



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on March 3, 2014

## “Son of God” Movie Opens to Mixed Reviews, \$26.5M at Box Office

This past weekend, the box office take for *Son of God* topped \$26.5 million — an attention-getting sum that exceeded expectations for this offering from the producers of the TV miniseries *The Bible*, Mark Burnett and his wife, actress Roma Downey.

In the title role is Portuguese actor Diogo Morgado, with Downey cast as Mary, the mother of Jesus.

While this ambitious modern telling of the life of Jesus is being given a thumbs-up by most Christian audiences, it has drawn mixed reviews from others.



The film attempts to chronicle the life of Jesus from His birth through His adult teaching, arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection; however, many scenes are skipped over. For instance, after a brief manger scene, the story suddenly jumps to Jesus as an adult. Too few miracles and parables — essential to a real understanding of God the Son — made the final cut. And not a single demon was cast out.

Also, the pacing lags somewhat, and the story is missing critical elements that might have taken it from simply a good film to an epic production.

The most notable of these missing elements (and one of the most important to any story) is some tension provided by an antagonist: in this case, the person of Satan. Not a single mention of the enemy of Christ made it into the dialogue, and the movie’s authenticity suffers as a result.

The “story behind the story” for the omission of this key character, however, is revealing: Satan was originally included in the film, but after it was noted that the actor playing him resembles Barack Obama, all his scenes were removed in favor of political correctness. But any recounting of the life of Jesus is naturally incomplete — and hence inaccurate — without the inclusion of Satan.

Additionally, no mention is made of the hundreds of years of ancient prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming Messiah which were fulfilled by Jesus — critical to a correct understanding of the Bible.

Though most Christians will no doubt be glad to see this portrayal of the story of their Lord, it will be difficult for the uninitiated (non-believers) to follow the plot without more back-story to the various events in the life of Jesus. Lacking a vehicle to link the separate scenes together, the film would have been better for the addition of narration from time to time. As it stands, it suffers from the preaching-to-the-choir syndrome.

Other than a perfunctory mention that Jesus came to save man from sin, left untold are the importance of man’s need for Jesus, and why His coming was necessary.



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Remarkable performances are offered by relative unknowns, including Sebastian Knapp as the Apostle John, Adrian Schiller as High Priest Caiaphas, and Darwin Shaw as the Apostle Peter. Amber Rose Revah's portrayal of Mary Magdalene is authentically believable and well executed.

Though it would be a challenging task for any actor to attempt to portray Jesus, Morgado seems more of a magazine model than a Savior, though admittedly his role affords little scope to deliver substance.

Inexplicably, the person of Mary Magdalene was given much more importance than can be known from Scripture. She was portrayed as having almost the standing of an apostle, even appearing to join the 12 apostles as an equal in traveling with Jesus.

Though the incidents portrayed in the life of Jesus are largely true to the Gospels, there are occasional departures from Scriptural fact throughout the movie. For instance, Mary Magdalene is shown discovering the empty tomb alone, rather than with Mary the mother of James, and Salome (or "the other women") as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

And in the scene of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, Jesus enters the tomb and places His hands on Lazarus, rather than calling to him from outside the tomb, as recorded in the Gospel of John.

Cinematic license was also taken in having Jesus speak important words from Scripture in contexts other than the ones in which they were actually spoken, often combining two stories into one sequence. Hence the truncated nature of the film.

Credit is to be given where it is due, though. The filmmakers did succeed in their excellent treatment of the effect of mob rule by emphasizing Pilate's cowardice in allowing the angry crowd to decide which prisoner to release: Jesus or the thief Barabbas.

The oppression, brutality, and tyranny of the Roman occupiers weren't overlooked, either. Early in the film, a small boy is crushed by a cart at the callous hands of the Romans.

Filmed in Morocco, the movie boasts breathtaking cinematography and outstanding production values. Oddly, however, the representation of Jerusalem seems out of place and not quite authentic.

But, while no movie is perfect, there is a great deal to redeem this one. While the storyline focuses more on Jesus' relationship with his apostles than on His teachings, Christians can't help but be moved by its message of love and forgiveness.

Near the end, Jesus delivers to His disciples the Great Commission about evangelism, and hopefully in viewing the film, Christians will be reminded of their own duty of obedience to that command.

*Son of God* is rated PG-13, and parents should know that some scenes, including the crucifixion of Jesus, are extremely violent.



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