

# JESUS OF NAZARETH—FILM ERRORS

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## Some Things in Error or Not Accurate

1. The rabbi of Nazareth, as well as many other men in the movie, would not have worn a white (or any other colored) knitted cap on his head. The knitted cap was not known in the days of Yeshua, but only many centuries later. The *kipa* or *yarmulka* is not biblical, but pagan.<sup>1</sup>
2. Many of the men in the film (e.g. the man in the red cloak at the betrothal of Joseph and Mary) didn't have a mustache. This form of shaving, where one has a beard, but no mustache, only came into existence in the 1700s through the Amish and Mennonites because they didn't want to be mistaken for a Jew. All male Torah observant Jews were required to wear full, *untrimmed* beards, which obviously, would include a mustache (Lev. 19:27).<sup>2</sup>
  1. Yeshua, as well as all the Jewish Apostles and Jewish men of that time would have had a full, untrimmed beard (Lev. 19:27; Is. 50:6; Mic. 5:1), not a short, trimmed beard as the movie portrays Him and many other Jews.
3. The men in the synagogue with a *tallit* on (prayer shawl) is also a mistake. This would not have been known in the days of Yeshua because the *tallit* of Yeshua's day was actually their outer *garment* of clothing, with the *tzit'ziot* (tassels) in the garment toward the bottom, and hence, no need to have a rectangular piece of material to drape over one's shoulders or head. The reason for the *tzit'ziot* as a part of their clothing comes from the commandment in Numbers 15:37-41. The use of the *tallit*, as we know it today, only came on the scene a few hundred years ago.
  1. Neither Jesus, Joseph, nor many other Jews in the movie wear *tzit'ziot* on their clothes. As God commanded it (Num. 15:37-41), all adult male Jews would have worn them.
  2. Also, ancient Jewish men wouldn't cover their heads with shawls (or *tallit*) for that would make them look like women. This practice with the *tallit* is a perverse modern Jewish one.
4. Joseph with long side curls is another *faux pas*. This is a relatively modern perversion, done first by the Jewish *Hasidim* in Poland in the 1800s. They teach that it's the *mystical tzit'ziot* (tassels) of the *head!* If God wanted men to have long side curls, which makes them look like women, He would have commanded men to grow their side hair long. It's unfortunate that the movie has this perversion on Joseph, and also, on the boy Jesus at his bar Mitzva, etc.
5. Mary, speaking to her mother after the visitation by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:26-28f.), says Elizabeth conceived on the *19th of Tishri*. This would make it the fifth day of the Feast of Tabernacles which falls around mid-October. Of course, the Scriptures never mention any date for either John's conception or Yeshua's. It seems that 19 Tishri would have Yeshua being born in December, though, most likely on the 25th.

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<sup>1</sup> See *The Kipa* at <http://seedofabraham.net/The-Kipa.pdf> for why the *kipa* or *yarmulke* is an idolatrous head covering.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Biblical Beard* at <http://seedofabraham.net/The-Biblical-Beard.pdf> for why the full, untrimmed beard is another aspect of God's holiness for men.

