

Roma Downey Says It's a 'Profound Privilege' to Share Jesus' Story in 'Resurrection'

This Easter, the world will get a powerful new look at the Passion Week of Jesus Christ when discovery+ releases *Resurrection*, the latest project from Mark Burnett and Roma Downey (*Son of God*, *A.D.*, *The Bible* series). Premiering March 27, the film will center on the final days of Jesus, His resurrection and the establishment of the early church.

Like the hit film *Son of God* did with *The Bible* series, *Resurrection* will feature footage compiled from *A.D.*, resulting in an updated biblical drama for future generations. For Downey, who grew up watching epics such as *The Greatest Story Ever Told* and *The Ten Commandments*, it's a faith-filled tradition worth carrying on.

"Those were biblical movies that we would gather around as a family, and they became annual traditions," Downey said. "Those were films we could watch every year, and I'm prayerful that *Son of God* and now *Resurrection* can be those movies for contemporary families that celebrate our faith, but that are told in a way that still feels dynamic and compelling and exciting."

Burnett and Downey, who have made a name as producers of faith-filled content, had the initial inspiration to put the film together as the world entered its shutdown before Easter 2020. As they conversed, they hoped something could be produced for theaters for the next year's Holy Week. As the date got closer and theaters remained closed, they turned to new streamer discovery+, who they call "perfect partners."

"They've been so supportive," she said. "I think they're aware that there's a large audience, not just the Christian audience, for content like this, that is driven by hope and reflects values that we hold near and dear, that unfortunately we just don't see enough of it anywhere."

In *Resurrection*, Jesus' disciples take center stage as the drama surrounds the fears, emotions and exhilaration of the Passion Week. Viewers follow along as the stone is placed in front of Jesus' tomb and sealed by Roman authorities. Although the world now knows the outcome, the disciples were anxious and fearful. Then something happens.

"We see the light radiating from inside the tomb, coming out through the edges of the stone," Downey recalled. "And Jesus has risen, and those soldiers are terrified, they're just dumbstruck. It just gives me goosebumps to think about it."

Before the film ends, it reminds viewers of Jesus' words to Thomas in John that "blessed are those who have not seen and yet still believe," a charge to Christians around the world who carry on the gospel message and continue to share the Good News.

"The Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to go out and preach," she said. "They were a small group of people. At the end of the film, we just wanted to connect that thought, with the billions of believers all across the world today. That couldn't have happened without the Holy Spirit."

As with other biblical dramas the duo has produced, great attention to detail was paid to the surroundings, environment and even the animals in making the production as authentic and realistic as possible. For Downey, who first became a household name with her starring turn on the inspirational television show *Touched by an Angel*, giving a platform to so many biblical stories and inspirational content is a sacred yet unexpected blessing.

“I don’t know that I was the most attentive kid in the Bible study growing up or that somebody would have said, ‘She is going to grow up and produce all this biblical content’” she said. “In my career as a producer, believe it or not, I’ve had to cast Jesus three times. Five times, I will have overseen the [filming of] the crucifixion of Jesus. I just think it’s such a profound privilege as a believer to get to share His story visually.”

In addition to the biblical epics, Downey and Burnett’s Lightworkers brand has also produced inspirational content such as *Country Ever After*, *The Dovekeepers* and *Messiah* as well as social media content on their own channel. They’re also currently working on the true drama *On a Wing and a Prayer* starring Dennis Quaid. All the productions and efforts are guided by the principle that continues to inspire them.

“My mantra is and continues to be that it’s better to light a candle than curse the darkness,” she said. “And there’s a lot of darkness out there but we are committed to continuing to try to find and tell stories of encouragement, stories of hope and resurrection. Surely, this is the greatest story of hope that there ever was.”

Watch the full interview here. {eoa}

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