Concerning ‘The Passion’ and Idolatry

By Tony Robinson

The Prohibition of Idolatry

In this article I want to examine the idolatrous nature of The Passion of the Christ. This may catch some by surprise; however, I believe the Scripture is very clear on this. The second commandment reads as follows:

4“You shall not make for yourself a carved image--any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments (Exodus 20:4-6).

These verses are very clear. The second commandment gives practical instruction on proper worship. Some may get the impression that this verse only pertains to the worship of false gods. In other words, someone may say, "Although it's wrong to worship created objects associated with false gods, it's okay to worship images of the Holy One." Traditionally, this verse has not been interpreted in this fashion. This verse means that we are not to make any image, whether in the likeness of a false god or in the "likeness" of the Holy One. He has made it very clear that we are not to worship carved images of any sort.

Deuteronomy 4:11-19 clearly indicates that we are not to make any images of His likeness. This is why the Holy One told them to remember they hadn't seen any form or likeness of His image. This is clear enough—"You didn't see any form/image of Me when I spoke to you; therefore, do not create any form/image to represent me."

I assume most of you reading this article are either Christian or Messianic and already understand that Yeshua is Divine. Therefore, I will not belabor this point. Since, therefore, Messiah is the Divine Elohim (God), then it should be obvious that the prohibition of representing the Holy One in any form/image would also apply to Yeshua. Many others are also bringing this understanding to the forefront of their arguments against viewing The Passion of the Christ. We are commanded not to make images of the Holy One, period. Many Protestants understand the idolatry of images of Yeshua on the Catholic Cross; however, this prohibition should apply to all other representations of Messiah Yeshua. It is wrong to try to capture the
Eternal One with our guesses as to his image. Why? Because none of our guesses about His image are true. By default they are all untrue. If it were important to know what He looked like, I'm sure the disciples would have drawn pictures of Him for future generations. The fact that they chose to skip the obvious opportunity to preserve images of Yeshua speaks volumes, volumes, volumes concerning their understanding of the second commandment as it pertained to images of Yeshua, the Eternal Elohim of the Universe.

And why does the Holy One not want us to make images of Him? I can see two major reasons from Scripture. First, any attempt to represent our infinite Elohim as a finite image is profane. It automatically fails to capture His eternal glory. It is but the work of man's hands.

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images (Isaiah 42:8, emphasis mine).

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things (Romans 1:21-23, emphasis mine).

The second reason Adonai doesn't want us to try to capture Him in an image is because it invariably leads to idolatry—the worship of anything other than the Blessed Creator. Our faith, loyalty and affections that properly belong to Him are shifted to finite created things when we worship idols. We need only look to the Roman Catholic Church to understand why one should not make graven images of any sort.

Israel’s War Against Idolatry

In Deuteronomy 12:2-7, Moses described 1) what the Israelites were supposed to do to the gods of the nations they dispossessed and 2) how they were to worship the Holy One.

Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God. But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And there ye shall eat before the LORD thy God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee (Deuteronomy 12:2-7, emphasis mine).

Note the phrase, “and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods.” To "hew down" means to cut down, cast down, or destroy by bringing low. Specifically, it means to take those carved images, which were situated in high places, and bring them down low to the earth.

Thematically, Deuteronomy 12:2-7 can be outlined as follows:

- Devarim12:2-3—Destroying the places where the nations worshipped their gods.
- Devarim 12:4-7—Worshipping at the place Adonai chooses.
Comparing and contrasting Deuteronomy 12:2-3 with Deuteronomy 12:5-7 leads to the following conclusions:

1. Whereas the nations worshipped in multiple places, Am Yisrael (the people of Israel) will only worship the Holy One in one place.
2. Whereas Am Yisrael were to destroy the idols and images of the heathen, they also were to establish a worship center for true worship.
3. Whereas Am Yisrael were to destroy the names of the false gods from the land, they were to worship at the One place the Holy One caused His name to dwell.

Deuteronomy 12:4 is a bridge verse, linking Deuteronomy 12:2-3 with Deuteronomy 12:5-7. It states that Am Yisrael cannot worship the Holy One the way the nations worshipped their gods. We’ve already seen the deeper spiritual teaching concerning the Law of Kil’ayim (Forbidden Mixtures) in the second article of this series. The deeper teaching (Sod) behind the law of forbidden mixtures pertains to holiness and the necessity of guarding the truth from error. In other words, the law of forbidden mixtures (Leviticus 19:19-22) is thematically linked to properly keeping the Holy One's commandments (Leviticus 19:1-18). This can only be done within the context of safeguarding His words from those of competing philosophies.