1. John the Baptist would have been conceived in late June or July, according to the records for when the course of *Abiyah* (Abijah; 1st Chron. 24:10) would have been at the Temple (Luke 1:5f.) and Yeshua would have been born in late September or early October, on the Feast of Trumpets.<sup>3</sup>
6. Mary, on her journey to see Elizabeth, would not have ridden in a basket carriage. She would have walked, like everyone else.
7. The three “kings,” or rather *Magi* (star gazers; astrologers) didn’t come from three different countries, but most likely came from the land of Babylon (from ‘the east;’ Mt. 2:1), and Scripture doesn’t give how many of them came (if it was three or not). They would have come at least a year after Yeshua had been born (not at the time of His birth, as is usually taught). This is seen from the fact that Herod ‘determined from them what time the star appeared’ to them (Mt. 2:7), and also, Herod’s murder of male infants in Bethlehem who were two years old and younger (Mt. 2:16-18). If Yeshua had just been born there would have been no need for Herod to murder anyone over three months old.
  1. To the credit of the movie, the infant Jesus is older than a new born baby when the Magi come and it seems that they are not in a stable, but in a home. Be that as it may, Scripture speaks of Yeshua being a ‘young Child,’ not a new born baby, when the Magi come (Mt. 2:8-9, 11, 13-14 NKJV).
  2. The names of Melchior and Balthazar are traditional Catholic names for two of the *Magi*. The movie director, Franco Zeffirelli, is a Catholic, and so it’s to be expected. The Roman Catholic influence is also seen with the older Mary ‘in mourning’ for Joseph, Martha and Mary, and most of the women of Jerusalem who help Jesus on the way to the crucifixion, being dressed like nuns.
8. In the movie the Magi don’t go to King Herod, but in Scripture they did. Also, the Magi didn’t tell or warn Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt, an angel did that (Mt. 2:13-15).
9. Of course, the mentioning of ‘the *divine* Zoroaster’ (628-551 BC) by one of the *Magi* (Donald Pleasance), along with intimating that some gods lead to the One True God, is worldly nonsense (‘all the rest are vain, or are *parts of Him*’). Zoroaster was known as the fire god (god of fire), which equates him with the Canaanite god Molech, who devoured infants in the *flames* as a burnt sacrifice to him. This is Satan by another name.<sup>4</sup>
10. In the movie, King Herod says there ‘won’t be any Messiahs, true or false, in *Palestine* while I’m alive.’ The name *Palestine* wasn’t given to the region until *after* the Roman Emperor Hadrian put down the rebellion in Judah and Galilee, known by its Jewish leader ‘bar Kochba,’ in 135 AD (more than a hundred years after King Herod died). Hadrian gave it the name *Palestine* in derision of the Jews’ ancient enemies, the Philistines (*Palestine* is an anglicized version of *Philistine*).
  1. The taking of the census, which was actually done in the days of Yeshua, was not lawful for the Jewish people unless God directed it (Ex. 30:12; Num. 1:1ff.; 26:4). Any other time would have been a great sin, as we see when King David took a census (2nd Sam. 24:1f.; 1st Chron. 21:1f.). It seems that God’s promise, of making Israel as many as the stars of the heavens, excluded counting Israel at any time (1st Chron. 27:23), except by His direction. In other words, taking a census of men (for only men were counted in census-taking in Israel; cf. Num. 2:1:1-3; John 6:10) might have meant that one didn’t trust God, but trusted in the number of men of war to fight their

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<sup>3</sup> For the correct date of Messiah’s birth see *The Feast of Trumpets* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Truah-The-Feast-of-Trumpets.pdf> and scroll down to *The Date of Birth for Yeshua*.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Hislop reveals that Zoroaster and Molech were one and the same gods, stemming from Nimrod being deified. See Alexander Hislop’s classic, *The Two Babylons*, pp. 61-67, 120-121, 229, 313f. My PDF of it can be read and/or downloaded at <http://seedofabraham.net/The-Two-Babylons.pdf>. Check the Table of Contents to determine the difference in page formatting between the book and the PDF.

enemies.

