

'Holy Spirit' Director Darren Wilson on Why You Should Go See Exodus

I saw the movie *Exodus: Gods and Kings* this weekend, and if nothing else, it certainly made me think. In fact, I spent the entire time driving home in prayer, because the film, if nothing else, will challenge you.

First thing's first, in my opinion, you should definitely see this movie in the theater. Why? Because it's one of the most massive films I've seen in a good, long while. The scale of the thing is simply enormous, and one of the things I enjoyed about it was finally being able to see that time period and this important biblical event played out in all of its 140 million-dollar budget glory.

Of course, the thing most Christians want to know going into this is probably, how did they change the story, and how did they portray God and Moses? Well, they certainly changed the story a bit, and they definitely messed up the portrayal of God and Moses.

I find it interesting how the directors of these big-budget biblical films are, for the most part, atheists. Knowing creative people, I am certain they are not low on ideas for films to make, so why decide to make a film about a Bible story at all, if you don't believe the Bible is anything but a series of ancient writings and hocus pocus? If pressed, I think they might say that there was something inherent in the story, as a human story, that appealed to them.

This is made clear early on in *Exodus*, when Christian Bale's Moses tells his wife and son that, basically, the only thing you should really believe in is yourself. Having taught creativity for over a decade, I can say with certainty that

all artists reveal their true beliefs in their work, no matter how much they may try to remain neutral. In a film like *Exodus*, which is essentially about God and men, it's only natural that director Ridley Scott's true beliefs about God will be made apparent.

As was the case with *Noah*, I don't have much of a problem with some of the creative licenses Scott took with the story itself. OK, the plagues happen in rapid succession, most have a seemingly natural explanation, and Moses only talks to Pharaoh twice in all that time. It's not how the Bible tells it, but I get that the story needs to keep moving, and in the end, it's still very apparent that this is all God's doing.

Hey Ridley, you want to play up the Moses/Ramses relationship? You want to make Ramses more of a short-sighted weakling than a hard-hearted tyrant? You want to ignore the fact that Moses was less the rebel warrior and much more the cowardly lion? All fine. You're adapting a story, and things have to change. Again, as a screenwriter and a filmmaker, I get it. The problem with this film is ultimately the same problem *Noah* had: The people making this film don't know who God really is, and therefore God looks like the reason you say you don't believe.

When I first heard Scott was going to use an 11-year-old boy as the representation of God in *Exodus*, I wasn't too concerned. I was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt on this one. After all, you certainly don't want to make God some invisible voice—film is a visual medium so we need something to look at. But once I saw it and saw the effect it had in conveying who God is, I realized that this decision was either a conscious shot at the God I love, or it was an unintentionally bad decision. Either way, this, I think, will be the problem most Christians will have with this movie.

Casting God as a child inherently turns God into a child. And

when He rails away at Moses (who, by the way, comes across as the compassionate one in the film—just like Noah was) God is characterized as a petulant child who just wants His way. Now, when you read the biblical text, I can see how one might view God in this way based on the raw story. God is sick and tired of His chosen people being tortured as slaves, and He's going to show these Egyptians what a real God looks like while at the same time freeing His kids.

And because God decides to flex His muscles a bit, a lot of people suffer and die. If you simply take that at face value, of course you're going to think God is a borderline lunatic with a (cough) messiah complex. But you cannot understand any story in the Bible outside the context of the rest of the Bible, as well as taking into account the enormous cultural differences between 1300 B.C. and 2014 A.D. When you read the rest of the Bible, and indeed even the rest of the Exodus story, you find a God who has emotions, is hurt by His own children, but is also overwhelmingly patient and loving. He's not a schizophrenic, or "mercurial" (in other words, moody) as Christian Bale characterized him in an interview.

With *Exodus*, we're left, ultimately, with a flawed God who is far less compassionate than His chosen instrument, Moses. I guess it could have been worse. At least in the film God is real, however flawed, heartless and stubborn as He's portrayed. Thankfully, this isn't the true God of the Bible, the true God whom I love and is my friend, and who I trust with everything that I am.

Looking at the many reviews for *Exodus*, from Christians and non-Christians alike, I certainly have to agree with the majority. *Exodus: Gods and Kings* is an enormous, beautiful, ambitious, yet fundamentally flawed film.

Darren Wilson is the founder of Wanderlust Productions and the creator of various films, including *Finger of God*, *Furious Love*, and *Father of Lights*. Darren's new book, *Finding God in*

the Bible, is available in stores everywhere. Visit his website at .

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