

# Jesus of Nazareth

co-written and directed by Franco Zeffirelli

## Study Guide for Hour Seven

The last twenty minutes of Jesus of Nazareth are devoted to the resurrection. Surprisingly, Zeffirelli drastically truncates the resurrection accounts as he continues to harmonize Matthew, Luke, and John's versions. (Read Matthew 27:62-28:20, Luke 24, John 20; Mark does not include a resurrection appearance.)

Jesus is resurrected for two essential reasons. First, his resurrection vindicates his atonement for human sin. According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus died screaming after uttering his cry of dereliction. What in this is there to indicate that the atonement succeeded? Second, his resurrection describes the effect of the atonement. The effect is reconciliation with God. (Cf. II Corinthians 5:18) Sin, born by Jesus, no longer creates a chasm between God and man. And ultimately, reconciliation with God is a literal reality. It is the convergence of God's eternity with our humanity, which allows us to ascend to eternal life after our deaths.

Hour 6, minute :02 depicts Peter's weeping after his threefold betrayal of Jesus. (Read Matthew 26:75)

Hour 6, minutes :03-:04 depict the so-called Deposition in which Jesus is removed from the cross. This is the subject of a great deal of Christian art. The gospels differ as to which women were at the foot of Jesus' cross, but they all agree that women were present.

Hour 6, minutes :04-:07 are taken from Matthew's resurrection account. (Read 27:62-66) The religious authorities demand that Pilate guard the tomb because they fear that the disciples intend to steal his body and spread the lie that he has been resurrected. In Matthew's account, an angel appears at the tomb and the guards faint. They are later bribed to lie about what really happened.

Hour 6, minute :07 is taken from Luke's gospel. Two angels appear and ask the famed question, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" Their appearance as angels is understated. Zeffirelli declines dramatic theophanies. Rather, his theophanies are subtle and ambiguous and depicted through the experience of their recipients.

Hour 6, minutes :08-:17 depict the disciples in the "upper room." Mary Magdalene describes to them her experience with the resurrected Jesus according to John's resurrection account, but that experience is not enacted. Nor is the doubting Thomas' interaction enacted. Nor is the Road to Emmaus enacted. Much of the resurrection accounts are left out.

Hour 6, minutes :18-:19 are from Matthew's account, with the imaginary Zerach functioning as the voice of the religious authorities.

Hour 6, minute :20 Peter in hindsight recalls that Jesus taught them very clearly and numerous times that he would rise from the dead. (Read Mark 8:31-33, Mark 9:30-34, Mark 10:32-40). Note the disciples' reaction to all three impartations. They are obtuse. They do not take it in. Also depicted is John's version of the Pentecost. (Read John 20:21-22) The disciples receive Jesus' Holy Spirit and are sent out to evangelize. (Cf. Luke's version of the Pentecost in Acts 2. Luke authored Acts.) The film ends with the resurrected Jesus surrounded by his disciples. He delivers the Great Commission. (Read Matthew 28:16-20) The film ends then with a new beginning. The disciples, now turned apostles, along with the leadership of the soon to be Apostle Paul, evangelize and form the nascent church, while Christianity's greatest theologians (Irenaeus, Augustine, Athanasius, etc.) hammer out the meaning of the New Testament. In so doing, they make Christianity an articulate, profound, intellectually defensible thought system.

Final question for reflection or discussion

It is Christ's question, "Who do you say that I am?"