Deuteronomy 12:2-7 is simply a practical application of forbidding a mixture of evil (the ways of the nations) with good (the commandments and ways of the Holy One). The mixing of competing philosophies would be prevented if Am Yisrael first destroyed all vestiges of false worship before establishing true worship. Note how Deuteronomy 12:29-31 confirms these assertions:

29 "When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, 30 take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did the nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise." 31 You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods (Deuteronomy 12:29-31).

Note how Gideon fulfilled this command (mitzvah) by casting down the idols:

And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down…And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down…Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it (Judges 6:25-30).

Understanding the True Nature of Idolatry

We must remember that Paul said everything in the Tanakh ("Old Testament") was written for our benefit (I Corinthians 10:11). What was Paul's understand of casting down idols? Does the command for Am Yisrael to cast down idols have any practical relevance to us? Yes it does. We simply need to look at instances where Paul used the terminology of casting down high
things to see his Renewed Covenant (New Testament) understanding of the commands in Deuteronomy 12:2-7 and 29-31. This is found in II Corinthians 10:3-5.

Although we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high

ing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, KJV)

As you can see, Paul obtained his doctrine of warfare in our minds from the Torah. Note how Paul connected vain arguments/imaginations to high things (II Corinthians 10:5). Remember the idols of Deuteronomy 12:2-3 that were situated in high places? Moses exhorted Am Yisrael to destroy everything related to the false gods of the nations. Why? So that they wouldn’t be captured by the false teachings and philosophies of those gods. So likewise, Paul exhorts us to cast down the imaginations/images/false doctrines of the gods of this age lest we be snared by them. And what are these false arguments? Anything that exalts itself against the pure knowledge of God. In other words, in Paul's worldview, we are to actively cast down and reject any "knowledge" or "wisdom" that doesn't line up with the knowledge of God (the Scriptures). This is our only protection against idolatry and deception! What’s most important, though, is that arguments and imaginations that don’t line up with the “knowledge of God” are considered idolatrous! That’s why Paul thematically connected the vain imaginations/arguments of II Corinthians 10:5 with the high places of Deuteronomy 12:2-7 and 29-31, stating that both need to be cast down!

You see beloved, idolatry is more than just making an idol/image and worshipping it. According to Paul, idolatry occurs whenever we allow false philosophies to compete with our allegiance to the truth of the Word of Elohim. Idolatry consists not only of physical idols/images, it also consists of false images in our hearts and minds that do not represent the truth of the Word of Elohim. Idolatry occurs when we diminish the Holy One's glory by trusting in man's wisdom and works instead of the revelation of the Almighty through His holy prophets. It is idolatry. All false notions, images, arguments, pretensions, speculations and vain imaginations must be seen for what they are—false gods. These things have set themselves up in high places within our hearts and minds in direct opposition to the knowledge of God. Furthermore, they must be dealt with as false gods. These false images and imaginations must be cast down low and forsaken.

The Idolatry of 'The Passion'

And what does this have to do with 'The Passion'? Much indeed! Could 'The Passion' be considered a vain imagination that has exalted itself against the knowledge of God? Yes, I think so. We have already seen the following concerning ‘The Passion.’

1. The fact that someone has been cast in the role of Yeshua is idolatry in and of itself, a clear violation of the second commandment. Jim Caviezel was made to be the “image” of the Messiah who is Divine.
2. Although Mel Gibson consulted the Scriptures in his production of ‘The Passion,’ he did not remain true to its primary focus, i.e., the need for men to repent and believe the Good
News of Yeshua's death, burial and resurrection—a Gospel message that was clearly not present in the movie. He did not present the Gospel of the Scriptures.

3. Many of the non-Biblical scenes (a significant portion of the movie) were directly taken from the demonically-inspired visions of a demon-oppressed false prophetess/mystic named Anne Catherine Emmerich, who bore the stigmata—the wounds in the hands, feet, side, and head (crown of thorns) inflicted upon the Messiah during his execution. Furthermore, it is also claimed that she bled profusely from those wounds on Good Friday and other holy days (holy days of Catholic origin)!

4. We have already seen that Mel's goal for the movie was to shake modern audiences by brashly juxtaposing the "sacrifice of the cross with the sacrifice of the altar - which is the same thing." Mel used 'The Passion' as a vehicle to teach that the sacrifice of the Mass is one and the same as Messiah Yeshua's sacrifice! This doctrine is called Transubstantiation. It is a Heresy and an Abomination (with Capital H and A).

The Mass continues the Sacrifice of the Cross. Each time the Mass is offered, the Sacrifice of Christ is repeated. A new sacrifice is not offered, but by divine power, one and the same sacrifice is repeated. 'As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until He comes (1 Cor 11:26). In the Mass, Christ continues to offer Himself to the Father as He did on the Cross. And in the Mass, the Father continues to accept His Son's gift as He did in the Resurrection and the Ascension.

