LaHaye, coauthor with Jerry Jenkins of the staggeringly successful Left Behind book series, said: “Everyone should see this movie. It could be Hollywood’s finest achievement to date.”

Pat Boone, legendary recording artist, called the movie “a monumental accomplishment. It continues to impact me in ways I couldn’t have imagined.”

Focus on the Family’s Dr. James Dobson agreed: “It is deeply moving, powerful, and disturbing, a film that must be seen. The graphic scenes of the scourging of Jesus are emotionally wrenching.”

During decades to come, I believe people looking back at 2004 will long remember this stunning motion picture, not just for its startling realism and heinous depictions of mankind’s hatred and brutality toward the Son of God, but for the fact that people all over the world, as a result of seeing and experiencing *The Passion*, realized how little they knew about what they saw on the big screen.

I went to a screening of the motion picture where most of the audience, if not all, were believers. It was moving beyond words, so stirring. Like me, most people there in the theater were simply overwhelmed at the end.

Mel Gibson, the man who invested his own \$30 million and years of his time to make this motion picture, doing what he openly says was “what the Holy Spirit called me to do,” has shared candidly: “This is a story about love, hope, faith, and forgiveness. Jesus died for all mankind, suffered for all of us. It’s time to get back to that basic message.”

Up to the point of the movie’s release, the story of Christ’s crucifixion

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had perhaps become so familiar to both believers and nonbelievers that it had sometimes lost its ability to outrage, grieve, or even stir any great emotion. In *The Passion of the Christ*, Mel Gibson presented history's pivotal moment in a heartrending way that absolutely forced viewers to witness every smashing blow of the whip, every slow-motion second of the savage thrust of the spear into Jesus's side, and every nuance of the supernatural love poured out among mankind throughout the crucifixion. The viewer cannot help but relive history's most horrific injustice, as well as the unvarnished triumph of God's plan to the sovereignty of God, expressed two centuries ago through the Holy Spirit-inspired words of John's gospel: "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (1:29).

IMPASSIONED QUESTIONS

Let me quickly hasten to say that this book isn't about the movie. Granted, it's about the Christ of that passion, yet that is just the beginning. The movie takes us to the Cross and Resurrection, then takes us to the moment when Jesus went to heaven to sit at the right hand of Father God. However, quite on purpose, viewers are left with an eternity-sized volume of questions, as it was intended.

The movie was produced, masterfully, with a clear intent to compel people afterward to seek answers to the facts of the Savior's death that have been ignored or viewed previously through jaundiced eyes. Most people who have seen the turbulent scenes in the movie seemed unsure how to respond to such emotion-wrought images of the final twelve hours of the Son of Man. Questions remain, as they should, from such a vivid portrayal of history's most important moments.

In a telling, nationally telecast interview, a well-known broadcaster asked Mel Gibson point-blank: "How do you know all of that happened?"

A *Special* INVITATION

Likewise, another well-known broadcaster, admittedly not a believer, said the first thing he wanted to do after seeing the motion picture was to get out a Bible and start reading the Gospels to find out what really took place during that time leading up to Christ's death, and what it all is supposed to mean.

My good friend, pastor, and author of *Unleashing Your God-Given Dreams*, Steve Munsey, spoke very candidly about his response:

I went into the movie with certain expectations. I'm third generation Christian. My father was a minister. My family is filled with ministers. I've been a minister most of my life. I'll admit, no matter how hard you try, it's easy to get so familiar and perhaps even jaded about the whole subject of Jesus dying on the cross. Sure, we talk about His death, burial, and resurrection. We rejoice at Easter with songs and drama. I've written and produced major Passion plays, so I've done more research and preparation than many people. But nothing prepared me for *The Passion of the Christ*. Nothing! I sat for a long time, along with many others, in the screening room, and I realized that I knew nothing, compared to what I had just seen, about the depth of love Jesus revealed when He went to Calvary. It literally changed my life, for I knew that I needed to plunge into the Word to discover, for the first time in a sense, the true meaning of God's love.

Questions! So many people who have seen the movie since its initial screenings and release continue to talk about the uncertainties and questions stirred as they saw the scenes of the Son of Man's brutal death.

Even the director of the movie made it clear that viewers would not see a joyful, Easter-morning triumph replete with feel-good reunions

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shared with His followers. The emphasis is on the Savior's bloody, painful passion, not His resurrection victory.

I've written this book specifically to respond to so many questions about Jesus Christ that men, women, and children around the globe are struggling to answer, now more than ever. If anything, the increased shaking of the world's financial, political, and territorial foundations are forcing even more people to look to the Cross for solutions. The timing couldn't be better.

I understand the volume of questions, because I've spent a lifetime seeking the same answers. And the Cross is simply not taught much in today's churches. The response of inquiries from my book *The Blood* helped me understand to an even greater extent how hungry people really are to understand more about this momentous historical, spiritual, celebrated, and despised event that is often simply not discussed or taught.

HISTORY'S TURNING POINT

No matter how people get to the place of seeking deeper answers about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they have arrived at the place of all answers, and the Answer for everything in history, before and afterward, points toward Calvary's Cross. History is, after all, HIS-story. Mankind, almost universally, uses the Gregorian (and sometimes the Julian) calendar which separates time by BC (Before Christ) and AD (an abbreviation for the Latin term *Anno Domini*, which translates "the year of the Lord," referring to the approximate birth year of Jesus Christ).

Even politically correct attempts to translate BC to BCE (Before the Common Era) and AD to CE (Common Era) have not been able to diminish the fact that the Savior stands boldly as the center point for all mankind.

