

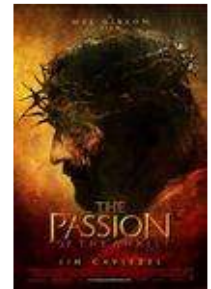
April 17, 2004

Dear Friend,

We are really in the thick of things, preparing for the showing of *The Passion of the Christ*, the Mel Gibson film, here in Japan! I have been networking almost daily with several other ministries and missionaries to help prepare materials and inform the Christian community here in regards to the film.

In Japan there was really very little news of the film until just before it was released in the US. At first, the news focused on the anti-Semitic charge and the violence, and then after it was released, the big news was the incredible box office results! Those box office results ultimately changed the mind of the Japanese distributor, that was not sure how to handle this film in Japan, and in mid-March they decided to aim at an all out blitz for this film.

It is opening in 146 theaters nationwide on May 1, 2004, which is a Saturday and also the 1st and also a holiday. Opening on the 1st means that all tickets that day are only 1000 yen in most theaters (\$10) as opposed to the normal 1800 yen (\$18). Buy-ahead tickets are 1500 yen, with discounts for students, including university students. There is a lot of excitement that hundreds of thousands of Japanese will get to see a major film on the life of Christ. Since not many people went to see the Jesus film when it was finally released in theaters, this is a great opportunity to bring the gospel to more people. We are praying that God will do great things like He has done in other countries. At the preview screenings, Japanese audiences have also been observed crying, and then some people went to bookstores to buy Bibles afterwards!



One of our staff, Keiko Okano was asked to supervise the subtitles for appropriateness, and that led to her being interviewed in a weekly news magazine article about the *Passion*. She was able to communicate the gospel message through her answers, so many will read those comments too!

Nevertheless, the critical issue is whether the Japanese will understand the film, since it focuses so narrowly on the death of Christ. I am doing several things now to help meet this need. I am helping arrange a website where people can write in their thoughts about the film and read the opinions of others. The

website will also enable people to find other information and materials about the life of Christ, such as the Jesus video. The response site is www.passionforum.jp. I am also helping prepare a Bible study booklet and promotional postcards highlighting the website and Jesus video.

Within our network, other coworkers have written an explanation of the film which shares some of the reasons for Christ's death, to be included in the movie brochure that will be sold in the theaters. Still others are producing evangelistic tracts and Bible studies for distribution and creating other websites with information to help people prepare for seeing and understanding the film. We rejoice at how the Body of Christ is cooperating in this effort!

Prayer focus:

Please pray that God would motivate and enable the Japanese churches to use this film for evangelism. It is not normal for Japanese churches to organize group events to see films, but that is just what we want them to do! The best evangelism will be when churches get groups of people together with non-believing family and friends to see the film and then sit and discuss it afterwards. The main point, of course, is to explain that Jesus willingly gave up His life and went through all that suffering for us to be saved. It would be great if follow up Bible study groups could be started as a result. Pray with us that God would encourage the churches to get involved and use this opportunity well.

Secondly pray that through the websites we can have opportunities to communicate the gospel online. Pray that the Lord would teach us how to do the best online outreach we can.

Pray that the film does "succeed" and thus, be shown in more parts of the country. It is not that the film is so evangelistic in itself, it is that it raises a lot of the right questions people need to ask! Success will mean a good impact later too through DVD sales and video rentals.

Please check out our efforts on line at www.japanccc.org/passion/ which is in English and Japanese. Included in this site is a list of all the theaters where the film will be shown, in case you have friends in Japan you wish to write to and encourage to go see the film.

Thanks for praying with us as we help more Japanese come to know

Jesus!

In His love,

Steve, Rochelle, Andy, Ben, Melissa and Joshua