

Movie Review

'I am Legend'

I didn't think I would get so much out of this movie before I saw it. I had heard different opinions about it. Some people had said it was well worth seeing, whilst one person just looked at me when I asked if I should see it. Anyhow, see it I did, and my first reflection afterwards was surprise at the many parallels with the Christian message that are highlighted in this human drama.

This movie is about one man's search for redemption and salvation following a deadly virus that has destroyed most, if not all, of humanity. Scientist Robert Neville (played by Will Smith) believes he is the only survivor of the virus. Somehow, in his contribution to creating it, he has developed an immunity and out of his immense guilt feels a moral obligation to stay at Ground Zero in Manhattan and develop a vaccine.

We soon find that those people who have survived the virus have been morphed into ferociously aggressive animals who cannot cope with any light and will do anything to survive. These people - the 'dark-seekers' as they are known - are forced to come out at night and eke out an existence away from the bright light of day. Despite their attempts to kill Neville (as well as anything that moves), he sees them as sick people in need of a cure and not as enemies who must be destroyed. For the survival of the species, he is forced to love his enemies by seeing them just as God sees us.

It is difficult to comprehend Neville's dilemma as he roams the totally deserted streets of Manhattan. The city that never sleeps has been rendered a ghost town. Wild animals roam free, and for Neville and his faithful German Shepherd, Sam, part of everyday life is about trying to kill the next deer for food.

As we follow Neville in his search for a cure to the virus, we are confronted by the desperate human need for relationship. Being the last person on the planet may have its advantages for a time, but soon it takes a toll on this determined man. His attempts to create a sense of human contact by some artificial means cannot hide the fact that he is desperately alone. As I sat through the movie, I couldn't help but be reminded of the fact that without any sense of relationship in our lives we will be driven to insanity or suicide. It is said that nature abhors a vacuum and it must be filled with relationship.

Despite his aloneness however, Neville battles on, inspired by a Bob Marley song which talks about lighting up the darkness, and by his strong sense of moral obligation to find a cure and assuage his guilt.

'I Am Legend' is a story of human survival and the desire for redemption. On the way it clearly exposes the human condition, both in our need for relationship and in the fact that everyone on the planet is made in the image of an almighty and all-loving God.

by Nils von Kalm
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