



*The General Church of the
New Jerusalem*

PERTH CIRCLE

April 2004



*“Father, forgive them,
for they know not what they do”*

(Luke 23.34).

The Passion of the Christ

A New Church Minister's Perspective

Excerpt from the Calgary Newsletter...pastor Rev Michael Gladish

What was the Real Purpose of the Lord's Life?

We understand that Ash Wednesday, February 25 this year, was the date for the release of the new movie, "The Passion of Christ." According to the reviews, and also the pre-release "hype," it is a very powerful film, well done, moving and memorable. Christian groups all over the world are promoting it heavily as an outreach to the unchurched, and it may well be a topic of conversation for many of us as we go about our business with Christian or other movie-going friends. But there are those – especially in the New Church – who have reservations. For example, here is an article written for publication by the Rev. Dan Goodenough, who himself discovered the New Church as a young man and then became a General Church pastor and president of the Academy schools in Bryn Athyn. Dan is now retired and living in Sheridan, Wyoming. He writes: -

"The Mel Gibson Movie, *"The Passion of the Christ,"* is getting high publicity these days, and with the Easter season not far away, people are wondering about seeing it. "Let me share why I think I probably will not see it. I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as God- Man, the incarnation of the "I AM," God Himself. Jesus is the Word of God in human flesh. I don't see Him as the Person whose sacrificial crucifixion as God's Son somehow persuaded His Father to allow human beings to be saved, and whose physical blood bought our salvation. I

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believe His real blood is the Divine truth by which He overpowered the hells, from the strength of His infinite love – “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23.34).

His real temptations were less centred on bodily torture (ghastly as that was) than on the cosmic issue of whether the human race could be saved; and on His inner despair from feeling remote from the Father, His soul of love within. “So as I think of His life on earth I try to develop in my mind a picture of a Divine Human Person, who indeed suffered horribly, but who also triumphed as a Warrior of Truth and Love.

And the image I seek as my dominant picture is Jesus as Teacher, Shepherd, Healer, both Leader and Servant of people. I do not want my primary thought to be Jesus the Sufferer – even though at Easter I will remember the details of His final temptations and victory over the hells, to restore human freedom to every one of us. Of my many mental images of Jesus, my favourite is as a shepherd with outstretched hands; it was painted in the Roman catacombs by very early Christians. “By all reports the Gibson movie is highly faithful to Gospel accounts, and this has led to charges of anti-Semitism. It may be no more anti-Semitic than the Gospel of Matthew. On the other hand, the theology inherent in this film clearly suggests that the true importance of Jesus lies in His role as a man in His suffering and dying. I understand Gibson is a devout Catholic, and the portrayal of Jesus as the suffering and sacrificial atonement is consistent with traditional Catholic portrayals of Jesus over the centuries (See *True Christian Religion* 132).

Personally I don't want to have highly graphic images of Jesus' bloody suffering at the centre of my picture of my Divine Human Lord.

"The Gospels talk about Jesus' resurrection as much as, or more than, they describe His Passion, and the earliest Christians worshipped Him as Teacher and risen Lord, not primarily for His death. I've heard the Gibson movie's only gesture towards the resurrection is a concluding shot of the empty tomb. The movie I wish I could see (besides one about Jesus' teaching, His loving and His working miracles) is about my Lord risen from the dead, speaking to Mary Magdalene, the Apostles, talking to Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24).

"If Jesus Christ were not God-Man whom I worship, this movie would not be much of an issue for me. And I admit that a compelling reason to see it may arise – such as the need to discuss the movie in detail with others. Still, as a believer in the risen Jesus Christ as the one God of heaven and earth, I seek His face in all the pictures and events described in the Gospels, not primarily during the one week on earth when, at His lowest, He suffered the severest attacks.

"This Easter season I will once again think with sorrow about our Lord's final suffering. But my principal *worship* will be for His resurrection, His defeat of evil through love, and the living power He then took on, to raise us to Himself, if we will follow Him."

Reader's response

I have seen the movie and I am very glad that I have.

There are several points to raise here.

In the New Church of course we know that this was the final temptation and not an atonement of a dysfunctional relationship between father and son.

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The Lord came to earth for 4 reasons,

- (1) to glorify His human
- (2) fight the Hells
- (3) reveal Himself to us as God in Human form
- (4) to establish a new church from the remnants of His followers.....His disciples.

The movie satisfied these reasons

- (1) the ending illustrated this.....
- (2) this was well portrayed in the New church sense
- (3) beautifully portrayed throughout the movie
- (4) the discipleship was clearly evident

The Movie was true to the gospels portraying the violence that we read about in the Word. We read about it every year and have heard about since childhood.....but the actual violence in visual form has greater impact in "The Passion". It is gruelling, sublimely sad, and heartrendingly felt by the viewers.

