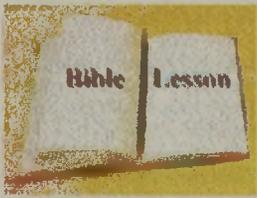


8B

RELIGION



A time to celebrate

Esther 8:3-8; 9:17-23

Esther again pleaded with the king, falling his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose and stood before him.

"If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?"

King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai, the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have hanged him on the gallows. Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring-for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked."

This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar and on the fourteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy.

The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth, and then on the fifteenth they rested and made it day of feasting and joy.

That is why rural Jews-those living in villages-observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other.

Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them.



"Passions of the Christ"

By Artellia Burch  
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"The Passions of The Christ" is remarkable and appropriately violent.

The controversial movie produced, directed and funded by Mel Gibson is an amazing visual and audible version of Jesus of Nazareth's crucifixion. It is extremely accurate according to the books of Matthew, Luke, Mark and John, also known as the Gospels.

Since so much controversy has been attached to the movie, I didn't know what to truly expect when I went to the viewing. From the minute "The Passions" started I was pleased. The film was so real. It was as if I was a guest following Jesus for his last 24 hours.

The movie opened in the Mount of Olives, the place Jesus went to pray with his closest friends John, James

and Peter. According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus prayed so hard and was in so much distress over his fate that his sweat became blood. The film gave a believable visual of that episode and Gibson took artistic license by adding a lurking Satan slithering around the distraught Jesus as he battles within himself to do the will of God, which was to die on the cross.

Gibson gave the viewer an opportunity to see his idea of the origination of sin. I say that because every place there was violence, deception, cruelty and just pure evil Satan was always there - a common belief in the Christianity faith.

Plus I think the movie did a great job in presenting the human side of Judas, Christ's betrayer. It didn't make Judas out to be Satan; it simply showed how he gave in to greed, later regretted it and committed suicide.

The star of the movie wasn't the actors or the great cinematography. It was the brutal story of crucifixion. Gibson left nothing to the imagination when it came to this. He included the Gospel's account of Jesus' last hours and the physical and mental brutality he endured before he was to die on the cross.

Gibson didn't make the crucifixion glamorous. It was bloody and painful-which came across on the screen. It was not a Hollywood-style movie filled with clichés. It was very real.

The only unrealistic part of the movie was the mere fact that all of the stars except the man that helped carry Jesus cross were white. Now that's just a little hard to believe since the people in that part of the world are of color.

Thousands of Egyptian students protest

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) - About 6,000 students at the Islamic Al-Azhar University demonstrated Monday against France's decision to ban head scarves in public schools.

Veiled females wore headbands that read, "I won't take off my veil."

The head scarf is compulsory for female students enrolled at Al-Azhar, Islam's most prestigious Sunni university.

The protesters remained confined to the campus, which was surrounded by large numbers of riot police. Students chanted, "(This is) a French attack against Islamic awakening." One group carried a banner that read, "No to (French President Jacques) Chirac, my veil is my liberty."

The students also chanted pro-Palestinian slogans.

Despite international criticism, the French Parliament's lower house overwhelmingly

passed a bill this month banning Islamic head scarves and other conspicuous religious symbols, such as Jewish skullcaps and large crosses in secular schools. The bill is expected to go before the Senate early next month, where little opposition exists.

The government says the law aims to keep religion out of its schools.

There have been protests and condemnations against the ban across the Arab world.

Egypt's foremost religious leader, Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, the grand sheik of Al-Azhar, issued an edict early this year saying France was entitled to pass the law and asking Muslim women living in France to comply with it.

Tantawi's remarks were criticized by many Egyptian theologians, but Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak backed Tantawi and said opposing the French ban was pointless.



Ratings

- Classic; ☆☆☆☆☆
- Excellent; ☆☆☆☆☆
- Good ☆☆☆☆☆
- Fair ☆☆☆☆☆
- Why? ☆☆☆☆☆
- No stars - A ☆☆☆☆☆

George Foreman Inspirations  
Toni Fritsch, producer  
Trauma Records

This CD has left me perplexed, bewildered and confused. What was on George Foreman's mind while doing this?

The bigger question is why was this CD on Foreman's mind? This two-disc set is divided into two parts: the first is a collection of songs and personal meditations

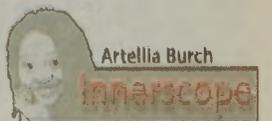
written by Foreman, the second a collection of songs Foreman likes.

