

MGM Plans Ben-Hur Remake

Reportedly, the new movie will focus more on the life of Jesus as his life parallels Ben-Hur. It will also go more into detail about the formative stories of Ben-Hur and his friend turned enemy, Messala, before the Roman Empire took control of Jerusalem.

The original 1880 Lew Wallace novel is in the public domain. It outsold every book but the Bible until *Gone With the Wind*.

The 1939 movie version of *Gone With the Wind* ranks No. 1 on the All-Time domestic box office chart when adjusted for inflation and the 1959 *Ben-Hur*, starring Charlton Heston, ranks No. 13. Until *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, Heston's *Ben-Hur* was the only other movie to match *Gone With the Wind* 11 Oscars.

Apparently, MGM's top studio executives Gary Barber and Jonathan Glickman just loved the new *Ben-Hur* spec script by Keith Clarke.

"It's one of the great stories of friendship and betrayal, and faith, that works in the context of a big onscreen action thriller for a global audience," one of the *Ben-Hur* reboot producers, Sean Daniel, said of Lew Wallace's novel.

As readers of the original novel know, *Ben-Hur* includes several major plot twists that the Oscar-winning 1959 movie never tapped.

Flush with box office change from the latest James Bond movie, *Skyfall* (the most financially successful Bond flick ever), and the first *Hobbit* movie, MGM is planning a series of action adventure movies, including *Hercules* with Dwayne "the Rock" Johnson.

BEN-HUR isn't the only Bible-themed movie in production or

being considered by Hollywood.

There are: two movies about Moses that Steven Spielberg and Ridley Scott are examining; the movie *Noah* with Russell Crowe playing the iconic biblical figure in the Great Flood; a version of Anne Rice's bestselling book *Christ the Lord*; and, *Pontius Pilate* from Warner Bros., to which Brad Pitt is attached.

TV is also getting into the act with a 10-hour, five-part miniseries this year on the History Channel of all the major Bible stories, from Noah's ark and the Exodus to Daniel in the lion's den to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

As MOVIEGUIDE® has shown Hollywood repeatedly over the years, movies with strong Christian, biblical content and values, including references to Jesus, church, biblical stories and passages, and prayer, make the most money on average by far. And, Hollywood is making more such movies, though still not enough.

However, the huge progress that has been made is greatly due to MOVIEGUIDE®'s supporters and friends, including those who support our Annual Faith & Values Awards Gala and Report to the Entertainment Industry.

The next Awards Gala takes place Friday, Feb. 15, at the Universal Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles. Highlights of the Awards will be telecast on the Hallmark Movie Channel and syndicated on other TV outlets after that.

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