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Certainly, the Bible points to the centrality of Christ Jesus. People sometimes talk about the differences in the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. But Christianity teaches that the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. God may have revealed Himself to us in progressive stages, but He is eternal and unchangeable. If God is a triune God, He was always a triune God.

Some people seem to misapprehend the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, as if there is some major difference between the two. Christ Jesus, however, said that He came to fulfill the law, not to abolish it.

The Bible doesn't begin with the New Testament. It is an integrated document from Genesis through Revelation. Virtually every page of the Old Testament points to the New. Old Testament prophecies inform the New Testament, and the New Testament validates the Old.

"In the beginning was the Word," the Gospel of John begins, referring to Jesus as the Word, *"and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

Having established Christ's exalted place in all eternity, John—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—continued

to pen these powerful truths: *"The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men."*

But why would Jesus do what He did? What caused Him to leave heaven's splendor to be born a baby in Bethlehem? What could have possibly motivated Him to endure a life of temptation and peril as He sought to call, disciple, and prepare a handful of followers who would eventually be sent out to shake the world's traditions to the core and bring hope and healing to the masses? Why would He willingly go

*History is,
after all,
HIS-story.*

through the shame and vile, inhuman treatment at the hands of people who didn't (or couldn't) grasp the historic event in which they were participating? What is the true story behind His gruesome death? What happened afterward that has eternal consequences for you and me?

*Gaze toward the
Christ of Calvary, for
He is the central
point of all truth,
wisdom, and
knowledge.*

As you look for answers, dear reader, gaze toward the Christ of Calvary, for He is the central point of all truth, wisdom, and knowledge. It is that truth that has changed the world's hardest men and women into God's most effective witnesses. It is that truth that has played an important role in the panorama of people who have yearned to be free from totalitarianism and human bondage.

It has changed the course of history, kings, and generals.

Everything before and after points to what the Savior actually did on the cross. Because of His sacrifice, and so much more, we have the Answer to the most pressing, troubling, life-changing questions we can ever ask.

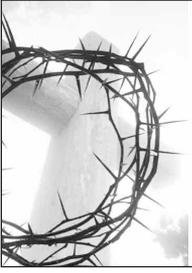
THE PORTRAIT

It is in the pages of both Testaments of the Bible that we can discover the true meaning of Christ's passion on Golgotha's mount. Its thorn-crowned message shines through the centuries, from the prophecies that were given to mankind centuries before Jesus appeared. The message of the Cross arrives vividly through everything related to the blood covenants with Abraham and the patriarchs, through the symbolism of the tabernacle and temple. For those who are willing to see,

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the message of Calvary comes through loud and clear from each feast, especially the first, the Passover, which celebrates the Exodus of the enslaved children of Israel from bondage and death. The message of John 3:16—“*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*”—is a blood-red cord that stretches from the most ancient writings of the Torah (Tanakh, or Hebrew Book of the Law), through the psalmist’s poetry, certainly through each of the Old Testament’s prophetic books, and confirmed through every book of the New Testament.

Sometimes people, especially those who have been taught to think that the Bible is a simple collection of poetic and historic writings, are amazed at how the Word is a life-changing, God-breathed book which has foretold and graphically symbolized Jesus Christ as the central figure, even through the centuries-old pages of the beloved Torah. It is there, beginning in Genesis (Bereishith), that we begin our search.



1 The CHRIST *of* Prophecy

I hear the Savior say,
“Thy strength indeed is small;
Child of weakness, watch and pray;
Find in Me thine all in all.”

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

—ELVINA M. HALL, “Jesus Paid It All”

*T*HE OLD TESTAMENT (the part of the Bible written before Jesus’s birth) was given by the Holy Spirit to trusted writers and was completed approximately 450 years before Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem. This is especially exciting for Bible scholars as they understand how more than three hundred prophecies, many in graphic detail, were meticulously predicted throughout the Old Testament, then astonishingly fulfilled one by one through the birth, life, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension of only one person in all of history, Jesus Christ. A large number of prophecies were made in astonishing detail by many Holy Spirit–inspired writers of these books.

In a mirror of C. S. Lewis’s experience, Josh McDowell, a brilliant scholar and skeptic, set out to disprove the authenticity of Christianity,

once and for all. Confronted with a growing mountain of evidence, he eventually became a born again Christian. (The same Josh McDowell now cites the chances of one person fulfilling a mere eight of these messianic prophecies as one in 100,000,000,000,000,000. He writes of these amazing odds:

For one person to fulfill 48 of these prophecies, the number becomes staggering—1 chance in 10 to the 157th power (1 with 157 zeros after it). Add to that the 250 other prophecies and it becomes impossible for any other person except Jesus to ever fit that particular sequence of time and events.¹

PROPHECIES AND FULFILLMENTS

There are numerous scholarly books, most notably Josh McDowell's works and Herbert Lockyer's incredible volume *All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible*,² that detail the mind-boggling predictions of the Old Testament which point with absolute certainty to Jesus being the Messiah who gave His life on the cross. Another wonderful resource is the Thompson Chain-Reference Bible. Especially helpful is the concise, chronological arrangement of prophecies and their fulfillments.³ While I won't take time to detail these prophecies to the extent McDowell or Lockyer has done on a major scale, here are several which show the amazing story of the ages.

The Messiah would rise from Abraham's lineage. This was outlined in Genesis 18:18 (written approximately fourteen hundred years before Christ's birth): "*Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?*"

This is also a matter of historic certainty, as described in Acts 3:25: "*Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made*