

JESUS OF NAZARETH—FILM ERRORS

by Avram Yehoshua

The SeedofAbraham.net

Some Errors or Things 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* that is worn by Jewish today is not biblical, but pagan.¹
2. Many of the men in the film (e.g. the man in the red cloak at the betrothal of Joseph and Mary) had a beard, but 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 Jews, as all male Torah observant Jews² are required to wear full, *untrimmed* beards, which obviously includes a mustache (Lev. 19:27).³
 - A. Yeshua, as well as all the Jewish Apostles and Jewish men of that time would have had full, untrimmed beards (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 (Jewish 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'zot* (tassels) in the garment toward the bottom sides, and hence, no need to have an additional rectangular piece of material to drape over one's shoulders or head. The reason for the *tzit'zot* 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.
 - A. Neither Jesus, Joseph, nor many other Jews in the movie wear *tzit'zot* on their clothes. As God commanded it (Num. 15:37-41), all adult male Jews would have worn them, especially Jesus because if He didn't wear them He would have sinned against God who commanded Israel to wear them.
 - B. 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 rabbinic one.
4. The young Jewish rebel who cries out to God for Messiah, who is dragged away by his father, would never happen. A son would not resist his father in either 'shutting up,' or being taken away by his father, but this is a theme that the director continually feeds us: Jewish men are seen to be very secular and two dimensional. For instance, when Joseph and Mary enter what I imagine seems to be part of the Temple in Jerusalem, the man who will circumcise baby Jesus is adamantly saying to someone on the bench, "I promise! Everything will be done the way we agreed. I promise!" When that same man sees Simeon come in and up to baby Jesus on the table, just after He's circumcised, the circumciser mocks Simeon by shaking his head. This did not take place in Scripture and is another Roman

¹ See [The Kipa](#) for why the *kipa* or *yarmulke* is an idolatrous head covering.

² Also, all male Gentile Christians should have a full, untrimmed beard. See [The Biblical Beard](#).

³ See [The Biblical Beard](#) for why the full, untrimmed beard is another aspect of God's holiness for men.

Catholic deprecation toward the Jewish people, as the director, Franco Zeffirelli, is Roman Catholic and Catholics, as well as too many Protestants, like Martin Luther, are very anti-Semitic. Read any Jewish history book from the time of Christ until today and you'll see how anti-Semitic and violent "Christians" were toward the Jewish people.

- A. When the wedding feast is in process, the rabbi is pouring some wine into a goblet for a Jewish man who looks like wine is his god. It's things like this, the director's presenting many of the Jewish people as morons and ungodly, that detracts from the quality of the movie.
 - B. The man who came for his plow immediately begins to berate Joseph that it wasn't made right and it wasn't on time. Really? Did we have to have that event in the movie in order to free young Jesus so he could begin to climb the ladder without Joseph seeing Him? Again, a degradation of a Jewish man, and this time, Joseph, and that, over his very job vocation.
5. Joseph with long side curls is another *faux pas*. This is a relatively modern Jewish perversion, done first by the Jewish *Hasidim* in Poland in the 1700s. They teach that it's the *mystical tzit'ziot* (tassels) of the *head!* If God wanted Hebrew 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 when he's climbing the ladder, and later at His bar Mitzva, etc.
 6. 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, which aligns itself with the Roman Catholic (and now also, Protestant) Xmas. It was the time the pagans worshipped the birth of the Sun god incarnate, complete with a tree in their homes.
 - A. 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 was born in the evening of on Sept. 11th, 3 BC, on the first day of the Feast of Trumpets that year.⁴
 7. At the wedding, Joseph doesn't seem pleased with Mary when she looks at him, and this adversely affects Mary, but Joseph would not have been that way toward Mary because the Voice (actually an angel of the Lord; Mt. 1:18-24) told him that Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit and therefore, he was not to put her away, but to marry her.
 8. Mary, on her journey to see Elizabeth, would not have ridden in a basket carriage. She would have walked, like everyone else. Riding in the carriage would also have increased her labor pains, which the film takes into account in an honest rendition. With God the Son in her womb, Mary still had to endure the pain in the beginning of her labor contractions. Such a wonderfully divine contradictory reality.
 9. The three were not "kings," but rather *Magi* (star gazers; Gentile or pagan astrologers; Mt. 2:1-2) didn't come from three different countries as the film portrays, but most likely came from Babylon (from 'the east;' Mt. 2:1), and Scripture doesn't give how many of them came (if it was three or not), only that they brought three gifts, which goes far in saying that there were three of them. They would have come at least a year after Yeshua had been born (not at the time of His birth, as is usually taught, as many Christians think). This is seen from the fact that Herod 'determined from them what time the

