

Epic Series Sets New Standard

Using new technologies, *The Bible* stands apart from previous Scripture-based portrayals in production quantity *and* quality

You know the word *epic* has been watered down and overused when it enters the vernacular of the average elementary school student. But *The Bible* might be the TV event to reclaim that word's original meaning: "extending beyond the usual or ordinary, especially in size or scope."

Starting on March 3, the History Channel will air the series two hours at a time over five weeks that fittingly culminate on Easter Sunday (March 31). As far as quantity is concerned, there has never been a lengthier project on this subject matter to hit the airwaves. *Moses the Lawgiver* had a running time of 360 minutes over six episodes in 1974. *Jesus of Nazareth*, which aired on NBC in 1977, was also 360 minutes long.

The only series to match Mark Burnett and Roma Downey's production might be the TNT *Bible Collection* that featured a dozen 180-minute films, including dramatic portrayals of Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon and Paul. But that series aired over a four-year stretch in the '90s and barely touched the New Testament.

The Bible is divided into roughly two parts—the first half covering the Old Testament (Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David) and the second half covering the New Testament (the life of Christ, Acts and Revelation).

But it's more than quantity that sets *The Bible* apart from other biblically themed television specials. With access to the latest computer-generated imagery technology and a Hollywood-level budget (the amount of which has not yet been disclosed), Burnett and Downey have applied a level of production quality lacking in previous attempts.

“The production is absolutely captivating,” evangelist Luis Palau says. “This will easily do for the History Channel what *Roots* did for ABC in 1977.”

Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Orange County, Calif., is another influential church leader enthusiastically endorsing the broadcast—and seeing its breadth through a historical lens. “I’ve probably seen most, if not all, of the films about the Bible produced in the past 50 years,” Warren says. “This one stands alone, in a class by itself, as the best I’ve ever seen. This series draws you into the story from the start. This is living history at its best.”