

The Passion in Qatar

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(a Christian living in the Middle East) Today very possibly was the most significant day we have seen in nearly 12 years of living in the Middle East. To everyone's shock & surprise, "The Passion" was released today here in Qatar. Just a few days ago when we prayed for it to come to Qatar in our prayer meeting (we knew it was opening in the United Arab Emirates in about a week), I honestly had no faith whatsoever that our prayer would be answered. You have to realize that until now we have only been able to show the Jesus film in Arabic to a handful of Qataris in a secret home setting. In the coming weeks, potentially 10's of thousands of Arab Muslims will see this powerful portrayal of Christ's suffering & death.

Since all of us have heard many different reactions & responses to the film, I won't add very much to that discussion here.

However, I don't think anybody who has seen this film saw it in a theatre, full of Gulf Arab Muslims - both men & women. In two short hours, more Qataris heard the Gospel than I have been able to reach in nearly 5 years of living here. The Arabic subtitles were completely accurate - they didn't water ANYTHING down or change any language that Muslims would not agree with. All of us watched the film in absolute amazement in what God had done. The Muslims sitting around us were being moved - gasping, crying & reacting with disgust to the brutality that Jesus faced.

Now - if you have heard anything about why the Arab Muslims would want to see the film, you know that it is because they 'heard' it was anti-Jewish & since they hate the Jews, they want to see it. How interesting that God is using this film to communicate the Gospel & the very opposite spirit that might be motivating them to go & see it. The message to LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, & Jesus praying for them to be forgiven while on the Cross would hit the Muslim theatregoers in a powerful way.

Just as Satan surely felt that he was winning when Christ began to suffer, ultimately it was the plundering of his house & his complete defeat. Muslims are going to see this film because of their hatred & in the end; the message they will hear is to LOVE. Is it not just like God to do something like that? They mean it for evil, & God means it for good!!

Below is an excerpt from the newspaper article that was run today in the local newspaper:

INTERNATIONAL blockbuster film Passion of the Christ will have a multiple

release in Doha today. Qatar is to be the first country in the Middle East to screen the film..."

There is yet another motivation that Qatar had in releasing this film & that was to be "the first country in the Middle East" to show the film. Qatar is trying to change its image & portray itself as a tolerant Muslim country. Little do they know that this film is exposing their people to many truths categorically denied by their faith; The Sonship of Christ, the Fatherhood of God, the Atoning Death of Christ for the sins of the World and of course the commandment to "Love your enemies". We are all still shell-shocked by what happened & what will happen in the coming days.

We pray that this film will be shown for a significant period of time. Currently it is being shown in 3 different theatres 4 times a day. Fundamentalists will surely be in an uproar about this unprecedented event. Just when we thought Satellite television was going to be the most significant way for the Lord to sow the seeds of the Gospel, this film arrives in Muslim nations!

We also pray that this film will cause a major shaking & stirring in the hearts of Qatari Muslims leading them to salvation.

3. That God will lead us to men & women who have been/will be impacted by this powerful film.

It was reported today Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat viewed "The Passion of the Christ" at a private screening in the West Bank city of Ramallah yesterday & said it was not anti-Semitic. He watched the film with Palestinian Muslim & Christian leaders at his headquarters.