⁴ For the correct date of Messiah's birth see [The Feast of Trumpets](#), p. 7 and note 24.

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.

A. Also, the wise men went to Herod (Mt. 2:3, 7-8), but in the movie they bypass Herod and go directly to Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

B. To the credit of the movie, the infant Jesus is older than a new born baby when the Magi come to see Him, and it seems that they are not in a stable, but in a home, which is accurate. 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), and they're not in the stable anymore, but a house (Mt. 2:11).

C. The names of Melchior and Baltezzar are traditional Catholic names for two of the *Magi*. The movie director, Franco Zeffirelli, is a Catholic and so that's to be expected. The Roman Catholic influence is also seen with the older Mary 'in mourning' for Joseph, and also Martha and Mary, and most of the women of Jerusalem who help Jesus on the way to the crucifixion, being dressed like nuns. Not your typical ancient Jewish head-dresses or black clothes for women. Jewish women dressed in a way that was "common to the humbler classes of the country—a linen frock extending the full length of the person, loosely gathered at the waist, and a veil or wimple broad enough, after covering the head, to wrap the shoulders."⁵

10. The Magi didn't tell or warn Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt, an angel did that (Mt. 2:13-15).

11. Of course, the mentioning of 'the *divine Zoroaster*' (628-551 BC) by one of the *Magi* (Donald Pleasance), along with saying 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; the Sun god), which equates him with the Canaanite god Molech, who devoured infants in the *flames* as a burnt sacrifice to him. This is just Satan by another name.⁶

12. 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 more than a hundred years *after* the Resurrection, by the Roman Emperor Hadrian. He put down the rebellion in Judah and Galilee, known by its Jewish leader 'bar Kochba,' in 135 AD. Hadrian gave it the name *Palestine* in derision of the Jews' ancient enemies the Philistines (*Palestine* is an anglicized version of *Philistine*). When the film was made in 1977 Israel had been a nation for 30 years; since 1948. "Scholars" from the 1800s on, called it Palestine because until 1948 the land was known as Palestine and they felt it easier to reference the land of the Jews (Judah and Galilee) as Palestine, but for scholars and others to continue to call it Palestine after 1948 belies a certain taint of anti-Semitism. It was never known as Palestine in the days of Jesus, but as Israel (cf. Mt. 2:20-21; 8:10; 9:33; 10:6, 23; 15:24; etc., as there are more than 50 references to the land as Israel in the New Testament).

A. Also in the film, the Counsel from Rome told King Herod that he had to abide by Emperor Augustus' decision on the head count (census), which entailed the shifting of populations "in Palestine," another error of the movie. The word Palestine is never mentioned in the New Testament.

B. The taking of a 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 King David found out when he took a census of his people (2nd Sam. 24:1f.; 1st

⁵ See Alfred Edersheim, [Sketches of Jewish Social Life](#), pp. 129-148.

⁶ 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. See my free PDF of it, which can be read and/or downloaded at [The Two Babylons—The Full Hislop](#).

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 against their enemies.

