



Noah: The Movie and the Bible

Paramount's film *Noah* is based on the Biblical story of Noah and the Ark. The film admittedly takes "creative license," but according to the disclaimer from its trailers, it remains "true to the essence, values, and integrity of a story that is a cornerstone of faith for millions of people worldwide."

Noah is an epic retelling of Noah, who is played by Russell Crowe, and the Great Flood. It begins with a young Noah learning the story of Creation from his father, who also uses the opportunity to educate Noah on the story of Adam and Eve and man's fall.



Noah's world is not a peaceful one. As depicted by the movie, descendants of Cain have been destructive to the Earth through their somewhat industrialist ways, leaving it a virtually barren wasteland (adding an environmentalist spin to the film). Noah's family attempts to live off the land, a difficult enough feat without the addition of having to avoid a band of evil men who are descended from Cain.

The movie skips forward a number of years, and viewers are introduced to an older Noah, who is married to Naameh (Jennifer Connelly) and has three boys.

This is when Noah sees a vision of the Earth being destroyed by a flood. Believing his vision to be God's method of communicating to him, Noah seeks guidance from his grandfather, Methuselah (Anthony Hopkins).

Noah comes to realize that God intends to send a flood that will wipe the Earth of those who have strayed so far from God's teachings.

He later sees another vision that leads him to build an Ark on which his family and Earth's animals may live to survive the flood that he previously envisioned.

It takes years for him to construct the Ark, and during that time, he has confrontations with Cain's descendants. And for dramatic effect in the film, the tensions reach their peak just as the rain that will bring the impending flood begins.

Meanwhile, Noah's son Shem (Douglas Booth) has fallen in love with a woman whom Noah's family had virtually adopted into their family, and despite beliefs that she would not be able to bear children, the woman, Ila (Emma Watson), learns she is pregnant with Shem's child.

However, Noah is so disheartened by humankind that he considers killing the infant. Noah begins to wonder whether his family deserves to be spared from the flood waters, or if they too should perish. Is it truly possible to destroy evil if fallen man continues to live on?

It is very clear that Noah needs God's grace and intervention to help redirect and guide him. He and his family need a miracle. Luckily, that is just exactly the Creator's specialty.

Noah is an exciting, adventurous film that lays the foundation of the Biblical story, but features a



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significant number of elements that are not found in the Bible. Unfortunately, some of these inserted elements do not remain true to the Biblical account, despite the trailers' promise that the movie would remain "true to the essence, values, and integrity" of the story.

For example, in the film, unlike the Biblical account, God does not communicate directly with Noah but communicates instead through visions that Noah must interpret. The Noah found in the film appears more conflicted than the Biblical Noah. And the film includes an uncomfortable sequence during which Noah describes the creation to his children that seems to combine the Biblical account with evolution, as animals are shown morphing into other animals.

In the film, it is a descendant of Cain, a despoiler of the world, who trumpets the Biblical mandate that man shall have dominion over all the living creatures. And it is Noah who will not use animals for food. In the film, in fact, the environmental damage wrought by the descendants of Cain is emphasized to such an extent that it may appear (perhaps purposely so) that ending environmental devastation is reason Number One why God decided to start the world anew with Noah's family and two of each living creature.

Toward the end of the movie, Noah is told that God left to him the decision as to whether or not to continue mankind, as opposed to God Himself making that decision. This view is left unchallenged.

The film also contains an extra-Biblical subplot about a group of angels who disobey God and help Cain's descendants create cities and ultimately pillage the Earth of its resources. Some of the disobedient angels later assist Noah, hoping that they may be forgiven for their sins against God.

However, the film provides accurate Biblical references as well, including the story of Adam and Eve and the Original Sin, the creation of the Earth, and Cain's murder of Abel. The film also includes important Christian themes about redemption, love, sacrifice, and the acceptance of God's grace and welcoming of God's miracles. Noah's confusion and difficulty in determining and understanding God's will mirrors that to which all Christians can relate. And essential elements of the Biblical story, including the flood itself and the sacred covenant that follows, remain in this retelling.

One item that Christian viewers will likely notice is that God is never referred to as "God" in the film, but as the "Creator." If it is a deliberate effort to avoid any sort of controversy, it seems like an odd one since the film's spirituality and Biblical basis are inarguable.

There is a significant amount of violence in the film, ranging from Cain's murder of Abel to conflicts between men and the fallen angels.

Russell Crowe proves to be a wonderful choice for his role in the film. Crowe has the ability to portray a wide range of characters, allowing him to aptly depict Noah as a man who wants badly to adhere to God's will, but who (in the film version) does not quite understand it. At times in this film Noah is a man to be feared; at other times he is sensitive and devoted. Crowe does a great job moving through these moods.

Additionally, the film's cinematic qualities are absolutely amazing and add a great deal of aesthetic value to the film.

Some moviegoers will leave the theater upset with the film's far journey away from the original story, particularly those elements that are not in harmony with the Biblical account. This is entirely understandable, particularly for those of us who believe that the Bible is the word of God. On the other hand, despite all of the flaws in the Hollywood retelling, there may be enough on the positive side to



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inspire viewers to check out the Biblical account and learn what it actually says. Hopefully many will, since those who don't and who are unfamiliar with the Biblical account will be left with a distorted view.

Note: After this article was originally published, additional examples were added to contrast the movie Noah with the Biblical account.



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