

PASSION of CHRIST

(Movie by Mel Gibson)

Deacon George Collins

The most striking and impressive scene in the picture, “The Passion of Christ,” is when Jesus and Mary meet as Jesus is carrying His cross. Although the words Jesus speaks are not scriptural, they are the most daunting and prophetic in the entire picture. “Mother, see, I make all things new.” It explains the entire theology of the picture and the purpose of Jesus’ life. The way the line is delivered by the actor also indicates a painful JOY. This is probably the most missed part in the entire picture as most reviews focus on the bloody flagellation and the meaning of the passion. Some even say the picture is too emotional. Certainly emotion cannot be totally eliminated, but the viewer should try to understand what is happening.

“I make all things new.” Jesus’ life was about recreating the world through salvation. ‘If you live by my commandments, I will make you new. I will give you spiritual and eternal life.’ If Jesus had cut His finger and shed just one drop of blood, would it have been enough for salvation? Yes, it would have been! Why then, the awful bloody experience?

The night before the passion, at the last supper, Jesus took a cup, blessed it and said: “Take and drink, this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant which will be shed for the sins of the world.” ... TO MAKE NEW... The kingdom of God enters the world. Scripture also tell us that “no greater love does a man have than to lay down his life for a friend.” The great sacrifice of dying so that others may live. This is not just physical life but spiritual life as well; the greatest gift God can give man. The gift that man threw away in the garden of Eden; man was dead, but now he can live.

Jesus, Son of God, who is truly God and truly man, has an immutable love for man, an all consuming love for man. The greatest desire of this kind of love is to be loved freely in return. A freely given love [commitment] that is not a forced love; a forced love is slavery. To show the totality of His love, He had to shed all His blood. [Blood is a symbol of life.] If He held back any blood then He would have held back on His immutable love

for man. God could not do that. Scripture also tells us that when His side was pierced by a lance as He hung upon the cross, the last drops of blood and the last drops of water [water is also a symbol of life] drained from His body. He totally emptied Himself. He did not hold back to prove His love for us. This was His total commitment to us. Can we do less in return?

Not only did Jesus shed His blood, but the blood spattered all over the soldiers who did the scourging. The soldiers who did the scourging truly represent us, for it is our sins and the sins of all mankind that drew His blood. The blood spattered on the bystanders, on the high priests and scribes, on the Jews, Gentiles, Romans and all who were present. It fell upon the ground making all things new. Not all present condemned Jesus. Some were horrified at the punishment. Even Pilot said Jesus was a just man as he washed his hands of the insanity. Jesus' precious blood was shed for all people, past present and yet to be born. This is a burden beyond all imagination requiring a salvation beyond imagination. Even the Jews recognized this when they said: His blood is upon us. The blood that spattered on the bystanders either redeemed them or condemned them. We choose what path to follow. Blood is a double symbol of life and death. At the end, many bystanders and many soldiers seemed remorseful and contrite.

The shedding of blood through all of scripture was a sign of salvation. One of the most powerful images was when Yahweh directed Moses to paint the blood of a lamb on the door posts of the Jews' houses; so when the angel of death passed by, they would be saved. [Feast of the Passover] Abraham sprinkled the blood of a lamb in thanksgiving for sparing Isaac's life.

When we view this picture from an emotional point of view, two scenarios come to mind. We cry because we know our sins did this and we can't handle it. We don't want to change our lives because we can't see ourselves as responsible or as sinners needing reconciliation. Secondly we cry because the bloody scene offends our sensibilities and we just don't get the message.

Blood is an atoning agent, like the blood of the sin and guilt offering. We are redeemed through His blood. By His blood we make peace with heaven. Blood is the only effective agent of purification and the remission of sins. Mankind can share in this blood of the new covenant when they drink of the Eucharist cup. In this way a deep bond is formed between God

and man. [The new and eternal covenant] Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood has eternal life; he remains in me and I in him.

Making all things new by the shedding of His blood, Christ brings the kingdom of God into the world. The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom is truly present to the world by the spilling of the blood on the ground, which renews its dedication to the glory of God. Blood is the gateway to heaven by which we pass from the world below to the new world above.

Thank you, Mel Gibson, for this presentation. The meaning and symbols of the passion were remarkable.