5. This movie greatly exaggerated the role of Mary, the mother of Yeshua. We've seen in a previous article how this movie teaches that Mary was a co-redemptress along with Yeshua. Her part teaches that she is the Mother of God who is able to secure forgiveness and Divine favors. If you doubt that 1) Mary's role was exaggerated ad nauseam and 2) Catholics view her as co-redemptress, then listen to what Mel Gibson himself has to say:

"I've been actually amazed at the way I would say the evangelical audience has—hands down—responded to this film more than any other Christian group." What makes it so amazing, he says, is that "the film is so Marian."

Gibson knows that Protestants don't regard Mary in the way Catholics do. And Gibson goes beyond many Catholics when he calls her "a tremendous co-redemptrix and mediatrix."

6. The movie teaches that Yeshua may not have made it were it not for the strength He received from Mary.

7. Mel Gibson and the prominent actors and actresses in this movie have all stated how they relied on Mary, relics and mystical (i.e., demonic) visions for strength to produce this movie.

The long and short of it is this. The Passion of the Christ is idolatrous because it teaches a false Gospel, another Gospel not found in Scripture. Points one through six above all fall into one or more of the following categories:

- **Heresy**—Transubstantiation
- **Fables**—The multitude of embellishments and additions to the Gospel account gleaned from the visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich.
• **False Prophecy**—Anne Catherine Emmerich fits Deuteronomy 13:1-3, a false prophet who has supernatural signs to “authenticate” her false message.

• **Witchcraft**—The reliance upon supernatural powers ascribed to Mary by the prominent actors and actresses and Mel Gibson.

• **Idolatry**—Every false teaching promoted and taught by this movie as well as the "image" of Messiah Yeshua. Idolization of Mary.

• **False Gospel**—The important portions of the Gospel that were missing and the un-Scriptural additions to the Gospel account.

Idolatry has as much to do with images in your mind as it does the physical images you view. The physical images you view are simply the vehicle through which an image is implanted within your mind and heart. Paul knew the danger of false images, that's why he gave Timothy the following warning (which is appropriate for our times):

> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (II Timothy 4:3-5).

All of the non-Biblical scenes…what are they? Fables! Not only are they fables, we know for a fact that they were inspired by hasatan himself. Not only that, they were mixed with the truth of the glorious Gospel (remember the law of forbidden mixtures of good and evil) of the Messiah and promoted as the Gospel.

In case you think I'm over-reacting. Judge the following for yourself and tell me whether or not idolatry is in the making. Robert Tippie, the author of the website TorahTips, had this to say in his review of 'The Passion."

> I have had an email sent to me saying that the believing individual was grateful for the movie. She expressed joy in understanding "facts" that were missed by the gospels. She expressed a certain "resentment" toward the Gospel accounts because they were so shallow. She was glad that some visionaries (Gibson et al) were able to see the "whole truth" of the Gospel. This is a serious error (emphasis mine).  

Do you see how this woman has been deceived? She has more faith in Mel Gibson's movie than she does in the inspired Word of Elohim! She has more faith in Anne Catherine Emmerich's demonically-inspired fables that the eternal, forever-settled-in-heaven Word of YHVH! You see beloved, this is the inevitable consequence of a mind that has been exposed to and overcome by false images and vain imaginations that are at odds with the revelation of the Scriptures. I know some would say, "Oh Tony, this is an extreme case. Most mature believers would never go to this extreme." Well how about this one:

> Lisa Wheeler, associate editor of Catholic Exchange, a Web portal dedicated to Catholic evangelism, told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, "It's the best evangelization opportunity we've had since the actual death of Jesus."  

Oh really? I guess Acts chapter two was just a warm-up for Mel's movie? And where's the idolatry? Trusting in a movie to get people saved! Beloved, no one gets saved by watching a
movie. The Scripture informs us that you must hear the Gospel, repent of sin, and believe the Gospel. By exercising faith, you are born again. It's a supernatural work of the Ruach (Spirit) and has nothing to do with seeing a movie. If anyone gets saved after watching this movie, it's because they have already heard the Word. People are trusting in the movie to bring salvation instead of the Power of God via preaching. Or this:

"This is a window of opportunity we have. Here's a guy who's putting his money into a movie that has everything to do with what we do," said Pastor Cory Engel of Harvest Springs Community Church in Great Falls, Mont. "Churches used to communicate by having a little lecture time on Sunday morning. People don't interact that way anymore. Here's a chance for us to use a modern-day technique to communicate the truth of the Bible," the Rev. Engel said.

A modern-day technique? Look at what Paul would say to such gibberish.