13. 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 for Mary's purification, and of course Joseph was there too, 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).⁷ In other words, Mary couldn't come into the Temple precincts until the 41st day after giving birth to Jesus, and so neither she nor Jesus would have been at the Temple for His circumcision on the 8th day of His life.
14. When Mary leaves Elizabeth, the latter says the 'one life shall be the Son of God,' referring to baby Jesus in Mary's womb, but it's highly doubtful that Elizabeth would have realized that. It's possible, as Mary would have told Elizabeth what Gabriel said to her, but it's not in Scripture that Elizabeth spoke that.
15. One of the Magi speaks of the baby freeing 'us from the evils of this world,' and that He will 'take away the sins of the world,' which are not in Scripture and so it's doubtful that he would have realized that, but it's possible.
16. 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 indecency, even in their home or rather the home of Mary's mother (in the movie, although Mary would have been living with Joseph then because Joseph and Mary were legally married.
 - A. 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) wore. 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 like a woman, especially with his very long hair, which Jewish men didn't have.
 - B. 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, and 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 very well be mistaken for a woman, as is the case all too often today.
 - C. In "Ezekiel's Temple" God specifically speaks of the length of the hair of the priests being *well trimmed* (Ezekiel 44:20).
17. In the film Joseph is seen speaking to the Jewish man of the coming Messiah as being 'pure from sin,' and not brining violence and blood-shed, which is a post-Cross understanding of Jesus. Even John the Baptist looked for the Messiah, the Son of David, to come and destroy the Romans and set up His

⁷ 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.

Kingdom, obviously, by force. Having Joseph say that the Messiah would be sinless is another post-Cross understanding of Jesus; something that Joseph would not have had. Of course, Scripture doesn't relate that such an incident took place, or that Mary's mother was named Anna and that she dies before Joseph and Mary leave for Bethlehem.

18. 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* of *tefillin* began one generation before Yeshua, but neither Joseph nor any other Jews, except the Pharisees, would have worn them. Even the priests of the Temple didn't wear tefillin.
 - A. 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 as religious Jews do today), 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 of the Temple, nor the Rabbis, nor the common people like Joseph, wore *tefillin*.⁸ It was one of the "marks" of the Pharisees (and Scribes).⁹
19. The celebration of Jesus with His *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.¹⁰
 - A. 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.
20. John's baptism of repentance would have been a baptism of full immersion (cf. Mt. 3:13-16), and not as the movie portrays, with John taking a handful of water and pouring it upon their heads.¹¹ Here we see the Roman Catholic influence of sprinkling, not fully immersing.
 - A. 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.
 - B. In that same scene though, many Jews are heard shouting insults 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 bastions and examples of holiness.
 - C. In scenes with John the Baptist sprinkling Jews, including Jesus, many of the man are almost naked, wearing adult diapers as they rush forward for John to sprinkle them. Everyone would have been fully dressed when they came to John. The film's sense of modesty leaves a lot to be desired.
21. 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), or any facsimile thereof. All of Israel would have stoned him if he had worn it.

⁸ See [Tefillin—To Wear or Not to Wear?](#)

⁹ See Mt. 23:5 where the Hebrew word tefillin is seen as phylacteries.

¹⁰ See [Goofs](#).

¹¹ "[Full-immersion baptism](#), not sprinkling, was in use at the time of" Messiah Yeshua, and the person would have immersed himself. For more on this ask for the PDF *Baptism in Water*.

- A.** 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.), in April, and he would most likely have begun preaching in April of the year when he turned 30 (27 AD), 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),¹² would enter upon full time ministry in the Tabernacle or Temple.¹³
- B.** Yeshua, born about six months after John (Lk. 1:26f.), in September, would turn 30 in
- C.** September on the first day of The Feast of Trumpets,¹⁴ and begin His ministry at ‘about 30 years old’ (Luke 3:23), being first immersed or baptized in Jordan, most likely on His 30th birthday. Luke speaks of Jesus beginning His ministry at about 30 years old, and when we realize that Yeshua immersed in the Jordan on His 30th birthday, and then went into the Wilderness for 40 days of temptation, and then returned and began to minister, we realize why Luke speaks of Him as being “about 30 years old when He began to minister” (Luke 3:23).
- D.** 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 months later (Jn. 3:30). Counting his prison time it seems that John’s ministry lasted for about a year.
- 22.** 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 do or even be familiar with. Substituting ‘chicken’ would have been more in line with what a Jew would have said.
- 23.** In the scene where Yeshua multiplies the fish, the fish are large and ‘live.’ This wouldn’t have been the case. 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