11. The movie has eight day old baby Jesus being circumcised in the Temple at Jerusalem, but this is a mistake. Yeshua would have been circumcised in *Bethlehem* on the *eighth day* of His life (Genesis 17:9-14; Lk. 2:21). He didn't have to be in the Temple to be circumcised. Mary would have been purified on the *41st day* at the Temple in Jerusalem (Lev. 12:1-8; Lk. 2:22-24), as Bethlehem is only five miles (eight kilometers) south of the Temple. Yeshua was there with Mary and Joseph because it was at the Temple at Mary's purification that Simeon and Hannah proclaimed baby Yeshua to be the Jewish Messiah (Lk. 2:25-39).<sup>5</sup>
12. When Mary, in the movie, is revealing to Joseph that she's pregnant with child, Mary doesn't have her head covering on. This would not have occurred because it would have been a form of immodesty and indiscretion. Even though Joseph and Mary were legally married, they hadn't consummated it yet.
  1. The Messiah would never have worn a head covering as the movie, and most of Christendom, portray Him. Instead, he would have worn a traditional head covering akin to what many men in the movie (like Philip) did wear. For instance, the man who was with Mary Magdalene, in her house. We see him putting a traditional Israeli head covering on. The way the movie portrays Jesus wearing it makes him look more like a woman, especially with his very long hair, which the Messiah Yeshua would not have had.
  2. Long hair on a man is a sign of rebellion against God. The Apostle Paul says it's a disgrace or a dishonor for a man to have long hair (1st Cor. 11:14 NASB). Part of the reason is because long hair is for women, so, a man having long hair is not walking in God's ways, but presenting himself as a wild/independent man, who has no need for God and who could be mistaken for a woman.
  3. In the 'Ezekiel's Temple' God specifically speaks of the length of the hair of the priests being *well trimmed* (Ezekiel 44:20).
  4. Also, Yeshua wouldn't have gone around with his head uncovered, as the movie displays so many times.
13. In the film Joseph is seen speaking of the coming Messiah as being 'pure from sin,' and not violent. Of course, the Joseph of Scripture never says that, and it would only have been a divinely enlightened person who would have thought that about the Messiah before Yeshua came upon the scene. Even Peter, with help from Above, didn't want Yeshua to die (Mt. 15:16:15-23f.). With Rome suppressing Israel, the people wanted the Messiah, the Son of David, to come and destroy the Romans and set up His Kingdom, obviously, by force.
14. Joseph, baby Jesus and Mary, after having returned from Egypt, are seen standing on their porch in Nazareth and praying or blessing God. Joseph has *tefillin* on (the leather straps that are seen on his left arm and the black leather box on his head), which is a mistake. This Pharisaic *invention* began one generation before Yeshua, but neither Joseph, nor any other Jews except the Pharisees, would have worn them. Alfred Edersheim writes that only the Pharisees wore them in the days of Yeshua, and even they couldn't agree on whether *tefillin* were to be worn on the head *or* the arm (not both the head and the arm), but whether it was the head, or the arm *tefillin*, it would have been worn *all day* by the Pharisees, and not just in morning prayer, as is done today in Orthodox Judaism. None of the priests

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<sup>5</sup> Interestingly enough, it seems that it was also the 41st day, after Yeshua's 30th birthday, that He began His ministry. Luke speaks of Yeshua being 'about 30 years old' when He began to minister (Lk. 3:23). If Yeshua was immersed on His 30th birthday, under John the Baptist, and then immediately led of the Holy Spirit into the Wilderness for His 40 day fast, it would have been 41 days after His 30th birthday that He began to minister, corresponding to the day when He first came into the Temple at Jerusalem.

of the Temple, nor the Rabbis, nor the common people like Joseph, wore *tefillin*.<sup>6</sup>

15. The celebration of becoming Jesus being *bar Mitzvah* at 13 years old, where the men were dancing and singing around Him, is a mistake. The *bar Mitzva* was not developed until medieval times.<sup>7</sup>
  1. The words of the blessings that are pronounced in the movie, for the times when John (the Baptist) and Jesus are circumcised, and when Joseph and Mary are betrothed, and when the marriage ceremony takes place, are traditional rabbinic blessings. They may or may not have been used in the days of Messiah, but are nice.
16. John's baptism of repentance would have had all the Jewish people *completely immersing themselves*, and not as the movie portrays, with John taking a handful of water and sprinkling it upon their heads.<sup>8</sup> Here we see the Roman Catholic influence of sprinkling, not fully immersing.
  1. The film has John the Baptist telling the Pharisees not to say, 'Abraham our Father is enough to save us!' This is an accurate understanding of how the Pharisees, and many other Jews, thought that they were going to be seen as righteous by God on Judgement Day, and inherent eternal life.
  2. In that same scene, though, many Jews are heard shouting invectives at the Pharisees, but the common people generally 'looked up to' the Pharisees as the keepers of the faith and examples of how to 'really' walk out their faith in God. This is indirectly understood when Yeshua speaks of one's righteousness needing to be *more than* that of the Pharisees (Mt. 5:20). Most Jews thought the Pharisees were the bastion of holiness.
17. Herod Antipas, at his birthday celebration, would not have worn the High Priest's breastplate of 12 precious stones (which represented the 12 Tribes of Israel: Ex. 28:15-29). All of Israel would have stoned him if he had worn it.
  1. Also, Herod Antipas speaks of John the Baptist being 'out there' in the Wilderness 'for years' preaching his baptism of repentance, but this is another mistake. John was born about six months before Yeshua (Luke 1:26f.) and would most likely have begun preaching in April of the year when he turned 30, which is when Scripture speaks of the time when a priest (whom, incidentally John was, for he was the son of Zechariah, who was a priest)<sup>9</sup> would enter upon full time ministry in the Tabernacle or Temple.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See *Tefillin—To Wear or Not to Wear?* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Tefillin-To-Wear-or-Not-to-Wear.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0075520/goofs>.

