

Beyond the Blood: The Real Meaning of The Passion of the Christ
By J.B. Hixson

It was about this time five years ago that Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* generated widespread reaction from both secular and Christian critics. For the most part the reviews were very positive—appropriately so. Secular reviewers, while not always appreciative of Gibson's pro-Catholic, pro-Christian perspective, at least appreciated the cinematographic power of the film. Christian reviewers, especially evangelical Christians, praised the film for its accurate portrayal of the suffering Jesus Christ endured. The response of the general public was overwhelmingly positive. Attendance and revenue records were set. Mel Gibson is to be commended for producing a significant, impactful motion picture that solicited an emotional response from viewers.

Without question, the most talked about feature of the film is its graphic nature. The movie is two hours of relentless, wanton brutality with almost nonstop bloodshed, anguish and torture. Only the most unfeeling individual could watch the film and *not* have an emotional response. The blood of Christ is particularly prominent throughout the film. From the pool of blood that covered the ground following His flogging...to the droplet of blood that dripped down over his eyes after He was crowned with thorns...to the flow of blood that spewed from His side on the cross...His blood is everywhere.

What is the significance of Christ's blood? The *Passion* movie does not answer this question clearly. But the Bible—Gibson's inspiration for the film—does. God's Word indicates that there can be no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22). Jesus' death was more than just the senseless and cruel murder of an innocent man at the hands of a misguided Jewish mob. Jesus' death was God's means of providing redemption for all of mankind! By His death, Jesus paid the penalty for the sins of mankind once and for all. By His resurrection, He defeated death and earned the right to provide eternal salvation to anyone who will receive it freely.

What distinguishes Christianity from every other religion known to man is that Christianity is the only religion that adequately solves mankind's sin problem. The reality of evil in the heart of man scarcely needs to be asserted. Even a casual

glance at the daily news makes this self-evident. Every human being is born with an evil nature that results in a proclivity for sin. The problem is mankind can never enter heaven in such a sinful condition. Furthermore, no amount of self-effort can attain the kind of perfect righteousness that heaven demands. So in the greatest demonstration of true love, God sent His Son, born of a virgin, to die as a substitute for fallen mankind at Calvary.

Today, all who trust Jesus Christ, the Son of God to give them the free gift of eternal life are declared—at the moment they place their faith in Him—totally and completely righteous. Personal salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone...nothing more...nothing less. Thus, the message of Gibson's movie, while graphic in nature, is really a message of hope. Because Jesus suffered and bled and died on our behalf, we can have our sins forgiven and receive the free gift of eternal life. Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ for your personal salvation?

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