

The Blood of Jesus Christ
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The recent release of the film "The Passion of the Christ" has unleashed a torrential flood of opinion, speculation and rhetoric. Living in Happy Valley - Goose Bay means I will not have opportunity to view this film for quite some time. Most likely I will be able to rent it before it comes the big screen here. Since this is the case, I have relegated myself to reading the various reviews of the film for the time being.

I have found that there is no shortage of thought and opinion on this particular film. Recently I read a review written by Brian D. Johnson of Maclean's magazine that stated: "I'm not sure Jews ought to feel offended by The Passion, but Christians should. Anyone stepping into this movie from another planet, knowing nothing about Christianity, would assume it's a barbaric cult of blood sacrifice."¹ He wrote this comment regarding the visually graphic images of blood, torture and death depicted by the director, Mel Gibson, of the crucifixion of Christ.

I will not pass judgement or opinion of the movie as I have not seen it. However, I wish to speak to the comment made by Mr. Johnson about Christianity assumed to be a barbaric cult of blood sacrifice by anyone not familiar with the Christian doctrine. This is not the first time that statements similar to this have been made concerning the Christian faith. In fact early Christians were depicted as, and accused of, being a cult of blood and cannibalism due to its focus on the death and blood of Jesus Christ and the emblems of the communion practice.² In communion, the bread that is eaten symbolizes the body of Christ and the wine that is drank, symbolizes His blood.

However, to ignore the blood of Christ is to ignore the power of His sacrifice and the work that He completed by His crucifixion and subsequent resurrection. According to the Bible - God's inspired and written word - sin demands a blood sacrifice. We are reminded in the scriptures that the wages of sin is death³ and that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin.⁴

In the Old Testament God laid out the laws of fellowship with Him and what was required for the forgiveness of sin. The Tabernacle designed by Him was a bloody place. It's altar flowed with blood. The smoke from the burning flesh of the sacrifices rose upward day and night. The stench and sight of God's earthly sanctuary must have been appalling. However, God in His wisdom and holiness demanded such sacrifice. Who are we to question His authority?⁵

¹ "The Power and the Gory", Brian D. Johnson, TV & Film Review, Macleans.ca, March 2004

² Christian History - check your books when you get home for credit line

³ Romans 6:23

⁴ Hebrews 9:22 (NLT)

⁵ Isaiah 45:11

In Jesus, God elected to end the Mosaic sacrificial system He instituted at Mount Sinai. He decreed that the perfect life and the death of His only begotten Son would be sufficient as a final sacrifice for all the sins of the world - past, present and future.⁶ This death He elected for Christ was death on a tree, to be crucified.⁷ Crucifixion was cruel and humiliating; reserved for the most vile and despicable criminal. To be crucified, a prisoner was stripped naked and fashioned to a cross where he died a painful, slow, and suffocating death.

To understand the extent of Christ's sufferings and God's reasons to subjecting His only begotten Son to such torture, we need to read Isaiah 53. In this portion of scripture we read about the punishments Christ would receive and what they would purchase for us. For us many of us today we cannot begin to comprehend or fathom what this violence would do to a person. However, with modern technology and understanding we are able to visually depict what is described in the Bible as the crucifixion of Christ. Now that we are able to be brought face to face with the reality of what it meant to be crucified, we can better understand that the sacrificial death and punishment of our sins was not just some passing event - no big deal. Rather, it was painful, it was violent, it was bloody, it was humiliating and it was appalling.

No doubt some of the scenes of the film may have exercised literary license, but it is safe to say and understand that the beating and crucifixion of Christ was a bloody affair. Let us not get lost in the whirlwind of opinion, theological analysis, argument and counter argument of the movie. Instead, should you decide to watch the film, determine in your heart to identify with Christ and appreciate the work He completed in His Passion. It was all our sin that nailed Him to the cross - beaten, naked and forsaken by His Father. He took our death and paid the price demanded of sin, once and for all humanity. His blood sacrifice was the final atonement of sin as decreed by God. Accept this priceless gift and walk away made free and complete in and by Him. His death has been our restoration and redemption.⁸ Approach God in confidence and humility for the sacrifice of His dear Son. He paid a lot to restore us to Him - He gave everything for us. Let us afford Him the respect that such a gift demands.

⁶ Hebrews 7:11-28

⁷ John 3:14; 8:28

⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 8:3; 1 Peter 2:24