<sup>8</sup> 'Full-immersion baptism, not sprinkling baptism, was in use at the time of Christ;' <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0075520/goofs>. For more on this ask for the PDF *Baptism in Water*.

<sup>9</sup> Luke 1:5, 13-17, 24, 26-27, 36, 39-41, 57, 59-63, 67-77, 80.

<sup>10</sup> Lev. 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47 states that the Levitical priest was numbered when he was thirty years old and able to serve in the Tabernacle. On the other hand, Lev. 8:24 speaks of the Levitical priest beginning his service at 25 years old. Rabbinic 'interpretation harmonizes the conflicting numbers by surmising that between the ages of 25 and 30 (the) Levites functioned as assistants, and only at age 30 were they counted as full fledged members of the work force.' Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler and Michael A. Fishbane, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible*; Accordance electronic ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; Num. 8:23-26.

Also needing to be taken into account is that in the days of King David the Levitical priests began work at 20 years old (1st Chron. 23:24, 27; 2nd Chron. 31:17; cf. 1st Chron. 23:3). Yet, John wasn't just a Levitical priest, but an Aaronic Priest, which means that he was a Son of Levi, and also a Son of Aaron, who were the only priests God ordained to sacrifice, burn incense, and to stand before Yahveh and minister to Him, to bless Israel in His name and to teach Israel the difference between holy and unclean (i.e. Torah; Lev. 10:8-11; Num. 6:22-27; Dt. 10:8; 33:8-11; 1st Chron. 23:13).

Be all that as it may, it John began his ministry at 30 years old because Luke speaks of John beginning his ministry 'in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberias Caesar,' which is dated at 27-28 AD. The "most usual modern esti-

2. Yeshua, born about six months after John (Lk. 1:26f.), in late September or early October, would turn 30 in late September or early October, most likely on The Feast of Trumpets,<sup>11</sup> and begin His ministry at ‘about 30 years old’ (Luke 3:23), being first immersed or baptized in Jordan, most likely on His birthday. So, it seems that John wasn’t in the Wilderness preaching ‘for years,’ but most likely for about half a year before Yeshua came on the scene. John probably was arrested by Herod Antipas about six month later (Jn. 3:30). It seems that John’s ministry lasted for about a year.
18. In the scene where John the Baptist’s body has been buried, one of the actor’s speaks of John’s head being “sheered off like a rabbit’s.” A Jew would never use that expression because the Law forbids the eating of rabbits (Lev. 11; they’re unclean), and so, sheering off their heads would not be a practice that a Jew would be familiar with. Substituting ‘chicken’ would have been more in line with what a Jew might have said.
  19. Alfred Edersheim writes that the multiplication of the bread and fish would have involved fish that were,
 

‘small, and generally dried or pickled fish eaten with bread, like sardines...The Greek word ὀψάριον (*opsarion*) directly indicates this (John 6:9, 11). Thus, if Yeshua thanked His Father for these small, dried fish, which the Jewish Sages called tasty and savory, the multiplication of them wouldn’t have brought forth larger, *fresh* fish that would have needed to be grilled over a fire before the multitude could have eaten it, but smaller dried and salted fish that the multitude could have immediately eaten with the bread.’<sup>12</sup>
  19. A number of times in the movie some of the Apostles appear dressed ‘as cave men’ (meaning that they’re ‘half-dressed,’ exposing their upper torsos; like Andrew in the scene of the feeding of the 5,000. This is pure 21st century Western culture. It would not have happened in the days of Yeshua because modesty, which is a form of holiness, was part of the way that everyone dressed.
  20. Another *faux pas* is when Martha greets Yeshua after her brother Lazarus has died. She would never have embraced Yeshua or even touched Him. First century Israeli protocol is not 20th century Western culture, and was much more circumspect and respecting of the opposite sexes.
    1. Scripture gives us a glimpse of what was proper for men and women when Yeshua is seen speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well. The Apostles returned and were *amazed* that He was even *speaking* to a woman! John 4:27 says, “And at this point His disciples came, and they *marveled* that He *talked with a woman*, yet no one said, ‘What do You seek?’ or ‘Why are You talking with her?’”
    2. Of course, what we see in John 4 is an asterisk, in that Yeshua spoke to a woman, but it reveals why there were 12 men, but no women, at the Passover Table with Yeshua. The ancient Israelis had a much greater understanding and respect for the differences between the sexes.