It left me with the knowledge that I can feel that the Lord gave up His life for me personally. A view which I have always rejected as a wrong Christian idea.

If it weren't for His Passion on the Cross, and His subsequent Resurrectionwhat would my spiritual future be?

At that time it was possible for people to be overcome physically by evil spirits.....but not any more!since He fought the Hells.

At that time people could not get to Heaven.....but now we can!

We can now feel completely safe in the Lord.

I feel supremely grateful to Him for this wonderful future that he Has gifted to meand I feel extremely passionate about this after viewing the movie.

Acceptance of what He had to go through for me and youso we could have a future of happiness.....brings us closer to loving Him personally.

A closing of our minds to the horrors of the tortures and violence inflicted on Him, and foretold in the prophets, deprives us of a wholistic understanding both in the mind and the will.

Emotionally we are never the same again after viewing this movie.....just as people then who lived to see the actual event were deeply affected .

The terrible inflictions that we view on the screen also represent the violence that had been done to the Word, by the scribes and Pharisees. It impacts powerfully in a spiritual sense as well.....on a New Church viewer. This violence is happening around us every day in this day and age too.

When the Lord arrives triumphantly into our minds after we have been living a life of repentance and reformation, and working with Him against temptations with His help, then we have to be ready to either accept Him totallyor to reject and try to destroy His presence in us.

This powerful movie sows seeds of such strong feelings of love and loyalty to Our Lord..... that I will never forget.

Respectfully submitted
Mary Smuts

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NEWS**Visit of Peter and Lisa Buss**

What a wonderful opportunity we all had to hear two classes from Peter, spend some social time just chatting and getting to know Peter and Lisa, and enjoying a wonderful sermon and Holy Supper service!

Parables of conversion was the topic on Thursday evening after a very tasty meal at Moira and John Frost's home.

Peter compared the conversion states of people by looking at the outline of the four stories in the Word.....Naaman, Nicodemus, Man born blind and the woman at the well.

They represent the four statesof those in truths profaned from the evils of life, those of the consummated Church, those outside of the church and the Universal Church seekers.

He discussed with us what we need to present to people in these categories....to help them to find the Lord in their lives.

Copies of the notes handed to us are available on request from Mary Smuts. (9310 9402)

The class on Friday was on the topic of Courage

This class was a deep look at how we operate in our lives, and how we need to examine our motives to ensure that we are acting according to pure motives. However if we have impure motives that we are unaware of, the Lord has so much love and forgiveness that we can be sure that He is caring for us and leading us towards eternal happiness.

Betrothal Verity Jane Smuts to Tony Phan on Sunday 28th March Rev Peter Buss officiating. We wish them every joy and happiness as they travel the path of life together.

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Farewell to the downstairs space at Broome street

The Harvest Festival on Sunday 21st March was the last time that we worshipped in the downstairs space. Relocation of the Georgist Society has resulted in the Speld Organisation needing this space and offering us the upstairs area.even storage of the organ and books etc is possible. We thank the Lord for this blessing.

Pictured below is the beautiful altar for the harvest festival.



Cynthia's 70th Birthday party

We enjoyed celebrating with Cynthia on her birthday and again on Saturday evening at Richard's home on the 27th March. Many, many happy returns of the day dear friend!!

April Calendar 2004

Sun 4th	Worship 10.30am followed by a cuppa	10 Broome Street <u>upstairs</u> South Perth (off Douglas St.)
Thurs8th	Class	TBA TCR
Fri 9th	<i>Good Friday Service</i> 6pm	10 Broome Street (off Douglas St.) <u>upstairs</u>
Sun 11th	<i>Easter Sunday</i> Worship 10.30am followed by a cuppa	35 Ewing Ave Bullcreek
Sun 18th	Worship at 10.30am followed by a cuppa	10 Broome Street (off Douglas St <u>upstairs</u> .South Perth
Thurs 22nd	Class TCR	Harts Kincardine Cres 7.30pm class
Sun 25th th	Worship at 1030am Followed by a picnic afterwards.	10 Broome Street <u>upstairs</u> (off Douglas St.) South Perth

10 Broome Street, South Perth

(off Douglas Street)

Worship at 10.30am every Sunday

*Experience a new meaning and level of understanding
the Bible and Creation.*

*Reach new satisfying states of peaceful tranquillity
and calm through inner faith and deep conviction in
God's Divine plan for us.*

*Enjoy happiness and joy by living principles of
charity and use in your everyday life as taught us by
the Lord God Jesus Christ.*

Reach out to others with love and understanding.

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New Church Radio Listen on line at

<http://www.newchurchradio.org/>

Walk to Emmaus (an online discussion group)

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