

“The Heart of Christmas” Theatrical, 2020

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“The Heart of Christmas” motion picture theatrical is a superb blend of ancient biblical prophecies and Persian magi folklore and timeless story-telling and modern dance all packaged in the one stage that opens to sing-out the central message of Christmas: the promised King, Messiah, Jesus (Y’Shua) was born Savior of the world about 2000 years ago.

To be sure, this is not a story that will put anyone to sleep. It draws you in through the classic portal of a book opened in an attic by a grandmother wanting to read “The Servant King” story book to her granddaughter. This opens up the portal back to the court of ancient Persia. The lifeless picture of Mustafa in the story book begins to move and talk...and you guessed it-this is the opening of drawing us back in time to the ancient Persian court where the magi were gathered. This tantalizing entertaining trick was done marvelously in full color as good as a Disney film but without the animism and witchcraft, and therefore markedly better from a Christian and biblical perspective.

Each of the Magi with their folklore names one by one make their entrance and sing a song. At this point early in this theatrical with the story rooted in the Bible, the Persian court set, the acting and the singing led me to break out with “Bravo! Bravo.” And if anticipating the Magi’s departure and arrival in Bethlehem to worship the Christ Child, I thought to myself, if it ended there, it would bring satisfaction and would seal a double Bravo.

But there is more to this story, for this story has multiple layers from three generations of a family in our contemporary time with periodic flashbacks to the Magi via The Servant King story book. From grandmother to daughter, and from daughter to granddaughter, the “Heart of Christmas” box is opened and in it is The Servant King story book, and opening the book, and beginning to read again draws us back to these ancient Persian Magi and their journey to Judea.

The “Servant King” theme, an unthinkable concept to worldly leaders, encapsulates a very rich biblical theology from Isaiah’s prophesy of a coming Suffering Servant to the coming of King Jesus in the Gospels in the New Testament who taught that to be the “greatest among you, you must be servant of all” (Matt. 23:11).

This ancient layer of the story focuses on a fourth Magi prince, Zargon (fictional). In this story, he is the “star” of the show, but not the STAR. He is the one who first catches the prophetic vision and makes the connection and convinces his fellow Magi that they must go to Judea to see this King. This actor gives a stunning performance in word and song. Yet the irony is that he is late on arrival and misses the baby King, and continues his quest in the Holy Land to find this Baby King after the other magi successfully arrived in time. And in his wisdom and yearning to see his righteous King, encounters a leper colony, and gives his ruby gift (fictional), which he had brought to give to his King, in exchange for medicines to care for the lepers of this colony. And in time, he too catches leprosy.

He sends his servant Mustafa back to Persian with instructions for him to tell Zargon's wife that he is dead. Musfafa is also another "little star" of this theatrical. He is the Persian character in the Servant King story who first brings us into this ancient layer of the story. He brings humor into the story and his character is one of a doubter. He finally catches onto the vision at the very end.

Mustafa is depicted wearing a Turkish fez which came into use during the Ottoman empire around the 16th century about 2000 years after the B.C. Persian empire, worn by Muslim men, but never mind that fact. The anachronism is not meant for scholarly critique but rather entertaining tickle. The importing of these multicultural and multi-national portrayals gives the viewers glimmers of the universal truths revealed through a laser-focused star light pointing on that Bethlehem manger, enfleshing and enculturating them. The universal truths that explode in the climax at the end of the theatrical are: we all need a Savior; Y'Shua (Jesus Christ) is the Savior of the world sent by God, seen and declared by ancient prophets, Y'Shua is the Righteous eternal King, and by serving the least of these, you do it onto Him.

The climax of the story begins when Zargon finally, after 30 years of searching for this King, finally comes within a stone's throw of Y'Shua, but Y'Shua is being led to be crucified. This momentarily brings sadness, but the sadness is quickly transformed into gladness after the witness by one special follower of Y'Shua (I won't spoil this part of the movie for you) and with the help of his healed leper friends and now believers in Y'Shua. The light comes to Zargon too, and he realizes that in serving the least of them, he did so in the name of the One he had been yearning for, and he too suddenly gets healed of his leprosy.

Truly, it is a stunning performance that rivals Broadway and Hollywood yet beaming forth the biblical light of truth. It uses timeless story-telling devices and entertaining ploys for the excellence of the core biblical story, something that secular Hollywood nor Disney would do.

The modern dance portrayed in this theatrical comes unexpectedly and tantalizes the mix and clash of cultures ancient and modern meant to entertain. My own view is that the modern dance portrayed is influenced by the contemporary pop culture motivated by worldly behavior, not biblical behavior. The energetic dancing looks more like an aerobic workout, arousing and exciting through the eyes, but does not communicate the message of the heart. I do not think the kind of modern dance portrayed helps or enhances the story and messages of "The Heart of Christmas." The final irony of "Heart of Christmas" is not what we see on the outside, but God's work on the inside, in our hearts, which no one can see except God.

*"The Heart of Christmas" was viewed by reviewer December 21, 2020 on DayStar TV on Andrew Wommack's program.