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mate of the fifteenth year of Tiberius is 27-28 AD. It may be presumed that the ministry of Jesus began not long after this” when He was ‘about thirty years old’ (Luke 3:23). “The date of the Crucifixion...is also controversial. A majority of modern scholars appear to favor 30 AD.” Walter L. Liefield, author; Frank E. Gaebelien, general editor; J. D. Douglas, associate ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan, 1990), Accordance Bible Software; B. Chronology, Luke 3:1.

<sup>11</sup> For why Yeshua was born on the Feast of Trumpets, and not The Feast of Tabernacles, see *The Feast of Trumpets* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Truah-The-Feast-of-Trumpets.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), pp. 467-468.

21. In the movie, when Jesus overturns the tables of the money-changers in the Temple, the disciples are smiling with glee, but they would have been just as shocked and surprised as the Temple priests.
22. In the scene of the man born blind, which takes place in the Temple, a woman is seen ministering to a sick person laying down by a pillar. Sick people, though, weren't allowed into the Temple because they were ceremonially unclean (Lev. 15:1-15).
  1. In that episode, though, the movie Jesus asks the former blind man if he believed in the Son of Man, but Scripture records that Yeshua asked him if he believed in the Son of God (Jn. 9:35 KJV and NKJV have Son of God).
  2. In the movie, when Jesus turns to rebuke the priests, He says, 'Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees!', but they weren't Scribes, nor Pharisees, but Temple priests (Sadducees).
23. In a number of scenes it appears that the Temple courtyard/precinct had several altars of incense, but there were no altars of incense anywhere on the Temple grounds. The only Altar of Incense was in the closed off area of the Holy Place, along with the gold Lampstand and the gold Table for the Bread of His Presence (Exodus 30:1f.; Luke 1:8-11). There was an Altar of Sacrifice in the Temple area, outside the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, but we don't see it in the film.
24. Pilate, as governor of Judah, would not have worn a military uniform.
25. Pilate, in the movie, returns to Caesarea around the time that Jesus was crucified, but in reality he would not have left Jerusalem during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread because he was there to specifically ensure order. With Passover and Tabernacles, Jerusalem would swell up to four times its size (about a million Jews), and so, Pilate, as head of the Roman government, would especially be in Jerusalem during those Feasts to insure Roman law and order.
26. The movie has Zarah the Scribe coming to the empty tomb, but Scripture doesn't record any scribe, or any other member of the Sanhedrin, going to the tomb. Also, entering a tomb would have made him unclean, something that a scribe of his caliber would not want to do.
  1. The Jewish, not Roman guards, told the Sanhedrin what had happened and the Jewish Sanhedrin bribed their own Jewish guards, telling them that if it came to Pilate they would vouch for them, and the guards wouldn't get in trouble or die for letting the corpse be stolen (Mt. 27:65; 28:4, 11-15).

## Some Theological or Scriptural Flaws

1. On leaving the Temple after healing the blind man, one of the things that the movie Jesus says is, 'I and My Father are one *and the same!*' In John 10:30, the only place in the Gospels that records speaking of 'I and My Father,' we don't see 'and the same,' but just, 'I and My Father are one.' The movie, adding 'the same' seems to imply that the Father and the Son are the same Person, which they are not. Of course, the movie could have been meaning that both the Father and the Son are deity, which they are.<sup>13</sup>
2. When the movie Jesus asked, 'Who do men say that I am' one of the Apostles says, 'Elijah back from the grave.' Of course, Elijah never went to the grave, but was taken up in the Chariot of Heaven (2nd Kings 2:11).

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<sup>13</sup> See *Yeshua: God the Son* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Yeshua-God-the-Son.pdf> and *Yeshua—His Deity and Sonship* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Yeshua-His-Deity-and-Sonship.pdf> for more on the deity and sonship of the Messiah from the Hebraic Perspective.

