

'Risen' Marks New Type of Jesus Movie

Since the advent of motion pictures, filmmakers have brought the story of Christ to life through cinematic epics, such as *Jesus of Nazareth*, *King of Kings*, *The Greatest Story Ever Told* and more recently, *Son of God* and *The Passion of the Christ*. *Risen*, releasing Friday, marks a new type of Jesus movie, bypassing his familiar birth and even the Passion Week and focusing instead of His resurrection and ascension.

When viewers first see Jesus, referred to in the film as Yeshua, He is lifeless on the cross, His last words repeated secondhand between characters. Clavius, a Roman military officer portrayed by award-winning actor Joseph Fiennes (*Shakespeare in Love*, *Enemy at the Gates*, *Hercules*), arrives at Golgotha with a convoy to dispose of the bodies and disperse the crowd. As instructed by Pontius Pilate, he seals the tomb to satisfy the fears of the religious leaders desperate to put an end to Yeshua's revolution.

When the Messiah's body goes missing, Clavius is tasked with finding those who he believes has stolen it. With his aide Lucius (Tom Felton), he begins investigating and interrogating in his quest to settle the mystery for Pilate and even for himself.

Fiennes capably handles this internal conflict, which alternates between subtlety and amazement. He carries the film, which is quite a task given one of the supporting characters is the central figure of humankind. By focusing on the military officer, however, the film achieves a level of depth not normally seen in such biblical productions, showing how the events affect even those outside the circle of 12.

With the fictional character Clavius, viewers are given a

front row seat with a character with whom they can identify, a man hardened by a difficult life and the horrors of war he's both witnessed and participated in. Out of all his life's assignments, what is it about this one in particular that keeps drawing him in? As one question is answered, several more arise. What will he do with the information he discovers? How will his mind process the possibility that life can exist after verified death?

Risen is beautifully shot, framing the suspense in the beautiful on-location set of Malta and incorporating historically accurate clothing and even fighting techniques. It was directed by Kevin Reynolds (*The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Robin Hood*, *Prince of Thieves*), written by Paul Aiello and Reynolds, and produced by Mickey Lidell, Aiello and Pete Shilaimon.

Risen will release from Sony Pictures' Affirm Films division on Friday in more than 3,000 theaters around the globe.