¹² Luke 1:5, 13-17, 24, 26-27, 36, 39-41, 57, 59-63, 67-77, 80.

¹³ 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 estimate 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.

¹⁴ For why Yeshua was born on the Feast of Trumpets, not The Feast of Tabernacles, see [The Feast of Trumpets](#).

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.¹⁵

19. A number of times in the movie some of the Apostles appear dressed 'as cave men' (meaning that they're 'half-dressed' and half-naked, exposing their upper torsos; like Andrew in the scene of the feeding of the 5,000. This is pure 21st century immodest 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. If they were working on the land or fishing in the sea, they might have pulled up their long robes to their knees, but they wouldn't have exposed their torsos.
20. In the movie, Jesus casts the demon out of the boy in the synagogue in Capernaum (as the next scene shows John speaking with Jesus next to the Sea of Galilee), but actually the boy was delivered outside, and not near the Sea of Galilee, as Yeshua had just come down from the Mt. of Transfiguration, as it's rightly called by Christians (cf. Mt. 17:1-21).
21. In the movie, Jesus is approached by the centurion while in Jerusalem, but Scripture records that the incident took place in Capernaum (Mt. 8:5-10; cf. Lk. 7:1-10 where the centurion first sent Jewish elders to persuade Yeshua to come and heal his servant). When Yeshua was going there, the centurion sent some 'friends' who spoke to Yeshua about the centurion not feeling worthy, but that if He would just say the word, his servant would be healed.
22. Another *faux pas* is when Martha greets Yeshua after her brother Lazarus has died. She would *never* have run up to Jesus and embraced Him, let alone even touched Him. First century Israeli protocol is not 20th century Western culture, and was much more circumspect and respecting of the opposite sexes, especially in that women were unclean half the time (cf. Lev. 15:19-33).¹⁶
 - A. 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 the Greek says they were *amazed* that He was even *speaking* to a woman! John 4:27 states, "And at this point His disciples came, and they *marveled* that He *spoke with a woman*, yet no one said, 'What do You seek?' or 'Why are You talking with her?'"
 - B. Of course, Yeshua speaking with her in John 4 is an asterisk, but it reveals why there were 12 men, and no women at the Passover Table with Yeshua. The ancient Israelis had a much greater understanding and respect for the differences between the sexes and the possibilities of infidelities and sin.
23. In the movie, when Jesus overturns the tables of the money-changers in the Temple, His Apostles are smiling with glee, but they would have been just as shocked as the Temple priests.
24. In the scene of the man born blind, which takes place in the Temple, a woman, who looks like a Catholic nun : (is seen ministering to a sick person laying down by a pillar. Sick people are lying about all over the place. They would be considered unclean and they would never be in the Temple area because of their uncleanness (cf. Lev. 13:45–14:1ff.; 15:1-15; 22:4; Num. 5:2; Mt. 8:2; Mk. 1:40).
 - A. In that episode though, the movie Jesus asks the former blind man if he believed in the Son of

¹⁵ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), pp. 467-468.

¹⁶ For more on this ask for the PDF, *Niddah—The Time of Women*.

Man, but some English translations rightly record that Yeshua asked him if he believed in the Son of God (Jn. 9:35 KJV and also the NKJV, which has the Son of God).