3. Another theological flaw is when Jesus says that Peter is the rock, which Jesus will build his church on. Again we see a heavy Catholic influence.
  1. First, Jesus doesn't say that Peter is the one whom He will build His church on. Yeshua said, 'And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it' (Mt. 16:18). Catholic interpretation says that *Peter* is the *rock* upon which Christ would build His Church, but it's Yeshua who is the Rock upon which His church is built upon. The Rock is the revelation that Yeshua is God the Son, which Peter had just confessed, Yeshua saying that he didn't get that understanding from himself (not from flesh and blood), but from the Father in Heaven. This, that Yeshua is God in the flesh, is the foundation upon which Messiah's assembly or church is built upon.<sup>14</sup> *Rock* is also a designation for the God of Israel and would be fitting for God the Son.
4. Judas may well have had doubts and been 'confused' concerning Jesus, but Luke 22:3-5 says that Satan entered him and that Judas 'conferred with the chief priests (not just a Sanhedrin scribe) about *betraying* Jesus. It wasn't a surprise to Judas, as the movie portrays. The priests were glad, paid Judas, and he promised to betray Jesus, in the absence of the Jewish crowds because the Jewish people *loved to hear Yeshua teach* in the Temple (Lk. 21:38) and other places.<sup>15</sup> Judas didn't betray the Lord because he thought that 'political action' was the way to effect a change of government (meaning that Rome would take her soldiers and tax collectors out of Israel) as the movie portrays him. Scripture also notes that Judas a thief because took funds out of the money box (John 12:6).
5. At the Passover scene, Jesus says that the bread was *no longer* to remind them of the deliverance from slavery in Egypt, but of the new deliverance. Yet, Yeshua doesn't say that in Scripture. The unleavened bread pictures *both* events because they both continue to represent salvation—freedom from slavery from Egypt and Satan.
  1. The same concept is true for the wine, which pictures the blood of the lamb slain in Egypt and the Lamb slain in Jerusalem. In other words, the initial meanings of salvation-redemption remain intact and valid, with the greater meaning overlaying the prototype, not obliterating it.
6. When Mary comes to the Apostles who are hiding in a room for fear of the Jewish authorities, she tells them that Yeshua is alive, but none of them believe her. After she leaves, Thomas begins to ask some of the Apostles if they believed her, and when he comes to Peter, Peter says that he believed her. In Scripture, though, none of the Apostles, including Peter, believed that Yeshua was alive until they actually saw Him (Mk. 16:11, 14; Lk. 24:11).
7. In the last scene, with the resurrected Jesus and the Apostles, he says to them that they are to baptize in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Even though Matthew 28:19 speaks of that, it's a gloss; something that the Roman Catholic Church invented.<sup>16</sup>
  1. Baptism in water was, and should always be done, in the name of Jesus (Yeshua), not 'the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In every instance in Acts and Romans where it speaks of water baptism, it's always 'in the name of Yeshua.'<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Greek word for church (assembly) is *ekklaysia* and was first used of Israel at Mt. Sinai in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was made about 280 BC. In other words, when Jesus and Paul, etc., speak of the Church, it's not a new word or concept, but something that began in the days of Moses, and was now continuing with Jesus of Nazareth.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 4:25; 5:1; 8:1; Mark 6:33; 10:1; Luke 5:3, 15; 8:45; 11:14; 14:25, etc.

<sup>16</sup> For more information on why baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is wrong, ask for the PDF, *Matthew 28:19: Baptism in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?*



8. When the three women are questioned as to why they didn't anoint the body of Yeshua at the time of the burial Mary replies that the Sabbath was approaching and so they didn't have time to buy it. Scripture, though, speaks of the spices being bought *before* the Sabbath (Luke 16:1-2; Jn. 19:35-40), and Mark speaks of them buying (additional?) spices after the Sabbath (Mark 16:1).