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (I Corinthians 2:1-5).

Where's the idolatry? The wisdom of man (a spectacular movie) has more power to save that preaching the eternal Word? Beloved, remember the Holy game-plan is to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching, not through the power of an emotional movie significantly based on fables. Lastly, please take this quote to heart:

Every time I preach or speak about the Cross, the things I saw on the screen will be on my heart and mind.

This was spoken by Billy Graham. This saddens me greatly. Let me put his statement into Scriptural context. “Whenever I speak about Messiah’s death, the false images of a false Jesus will be on my heart and mind.” Beloved, this is idolatry. There is a false image seared into Mr. Graham’s mind. You see beloved, the image was not the image of Messiah Yeshua from Scripture. It was someone “playing Christ.”

Caviezel recalled telling Gibson, "I think it's very important that we have mass every day - at least I need that to play this guy.

In previous articles, we saw conclusively that this movie is Catholic and Marion from beginning to end. Now let me help you understand why you shouldn’t be surprised that idolatry accompanies this movie. Have you ever seen the Ten Commandments from a Catholic perspective? I ask this because you may not know this, but Catholics have tampered with the Word of Elohim. In fact, they have removed the second commandment concerning idolatry. Look at this comparison of the Ten Commandments from Jewish and Catholic perspectives.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ten Commandments From Scripture</th>
<th>Catholic Ten Commandments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.</td>
<td>I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.</td>
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<td>Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or</td>
<td>Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.</td>
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that is in the water under the earth; Thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; And showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love Me and keep My commandments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.</th>
<th>Remember thou keep the Sabbath Day.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath in honour of the Lord thy God; on it thou shalt not do any work, neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.</td>
<td>Honor thy Father and thy Mother.</td>
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<td>Honour thy father and thy mother; in order that thy days may be prolonged upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.</td>
<td>Thou shalt not kill.</td>
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<td>Thou shalt not kill.</td>
<td>Thou shalt not commit adultery.</td>
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<td>Thou shalt not commit adultery.</td>
<td>Thou shalt not steal.</td>
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<td>Thou shalt not steal.</td>
<td>Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.</td>
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<td>Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.</td>
<td>Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.</td>
<td>Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notice how the Jewish version of the Ten Commandments (mitzvot) simply re-state the actual words of the Scripture. However, take notice of the Catholic sleight of hand in commandments two and ten. They delete a large portion of the Word of Elohim in commandment two. In order to get Ten Commandments, they divided the actual tenth commandment into two separate commandments! This is why idolatry comes so naturally for the Catholic Church. This is also why you would do well to avoid idolatry by not going to view this movie.

This is number 5 of 7 articles examining the movie, The Passion of the Christ. The other articles may be found at Restoration of Torah Ministries.

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1 Other translations translate the word arguments as speculations and imaginations.


Caviezel: "I first heard about Medjugorje in 5th - 6th grade. They said that it was like the apparitions of Fatima, Guadeloupe, Lourdes, and they quickly said that the bishop said that it was false... Many years later, I met my wife, we got married, and after a few years she went to Medjugorje. While she was there, I was filming "The Count of Monte Cristo" in Ireland. She called me in Ireland, I felt that there was a change in her voice, but I wrote it off very quickly, thinking: "That's good for you, dear, who am I to take away from you spiritual experience?" She said that Ivan Dragicevic was coming to Ireland...I met with him a couple of times, and during an apparition, I felt a physical presence. Kerri Caviezel: "It took me 15 years to come [to Medjugorje]. When I came, I knew immediately - from what I was feeling in my heart - that it was real. I haven't seen signs or anything, but - I have been a Catholic for my whole life and I had never felt in confession as I felt when I was here. It was a tremendous healing." Jim Caviezel: "The catharsis for me to play this role was through Medjugorje, through Gospa. In preparation, I used all that Medjugorje taught me. Mel Gibson and I were going every day for Mass together. Some days I couldn't go for Mass, but I was receiving the Eucharist." Kerri Caviezel: "I pray that we are open to wherever Mary is leading us and that in all the places where we go and to the people that we meet around the world, we may bring these messages." Jim Caviezel: "This film is something that I believe was made by Mary for her Son. Taken from Why I Will Not See "The Passion of the Christ" By John LeGare.

Robert Tippie, Director of TorahTips.

"Churches Make 'Stunning' Show of Support for Gibson's 'Passion'' Newmax (Thursday, Feb. 5, 2004).

Ibid.


"Mel Gibson's 'Christ' Reveals Crucifixion" Newmax (Sunday, Jan. 25, 2004).

Taken from the Jewish reckoning of the Ten Commandments. This one differs from the Protestant reckoning also. But at least the Protestants don't tamper with the Word by deleting commandments.