- B.** In the movie, when Jesus turns to rebuke the priests in the Temple, He says, ‘Woe unto you *Scribes and Pharisees!*, but they weren’t Scribes nor Pharisees, but Temple priests (Sadducees).
- 25.** In the movie a number of scenes in 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.
- 26.** Pilate, as governor of Judah, would not have worn a military uniform, but would have been dressed in royal robes.
- 27.** In the movie, Pilate returns to Caesarea around the time that Jesus was crucified, but in reality he would not have left Jerusalem during the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread because he was there during Feast times to specifically ensure order. With Passover and Tabernacles, Jerusalem would swell up to four times its size, or about a million Jews, and so Pilate, as head of the Roman government in Judah, would especially be in Jerusalem, before, during and after those Feasts to insure Roman law and order.
- 28.** 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, especially of his caliber, would not have done.
 - A.** The Jewish guards, not Roman guards, told the Sanhedrin what 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” (Matthew 27:65; 28:4, 11-15).
- 29.** Another error is when Mary Magdalene leaves the 11 Apostles, after having told them that she saw Yeshua alive from the dead, and all of them except for Peter, don’t believe her. Peter says to Thomas, who incredulously asks him, “Do you believe her, Peter?!” and Peter says, “Yes. I’ve always believed Him.” In fact none of them believed that Jesus had risen until they (all but Thomas) actually saw Him on Sunday night, after He had appeared to Mary and other women in the morning. Thomas would see him the following Sunday.

Some Theological or Scriptural Flaws

- 1.** The movie begins with a scene in Nazareth with people working on things in the town of Nazareth. It then shifts to the synagogue where the rabbi is speaking to a crowd about God. It’s the Sabbath. People would not have been working in the town.
- 2.** 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 any Gospel that records Jesus 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’ implies that the Father and the Son are the same Person, which They are not. The Father and the Son are deity, Two Persons of the Three Person God Family.¹⁷

¹⁷ See [Yeshua—God the Son](#) and [Yeshua—His Deity and Sonship](#) and [Messiah’s Deity and Micah 5:2](#) for more on the deity and Sonship of the Messiah from the Hebraic Perspective.

3. 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).
4. Another flaw is when Jesus says that Peter is the rock, which Jesus will build his church on. Again we see a heavy Catholic influence.
 - A. 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). Jesus didn’t say, “upon you Peter I will...” but Catholic interpretation of the verse says that *Peter* is the *rock* upon which Christ would build His Church. The Rock is Yeshua whom the Church is built upon. The Rock is the revelation that Yeshua is God the Son, the Messiah (a human being), which Peter had just confessed (Mt. 16:16). Yeshua said that Peter didn’t get that understanding from himself (not from flesh and blood), but from the Father in Heaven. This, that Yeshua is God the Son in the flesh, is the foundation upon which Messiah’s assembly or church is built upon.¹⁸ *Rock* is also a designation for the God of Israel and would be fitting for God the Son.
5. 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. Judas didn’t do it so that Jesus could reveal Himself to the Sanhedrin. 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.¹⁹ 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 and took funds out of the money box (John 12:6).
6. 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.
 - A. 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 Second Passover amplifying the freedom of Egypt, not obliterating it.
7. When Mary Magdalene comes to the Apostles after the Resurrection, 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), and Thomas was not among them at that time (John 20:11-24f.).
8. 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. Only Matthew 28:19 speaks of this and it’s something that the Roman Catholic Church inserted into the text around 320 AD.²⁰

¹⁸ 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* in Jesus of Nazareth.

¹⁹ Matthew 4:25; 5:1; 8:1; Mark 6:33; 10:1; Luke 5:3, 15; 8:45; 11:14; 14:25, etc.