There are other mistakes in the film, but I thought these would be enough to make you aware that the movie isn't perfect, but it is the best 'Jesus' movie, and here's why:

## Some Powerful Acting

1. The movie's greatness, and it's certainly a great movie, in spite of the mistakes and errors, centers around Robert Powell, who presents an *extraordinary* performance as *Jesus*. Especially poignant is the Prodigal Son scene where Peter, because of what Jesus says, is reconciled to his enemy, Matthew the tax collector. I can't watch this scene without tears welling up. Powell is excellent in his *presence*, his words and his actions throughout the movie.
  1. Although the New Testament doesn't speak of Peter hating Matthew, or this event transpiring, it, or something close to it, could very well have been. Tax collectors, especially chief tax collectors like Matthew Levi, were hated by the Jewish people who felt oppressed by the power they had from Rome to extract taxes. Also, because their profession was what it was, they were excluded from giving testimony in a Jewish court of law. The only other 'profession' that wasn't allowed to testify in a Jewish court were prostitutes. The Rabbis had barred them both because of their obvious character flaws.
  2. Another brilliant display of *presence* by Powell is Jesus' attempt to call the zealot Barabbas back to him. After Barabbas turns to leave Jesus, not wanting to love the Romans, his enemy, we see an emotional Jesus crying out of his heart to the wayward zealot. We have no Scripture for Jesus ever meeting or speaking with Barabbas (outside of them both being in Pilate's grip), but the dynamics of the meeting are real enough and present Jesus as pleading with the misguided patriot, wanting to make him turn from his disastrous way. Powell is keenly distressed, and Stacey Keach, as Barrabas, is very believable.
  3. The scene where Jesus raises Lazarus is another *tour de force*, partly because of what and how Yeshua speaks of Himself being the resurrection and the life, and partly because it climaxes the film's usage of part of a passage from Jonah's prayer in the belly of the great fish (Jonah 2:6), which was first heard at the deathbed of Joseph. At the scene of the tomb of Lazarus, John the Apostle says it, and how poignant it is:
    - a. 'I went down into the cities below the earth, to the peoples of the past, *but you lifted my life from the pit...Oh Lord, my God...*'
    - b. Jonah's prayer is from vv. 2-9, but verse six says: 'I went down to the moorings of the mountains. The earth with its bars closed behind me forever. Yet, You have brought up my life from the pit, Oh Lord, my God.'
  4. The scene in the Temple, with the man born blind, is another poignant depiction. Powell places his hand on the head of the former blind man, to still his soul in the midst of the false accusation by the priests, that he had never been blind, but was only pretending to be blind so he could beg mon-

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<sup>17</sup> Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5; Romans 6:3; Paul speaks of us being baptized into His death. Neither the Father, nor the Holy Spirit, died for us. Baptism speaks of our dying to ourselves



ey from the people.

5. Powell's performance as 'a Jesus who entreats the sinner, but rebukes the self-righteous,' is to be expected, but the way Powell does it, and everything else in the film (e.g. the way he accepts Andrew and Philip as his disciples) is phenomenal. His speech, cadence and mannerisms make this *Jesus of Nazareth* come alive as no other actor has done before or since.
6. Powell 'received best actor awards from TV Times (UK) and Italian TV Times, and also, the international arts prize at the Fiuggi Film Festival, the grand prize at the Saint-Vincent Film Festival, and a nomination as best actor from The Irish Academy of Film and Television Arts.'<sup>18</sup> For its fifth airing on American television at Easter 1987, TV Guide called it 'the best mini-series of all time' and 'unparalleled television.'<sup>19</sup>
2. Peter Ustinov's performance as King Herod is nothing short of magnificent. Ustinov displays the emotions, quirks and power-driven madness that might well have been associated with the king. At times he is humorous and at other times we see that even the king must bend to the wishes of the Emperor of Rome. In his desire to hold onto his kingdom at any cost, we see both fear and rage at the thought that another king, even though an infant, was threatening his kingship.
3. Standing shoulder to shoulder with Powell and Ustinov is Michael York's spectacular presentation of what we would expect from the real John the Baptist—fiery and fierce! York has me soaking up every word and action of *John* because of how he presents the Baptist.
4. Christopher Plummer's paranoid and pleasure seeking Herod Antipas, one of King Herod's sons, is yet another strong point, one among many in this movie.
5. James Mason portrays Joseph of Arimathea exceptionally well. We see him struggling with recognizing and accepting Jesus as the long awaited Messiah as he also tries to keep Jesus from indictment before the Sanhedrin.
6. Laurence Olivier as Nicodemus is a joy to watch as he presents Nicodemus as a very humble man seeking the Truth, but not being sure if Jesus is the Messiah.
7. Throughout the movie, Olivia Hussey presents Mary in a tender and precious way, although a little too forlorn, which is part of Catholicism's picture of her.
  1. As the Jewish teenage girl whom God chose to bear His Son, she *is* the 'handmaiden of the Lord.' As the mother of Jesus she is caught up in the tension of those opposed to Him, until His death pierces her heart. Her scenes of coming to the crucified Jesus, and when He is dead and placed on the ground, are very moving.
8. Other notable mentions include Keith Washington as Matthew; Ralph Richardson as Simeon; Ernest Borgnine as the Centurion who comes to Jesus because his servant is dying; Tony Lo Bianco as

