



Acts - the TV Series



A.D. The Bible Continues (2015)

Starring: Richard Coyle, Adam Levy, Joanne Whalley

Written by: Simon Block, Ben Newman, Tom Grieves

Directed by: Ciaran Donnelly
Produced by: Mark Burnett

The 'sequel' to *The Bible* (2013) TV series, was originally shown on Australian TV with the title *A.D. Kingdom and Empire* in 2015 and is now available on some subscription channels. Even though the series is based on the first ten chapters of the *Book of Acts*, the latter title is a more accurate a description as it is more a biblical Game of Thrones than a historical docudrama rendition of the Bible stories. The last episode of The Bible series provided a shorter consideration of some key parts of the Book of Acts. The A.D. series has 12 episodes, with the first two connecting with the previous series *The Bible* and acting to remind or introduce viewers to the context of the new Christian community with a focus on the death and resurrection of Christ.

This series is similar to the SBS aired *Vikings* in terms of its historical accuracy (lack thereof) and use of truncated time-lines and re-arrangement of historical figures to suit an overall story, rather than a series based solely on the biblical text and historical sources. There is a good amount of creative licence (they are filling in 12 hours or so of material), but there are also some good scenes of biblical message and interaction. The main issue for me is that it suffers from the curse of contemporary television; the reality TV show, and so focusses on personalities and individual perspectives, rather than providing a holistic theology of the bible. Too often, (especially in the later episodes), the main characters are reduced to emotional caricatures in the attempt to personalise them. Essentially it is Hollywood-style television aimed at a nominal Christian audience and culture.

If you watch, have your bible ready and take the opportunity to review and work out what is biblically based and where the creative licence comes in.



New Life

(2016) PG

Starring: Barry Corbin, James Marsters, Terry O'Quinn, Irma Hall

Written by: Erin Bethea, Josh Spake, Candice Irion, Drew Waters

Directed by: Drew Waters
Produced by: Arthur Bernstein

New Life had a limited Australian release in December 2018 (it was produced in the USA in 2016) and is available through *Movies Change People* (Heritage Films). *New Life* is not a Christian film in the defined US tradition, but a film in the 'Hallmark' style tradition of stories about life, family and love. It raises questions about life and being in the context of the friendship and love of two childhood friends, and links into other more well-known commercial love story films. *New Life* is a sweet film for today, and while not overly dynamic, it has some moving moments and is certainly a film you would feel comfortable inviting people to view and discussing the themes of life, death and living. While I don't want to outline the ending, I found it quite intriguing for this day and age and have wondered what people's reactions to this will be. Actor Drew Waters directs the film, and the main female character Ava Kennedy is played by Erin Bethea, who will be recognisable to many Christian film watchers, particularly as the lead in an earlier (2008) and very popular faith-based film *Fireproof*. I leave you with the defining narrating comment from the film, by John Patrick Moore, an Australian actor who plays the main male character Ben Morton:

There are mountain top experiences in our journey through this world. Those rare and lucid moments when everything seems right, and anything is possible. There are those ordinary days when we may not be thrillingly aware of what lies in the future, but we know it's still out there. There are also those strange times when things do not add up or make sense, when we seem to be forgotten, when heavens are brass, but it's all the moments, good and bad that make up life, and the most important thing to do with life is to live it.