

Some thoughts on watching films

Stories are the stuff of life. They allow us to reflect on all sorts of issues at a safe distance as we engage with the characters, cry with them, laugh with them, get cross with them and generally share their experience. How they deal with the issues they come across may frustrate us, or give us new insights; cause us to laugh or cry; result in us hurling abuse at the screen or willing there to be a happy ending. And through it all we can encounter God in all sorts of unexpected places if we only take time to look.

So here are some questions you can apply to any film. Sometimes, you may feel that there is nothing much to say—but that itself can be its own message. Other films can be truly life changing! But whatever film you are watching, enjoy the experience!

Questions to ask yourself

What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?

Which incidents made you *think* or *feel* most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?

What issues did the film raise for you?

What character(s) do you most identify with and why?

Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values? How does the Bible tackle the issues the film raises?

Some facts about the film

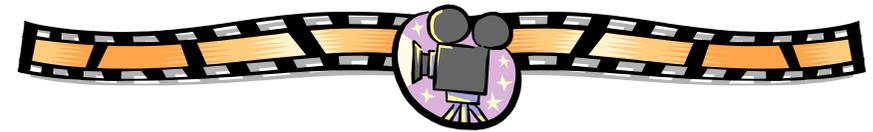
According to director Martin Scorsese, the last shot was not intentional. The camera used to film this scene was faulty and light leaked in onto the the film, causing a white-out at the exact point in the scene at which Jesus expires, and this was not discovered until the film was processed. Serendipity or divine intervention, take your pick.

The Jews have American accents while the Romans have British accents.

The film is currently banned in Chile and Bulgaria. Try and import a DVD and it will be seized at customs.

Due to budgetary restraints there are only five stuntmen. Thus, the same five play the Roman soldiers who surround the temple, the locals who riot, the Levites who come down the stairs, and the five men who go up the stairs against the Levites—that is, against themselves.

Nikos Kazantzakis also wrote *Zorba the Greek*.



**A chance to watch films together.
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

15th Jan*	Bruce Almighty
5th Feb*	The Mission
12th Mar	Shrek
9th Apr	<u>The Last Temptation of Christ</u>
14th May	Bagdad Cafe
11th Jun	21 Grams

**Films start at 5:30pm
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

**10 Bletchington Road
Islip**

**Further details from Jonathan (Ox 842214)
Or email info@spiritualityonscreen.org.uk**

*Please note change of date



The Last Temptation of Christ

Unlike some of the other “Jesus” films, the source material for *The Last Temptation* is not the gospels but Nikos Kazantzakis’ novel of the same name. The carpenter Jesus of Nazareth, tormented by the temptations of demons, the guilt of making crosses for the Romans, pity for men and the world, and the constant call of God, sets out to find what God wills for him. But as his mission nears fulfillment, he must face the greatest temptation: the normal life of a good man.

A film of three parts, the first sees Jesus in his carpentry shop, being chastized by Judas for collaborating with the Romans, his participation in the crucifixion of a fellow Jew, and his withdrawal to a desert monastery in search of spiritual guidance. The second then includes familiar stories from the gospels, though the sequence has been rearranged for dramatic effect. Finally, part three, the controversial vision sequence, takes place with Jesus on the cross, where Jesus imagines being rescued by God and going on to live a contented family life. Along the way, he confronts Paul, and also has deathbed conversations with his surviving disciples, including Peter and Judas.

Some key issues

Body vs Soul

Kazantzakis uses the Jesus story to continue working through his own lifelong struggle between the flesh and the spirit, something he believed to be the universal human struggle. Thus, the “last temptation” for Jesus is whether to embrace the domestic—and fleshly—pleasures of wife, home, sex and children, and thereby abandon the spiritual call to sacrifice himself on the cross. In contrast, orthodox Christianity would want to affirm the wholeness of life, where there is no inner struggle but all is held within the love of God. “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Gen 1:31).

The role of Judas

Throughout the film, it is Judas who is Jesus’ closest confidante. It is thus to an incredulous Judas—whom Jesus calls his “strongest friend”—that Jesus shares the reason for their visit to Jerusalem. And it is Judas who is ultimately persuaded to betray Jesus in response to Jesus’ own urging, Judas being the only one who loves Jesus enough to carry it through.

The Mind of Christ

Unlike some of the other portrayals of Jesus where Jesus’ other-worldliness is stressed, this Jesus is a very human Jesus. He struggles with the whole issue of his calling and the film allows us not only to hear Jesus speak but also to hear Jesus think, as Scorsese uses voice-overs to open up that interior life. As a result, we get to hear the questioning, the equivocation, the anxiety, the fear and, finally, the understanding and the conviction.

Some quotes

- Jesus:** The pain begins. It slides up my back and just before it gets to my eyes, it digs in its claws.
- Jesus:** I am here to set fire to the world! John the Baptist spoke to me in the desert. He said God is coming. Well, I'm telling you it's too late! God is already here; I am here! And I'm going to baptize everybody with fire!
- Judas:** I struggle, you collaborate.
- Jesus:** You think God belongs only to you? He doesn't. God is an immortal spirit who belongs to everybody, to the whole world. You think you're special? God is not an Israelite.
- Jesus:** God loves me. I know he loves me. I want him to stop.
- Judas:** How will you ever pay for your sins?
Jesus: With my life, Judas. With my life. I don't have anything else.
- Jesus:** If I was a woodcutter, I'd cut. If I was a fire, I'd burn. But I'm a heart and I love. That's the only thing I can do.
- Jesus:** If I could touch every stone, if I could breathe on every branch, they'd get up and follow me. So what's wrong with you?
- Jesus:** I wish there was another way, but there isn't. I have to die on the cross.
Judas: I won't let you die.
Jesus: You don't have a choice. Neither do I. Remember, we're bringing God and man together. They'll never be together unless I die. I'm the sacrifice.... Forget everything else, understand that.
- Judas:** If you were me, would you betray your master?
Jesus: No. That's why God gave me the easy part—to be crucified.
- Pontius Pilate:** Unfortunately for you, we don't want things changed.
- [in response to Jesus' denial that Jesus is the resurrected messiah]*
Paul: I created the truth out of what people needed and what they believed. If I have to crucify you to save them, then I'll crucify you. If I have to resurrect you, then I'll do that too.
- Judas:** What's good for man isn't good for God!
- [last lines]*
Jesus: It is accomplished!