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<sup>18</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Powell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Powell).

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.tbn.org/index.php/7.html?nid=237>.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus\\_of\\_Nazareth\\_%28miniseries%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_of_Nazareth_%28miniseries%29). Also, *Jesus of Nazareth* is a 1977 Anglo-Italian television miniseries co-written (with Anthony Burgess and Suso Cecchi d'Amico) and directed by Franco Zeffirelli, which dramatizes the birth, life, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus largely according to the Christian Bible's New Testament Gospels. It was filmed in Tunisia, Morocco and Mexico and was produced by Lew Grade and Vincenzo Labella on a budget of an estimated \$12 million to \$18 million.

Franco Zeffirelli desired to deemphasize the accusation of deicide against the Jewish people in his film. On the other hand, he came out against Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* because it is very anti-Semitic, like Mr. Gibson. The United Kingdom based paper, *The Guardian*, wrote of *The Passion*, that Gibson's film ignored his vow to remove the blood libel. Zeffirelli, though, would direct Gibson in the 1990 film *Hamlet*.

Quintillius, the aid to Pilate; Ian Holm as Zerah the Scribe, and Ian McShane as Judas.

9. In the scene where the disciples, not wanting to go into Levi's house, discuss the reason why they shouldn't enter, we find a subtle nuance that most movies on *Jesus* fail to present. John rightly brings up the point that it's *only* the Pharisees that teach that one is defiled by entering the home of a tax collector, meaning that it's the Pharisaic point of view, and obviously, not the viewpoint of Jesus. John is trying to get the disciples to think for themselves and not follow 'the Party line.'

Here's what Hal Erickson wrote:

"Because director Franco Zeffirelli noted publicly that he intended to depict Jesus Christ as a human being rather than a religious icon, his expensive made-for-TV miniseries, *Jesus of Nazareth*, fell victim to protestors long before its April 3, 1977 debut. Despite the pullout of several sponsors, *Jesus of Nazareth* was aired as scheduled, sweeping the ratings in the process. In avoiding the usual overproduced Hollywood approach to the Gospels, Zeffirelli offers *one of the most sensitive and reverent portrayals of Jesus ever seen on film*. In the title role, Robert Powell heads a huge international cast, which includes Olivia Hussey as Mary, Peter Ustinov as Herod the Great, Christopher Plummer as Herod Antipas, Michael York as John the Baptist, James Farentino as Simon Peter, Donald Pleasence as Melchior, James Earl Jones as Balthazar, Ian McShane as Judas, Anne Bancroft as Mary Magdalene, Rod Steiger as Pontius Pilate, James Mason as Joseph of Arimathea, Anthony Quinn as Caiaphas, Laurence Olivier as Nicodemus, Ernest Borgnine as the Centurion, and Claudia Cardinale as the Adulteress. Filmed in England, Tunisia and Morocco, *Jesus of Nazareth* was scripted by Zeffirelli, Anthony Burgess, and Suso Cecchi D'Amico. It originally aired in two three-hour segments, telecast Palm and Easter Sunday of 1977 as part of NBC's Big Event anthology."<sup>20</sup>

*Jesus of Nazareth* is acclaimed by many to be the best 'Jesus' movie, and also, the Lord uses it to bring many of those who watch it, closer to Himself, which is the sweetest thing about the movie.

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<sup>20</sup> [http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/jesus\\_of\\_nazareth/](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/jesus_of_nazareth/).

For more comments about the film see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0075520/usercomments>.

Revised on 30 March 2016.