

'Son of God': A Love Story Beyond the Big Screen

The 10-hour miniseries *The Bible* broke cable viewing records in 2013, reaching more than 100 million viewers on The History Channel.

Now, co-producers Roma Downey and Mark Burnett are taking the life of Jesus to the big screen with their new film, *Son of God*.

Downey is best known for her role on the hit television series *Touched by an Angel*. Her husband and production partner Burnett is the creative genius behind reality shows *Survivor*, *The Voice*, and *Shark Tank*.

Jesus on the Big Screen

"We just knew that the Jesus story needed to be presented in a stand-alone experience," Downey said.

"Jesus hasn't been on the big screen since *Passion of the Christ*. And his whole life hasn't been seen on the big screen for 50 years since *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. So we thought this was the opportunity to bring Jesus to the big screen for a whole new generation," she continued.

The Hollywood couple came up with the idea for the film while producing the miniseries. Downey and Burnett spoke with CBN News prior to the theatrical release of the movie.

Burnett recalled that decision to CBN News.

"While we were making the series, Roma looked at me and said this footage is so amazing," he said. "The special effects are going to be so big, this should be on the big movie screen. So, we started this two years ago, way before the series came out."

The couple shot the film on location in Morocco with an international cast that includes familiar faces from *The Bible* miniseries, like Diogo Morgado as Jesus. Downey plays the mother of Jesus.

Downey as Mary

"Gosh, it was just such a privilege to be able to step into the role. I had never fully considered what the mother of Jesus might have been feeling, particularly in those scenes at the foot of the cross," the actress said, describing the experience.

"There was a lot of prayer that went ahead," she continued. "I just tried to bring a mother's heart to the role. To feel what a mother might feel.

"It was a profoundly moving experience," she said.

Faith Revival in Hollywood?

Son of God hits the big screen at a time when Hollywood is experiencing a bit of a faith revival.

The film is also getting a boost at the box office with megachurch pastors like Joel Osteen and Rick Warren leading a "theater take over" campaign. Churches and Christian organizations are buying out screens in multiple theaters.

Still, Burnett said the proof of success is in the movie itself.

"What matters is how good is the movie," he said. "And we have now been to 20 cities and done preview screenings. People are loving the movie experience. It is epic. Lots of action. It is dramatic. But it is also so intimate."

The intimacy of the film also touched the couple's personal life.

"The only thing that could ever happen to anybody, who believes in Jesus as we do, as you are working on this is that you get deeper and deeper," Burnett said. "And, also, we are married, so it has been a really great journey for us."

"We are still speaking to each other," Roma joked.

"We always joke that a lot of couple can't work in the garden together. And we have been producing together now for almost five years with *The Bible* series and now *Son of God*. It has just been great. It's deepened our friendship. It's deepened our marriage and deepened our faith as well," Roma explained.

And a deeper faith is their prayer for all who see the film.