Let's talk about the first CD. Foreman convinced Ronald Baumgartner, a student of Leonard Bernstein, to compose music to songs he'd written. He also convinced classical tenors and sopranos to sing along with the Vienna Boys Choir and the Vienna Festival Symphony Orchestra to play the music. All of that is a tremendous achievement but I don't understand why, any of those parties

agreed to do this. Foreman's meditations come off a bit stiff as do his songwriting capabilities. This is inspirational music at its dullest.

The second side is even more perplexing. There are songs by Aretha Franklin, Lee Greenwood, B.J. Thomas, Jose Carreras, Edwin Hawkins and Jim Nabors (yes, Gomer Pyle U.S.M.C.) I like most of these folks but I don't know that I would put any of them on the same CD.

If you don't have the songs



Jesus death on cross was an act of love

When I left the Monday viewing of "The Passions of the Christ," I was thoroughly moved by the movie. After the film was over I sat in silence reflecting on the level of physical pain and humiliation Jesus went through just for me.

I know the scripture says that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. However, when I think about the sacrifice I see him dying that brutal death because of me. I see a loving Savior enduring physical abuse, mocking from human beings and spiritual taunting from the enemy just to save me from the depths of hell.

Everyone should see Jesus' sacrifice as a selfless act of love. It's amazing that He loves us so much He would have traveled from heaven to die on the cross for us.

On top of that, Jesus doesn't ask for much in return. In fact He only asks me to give my life to Him. Which isn't asking for much since he was willing to give His life for me.

Before seeing "The Passions," I still struggled with letting go of my own way of thinking because there were things I still wanted to hold on to.

Yet, after seeing the movie I realized that Jesus died to himself. He didn't do what He wanted to do on Earth. He only did His Father's will.

Since Jesus was willing to live a selfless life, he sacrificed Himself on a cross so a disobedient child like me can be free from the wrath of God.

Why would Jesus do that for me when He didn't have to? I found the answer in Luke 6 when he instructs people to love enemies and do good to those who hate you. In Luke 6:32 he says "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that."

Jesus allowed the love of His Father to control him.

Please see Jesus/5B

on the second CD, the \$14.99 you shell out may be worth it. Sandy Patti's "Amazing Grace" is awesome. Donnie McClurkin's New York Restoration Choir sings the mess out of "Joyful, Joyful."

But only if you are a true Foreman fan will you find the first CD remotely entertaining, inspiring, moving - or anything for that matter.

This could have been divinely inspired. Maybe. Really, it could have been.

CHURCH NEWS

**February 19**  
The Mecklenburg County Missionary Union of the Women's Baptist Home and Foreign Missionary Convention will be held at 1303 Hawthorne Lane.

**February 21**  
Winston-Salem State University Concert Choir will perform at Friendship Missionary Baptist church at

3301 Beatties Ford Road. Greater Mount Moriah Primitive Baptist Church will hold an Adult Lecture at 4 pm on "From the Pyramids to the Ghetto" by Ahmad Daniels and a youth lecture "Building Self-Esteem in Our Youth" at 5 pm by Doris Frazier.

**February 23**  
Silver Mount Baptist

Church at 501 West Arrowood Road will hold a special campaign service to elect Rev. Franklyn Richardson as the next President of the National Baptist Convention at 7 pm.

**February 26-28**  
Second Calvary Baptist Church will sponsor a Music Ministry Workshop.

**February 28**

Greater Mount Moriah Primitive Baptist Church will hold its Black History Celebration at 5 pm.

**February 25**  
Ash Wednesday Service will be held at Friendship Baptist Church at 7 pm.

**February 28**  
The North Carolina Baptist Ushers Convention one-day

session will be held at M.G. Benton Convention Center at 301 West 5th Street, Winston-Salem at 8 am. Registration is \$10.

**February 29**  
Friendship Missionary Baptist Church at 3301 Beatties Ford Road will hold its Fifth Sunday Hymnsing: A Celebration of Our Heritage-Metered Hymns & Spirituals

will be held at 5:30 pm. Greater Mount Moriah Primitive Baptist Church will hold its African American Arts Festival and Food Tasting at 2 pm.

**March 5-6**  
A gospel comedy show will be held at Dr. U.I. McCall Activity Center at 1200 North Irby Street at Old Wilson High Auditorium in Florence, SC at 8 pm.

