



Dear Friends in Christ,

Religious movies have been popular before, like *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben Hur*. But the last twelve years have brought quite a succession of good and successful Christian movies: *Luther* (2003), *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), the *Narnia* movies (2005, 2008, 2010), *The Nativity Story* (2006), *Facing the Giants* (2006), *Fireproof* (2008), and *Courageous* (2011). I think all of these movies can be found in our church library.

But 2014 is looking like the biggest year ever for Christian movies. First came “*Son of God*” based on the 2013 TV mini-series “*The Bible*”. While it takes some liberties with the story of Jesus, it proclaims a message that Jesus is the Son of God who came to save the world. Of course, the book is always better than the movie, but maybe this retelling of the story will enable us to read the story with new questions and new insights.

A second movie is “*God's Not Dead*” about a college student challenged by his anti-theist philosophy professor to defend his faith in God. In an engaging and entertaining way the movie addresses the pop culture attacks on faith by such anti-theists as Dawkins and Hitchens.

And finally, there is “*Heaven Is for Real*” based on the best-selling book by Pastor Todd Burpo from western Nebraska about his 4-year old son's near death experience of heaven. I expect this movie will be the most successful of the three movies because the book has been so popular.

I don't include the movie “*Noah*” in the list of Christian movies this year because from what I have read, “*Noah*” is more Hollywood than Bible.

There are more faith-based movies scheduled to come out later this year. In addition there are other good Christian movies that you may not have seen that are in our church library. Two of my favorites are “*Grace Card*” and “*End of the Spear*”.

Because of the interest in “*Heaven Is for Real*”, I want to do something as a preacher that I have never done before. During the Easter season, I am planning to preach a series of topical sermons. The series title is “*Heaven Is for Real*.”

I haven't preached much about heaven. I don't remember any seminary classes touching on the topic of heaven. We American Christians tend to focus more on this earthly life. But the Bible really does have a lot to say about our heavenly hope. If heaven is our eternal destiny, we should be more than a little interested in where we are headed after this brief earthly life.

There is a lot we don't know about heaven. But a lot of popular assumptions about heaven are not based on the Bible but rather are misconceptions based on non-Christian ideas. The truth about heaven is far more fascinating and hopeful than most people realize.

During this sermon series I will try to address as many questions about heaven as I can. I may not have final answers to many questions, but I do believe Scripture gives us some clear truths upon which to base our imaginations about heaven.

So is heaven a place? Do those in heaven now see what is happening on earth? Will we remember our earthly lives? What will we do in heaven? What will life in heaven be like? Will there be time? Will there be sunsets and oceans and stars? Will we be ourselves? Will we have emotions? What will our resurrection bodies be like? What age will we be? Will we eat and drink? Will there be free will and temptation? Will we know everything? Will we sleep? Will we remember each other? Will there be marriage and family and friendship? Will there be animals and pets? Will there be work, arts, entertainment, and sports?

Do you have any questions to add to the list? Let me know, and I will try to address them.

Yours in Christ, *Phil Nielsen*

“*Heaven Is For Real*” Showing at the Hebron Majestic Theatre

Thursday, May 1 @ 7 pm
Friday, May 2 @ 7 pm
Saturday, May 3 @ 7 pm
Sunday, May 4 @ 2 pm and 7 pm
Monday, May 5 @ 2 pm and 7 pm
Tuesday, May 6 @ 7 pm
Wednesday, May 7 @ 7 pm