

Big Budget Biblically Based Movies?

Film is the most powerful medium next to the internet itself. No other method of communication can capture our hearts and minds like the big screen. I love movies!

However, here's what I don't love. Movie-makers whose budgets drive content. Three "Bible films" (both upcoming and present) have entered the public awareness lately. These films are [Son of God](#) (stemming from the History's Channel's *The Bible*), [Noah](#) (Starring Russell Crowe) and an upcoming film about the [Exodus](#) starring Christian Bale as Moses.

With the [pre-screening reviews](#) of Noah bending toward the abysmal and [controversy amongst Christians](#) as whether Downey and Burnett's Son of God is really *the* Son of God, I am just not sure the Biblical narrative can fit into the demands of the Blockbuster.

Here's a basic rub of the movie business. If you produce a movie that doesn't please the audience, the movie will not pay for itself let alone make any money. So, it is thought, get the best actors, the most gifted writers with proven stories, the most advanced CGI, the acclaimed director and stellar locations to produce the most pleasing movie for its potential audience. The only thing is that a formulaic approach to film making is defeated on a regular basis and the Scripture isn't formulaic to gross millions at the box office.

What is true about movies is those who push the creative envelope, to let the characters, the story or the craft drive the creation, are the ones who make movie history. (and therefore, as a result, could bring in blockbuster dollars) Any movie making beyond that point seems to be formulaic reproduction for the purpose of making the dollars.

A few examples? The drama and glorious victory of the Rocky movies led to so many formulaic sports movies that even the final installments of the Rocky films (Rocky Balboa? Ew!) were formulaic. Silence of the Lambs broke the seal on a caseload of forensic, psychological thrillers including a myriad of tv crime dramas. Have we seen anything in film that can hold audiences in utter disbelief since Schindler's List? Some have tried. Let's not forget that Tim Burton's Batman played by Michael Keaton redeemed the need for superhero films once again, and look at all that's followed!

Now, I don't mind formulaic movies. I am a superhero movie glutton. But let's admit. The "CGI generation" superhero movie genre was getting crusty until Joss Whedon's Marvel's [The Avengers](#) kicked it up a notch. The content led the movie-makers and the actors and then dictated the budget which led to a successful movie. But, get ready, here comes The Avengers 2, Guardians of the Galaxy, Batman vs. Superman and the Justice League. I will probably see all of them, but... yawn... they have so much to live up to even justify their existence.

So enter the Biblical narrative into the Blockbuster culture. Can that work? Can movie makers allow the actual story and character to drive the creation of these films? Early reports on *Noah* is decidedly, "no". It seems that Noah's director [Darren Aronofsky](#) found the actual Biblical Noah to be pretty boring. The changes from the Biblical narrative caused the creators of the film to move from billing the movie as "Based on the Bible" to "Inspired by the Bible". Which to me

means to me they needed to take creative license to justify the movie's large budget. But this just doesn't need to be.

We can take an example from Mel Gibson's [The Passion of the Christ](#), which was 90% Biblically accurate with some creative license to frame-up parts of the whole story. But what drew us to this movie was a 21st century rendering of Jesus Christ's life and ministry contrasted with all the movie industry could muster to show the real brutality of his torture, death and resurrection for all of humanity. This lived up to the scripture and purpose of the film; and it grossed \$500,000,000. However, following that was [The Nativity Story](#), also faithful to the scripture with needed creative license, it grossed \$45,000,000. But, I would watch The Nativity Story with my kids just the same as I'd watch The Passion of the Christ with them. Why? Because the money it makes isn't the point, it's the reality of the Biblical story it tells.

I like my Bible heroes, well, Biblical... and accurate. Most people know the highlights of the stories of Noah, Moses and Jesus Christ. If the Biblical story and characters drive the creation of a film utilizing contemporary movie magic, then we can see a Biblical story as we know it to always have been; yet in greater faithful detail. This is the most honoring to God and the Bible, but it probably won't be enough to rouse the crowds to the level of support a Big Budget film needs. And that's ok as long as we are faithful to the source material.