- A. 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.’²¹
9. 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). Also, the movie implies a Friday crucifixion, but Yeshua was crucified on Thursday.²²
10. When Jesus, in the Temple precincts says that He and His Father “are one and the same!” Yeshua though, didn’t say “and the same!,” which implies that the Father manifested Himself as Jesus AND that Jesus is not a Person of the Triune God Family, but just a mode or manifestation of God. This is an ancient heresy known as Modalism or Sabellianism (known after it’s greatest proponent, Sabbal-ius). What Yeshua actually said was,
- A. “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.” (John 10:29-30 NKJV)
- B. Yeshua didn’t say this in the Temple, but among some Jews who believed in Him and didn’t believe in Him. Where He said it in the movie, in the Temple precincts, is irrelevant, but how the movie adds to His words is disgraceful and heretical.

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 I’ve ever seen, 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, except for one scene at lunch with the Pharisees, which has Powell spouting off to one Pharisee how he shouldn’t judge, which might sound good, but it’s out of context, and the script has Jesus coming off as the aggressor and judgmental.
- A. Although the New Testament doesn’t speak of Peter hating Matthew, or this event even 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 the tax collectors had from Rome to extract taxes “and then some.” Also, because their profession was what it was, they were literally 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 Rab-bis had barred them both because of their obvious character flaws, and so Peter “hating” Matthew isn’t a far stretch, but good movie making and helps to give the Prodigal Son a very human face.

²⁰ For more information on why baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is wrong, see [Water Baptism—Father, Son and Holy Spirit?](#)

²¹ 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 in order to be alive in Messiah Yeshua.

²² Ask for the PDF, Crucifixion Day—Thursday or Friday?

- B.** 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 forgive his enemies the Romans, we see an emotional Jesus crying out from 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 that day), 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 to God's Way. Powell is keenly distressed, and Stacey Keach as Barrabas is very believable.
- C.** The scene where Jesus raises Lazarus is another *tour de force*, partly because of what and how Jesus speaks of Himself as 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 in the movie at the deathbed of Joseph. At the scene of the tomb of Lazarus, John the Apostle says it, and it's very poignant:
- 1) '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...*'
 - 2) 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.'
- D.** The scene in the Temple, with the man born blind, is another touching depiction. After Jesus gives him his sight, the Priests come and denounce the man born blind as having been a fake. The former blind man, having kneeled at the side of Jesus, is upset because of the false accusations, but Jesus places his right hand on the head of the man and his his soul is at peace in the midst of the accusations by the priests, that he had never been blind, but was only pretending to be blind so he could beg money from the people.
- E.** 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 words, cadence and mannerisms make this *Jesus of Nazareth* come alive as no other actor has done before or since.
- F.** Powell 'received best actor awards from TV Times (UK) and Italian TV Times, 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.'²³ For its fifth airing on American television at Easter 1987, TV Guide called it 'the best mini-series of all time' and 'unparalleled television.'²⁴
2. Next is Peter Ustinov's performance as King Herod. It's nothing short of magnificent. Ustinov displays the emotions, quirks and power-driven madness that might well have been seen with the king.

²³ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Powell.

²⁴ <https://www.tbn.org/index.php/7.html?nid=237>.

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 12–18 million dollars.

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*.

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 and Ustinov makes it a delight. On the other hand, 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, 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's performance has me soaking up every word and action of *John* because of how he presents the Jewish prophet.
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, and he also tries to keep Jesus from indictment before the Sanhedrin.
6. Laurence Olivier as Nicodemus is a joy to watch as he portrays Nicodemus as a very humble man seeking the Truth, but not being sure that Jesus is the Son of God.
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.
 - A. 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 scene of coming to the crucified Jesus when He is dead and placed on the ground is 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 Quintillius, the aid to Pilate, who actually seems to be directing Pilate; Ian Holm as Zerah the Scribe, and Ian McShane as Judas.
9. In the scene where the disciples, not wanting to go into Matthew Levi's tax collector 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, who is about to enter. John is trying to get the disciples to think for themselves and not follow 'the Party line.'

Hal Erickson had this to say about the film:

"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 (that now is a movie), *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."²⁵

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.

²⁵ http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/jesus_of_nazareth/.

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

Revised on Friday, April 7, 2023.