

'The Nativity Story' makes an old story new in time for Christmas

BY DANIEL ARONSON
Sports Editor

Perhaps the most familiar story ever told is the birth of Jesus. "The Nativity Story," a modern movie about the historical biblical account of Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, describes the birth of Jesus Christ. Director Catherine Hardwicke and writer Mike Rich make the tale marvelously fresh and new.

"Nativity Story" focuses more on the characters than other biblical narratives that give account of the story of the birth of Jesus. Fortunately, the young and attractive appearances of unknown actors Keisha Castle-Hughes and Oscar Isaac do not detract from the miraculous story. Viewers truly believe they are witnessing an accurate account of life in Palestine during the featured time period.

Characterizing Mary and Joseph as simple people prevents the viewer from being overwhelmed by the immensity of the plot: the birth of Jesus Christ and Herod's at-

tempt to kill the prophesied King of the Jews. The movie displays the hardships the Jews are enduring under the oppression and heavy taxation of the Roman Empire. Mary and Joseph are depicted as simple people caught in the most extraordinary circumstances.

"Nativity Story" begins months before the Holy Spirit impregnates Mary, an ordinary young girl, who lives with her hardworking, poor parents. Her father arranges a marriage to Joseph, a tender, kind-hearted man, an idea Mary is not too excited about. However, the engagement lasts a year, long enough for Mary to warm up to the idea. One fateful night, an angel visits her and tells her she will bear a child who will save her people from their sins. The movie is strongly based around Mary and the reactions of Joseph, her parents and the community to her becoming pregnant out of wedlock. Because adultery was a crime punishable by stoning, Mary was scorned and

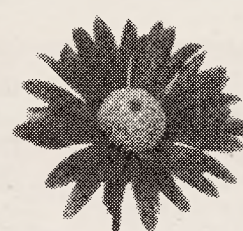
looked down upon, and even faced threats on her life. Joseph agrees to marriage despite not being the father of Mary's child, resulting in both becoming outcasts in their community. Fortunately for them, the angel Gabriel speaks to both Mary and Joseph and brings them peace.

According to the Roman Empire, every citizen must return to their place of birth to be counted in a census. Joseph and a very pregnant Mary make the perilous 100-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, with Mary riding on a donkey and Joseph on foot. As they make this dangerous voyage across the mountains and deserts, their love for each other grows stronger. Their faith grows as they realize the significance of the task God has given them. The viewer feels deeply for Mary, and her pain of childbirth, and the love Joseph shows to his young bride.

Even though the story of the birth of Jesus is familiar to most, Hardwicke still manages to keep the audience on the edge of their seats. With

climaxes such as the wise men seeing the star, and King Herod's evil plot to kill the first-born males in Bethlehem, the story is enthralling. With excellent cinematography

and breath-taking images, the film is a fresh retelling of an ancient story. The "Nativity Story" truly reminds viewers that Jesus is the reason for the season.



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