

## **Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World**

Rated PG-13

Based on Patrick O'Brien's book "*The Far Side of the World*," part of his 19 book series, "*Master and Commander*" is a swashbuckling, fast adventure of the early 1900's Napoleon wars. This epic journey begins when the sailing warship H.M.S. Surprise is attacked in an unexpected and superior way. "Lucky" Jack Aubrey, played by Russell Crowe, is the ship's captain and he is furious at being overtaken by another battleship. Captain Jack sets out to defeat his enemy only to be nearly beaten again. Captain Jack finds a way to use trickery to avoid capture and discovers that the battleship is much faster and more maneuverable than his own vessel. Still, Captain Jack refuses to give up and pursues the battleship from South America to the Galapagos Islands.

"*Master and Commander*" is definitely not a romance film in the fashion of *Sleepless in Seattle*. The waves seem to drench you, the blasts from the cannons are rocketing, and the brutality of war at sea feels very real and profound. Witnessing the two vessels pound each other with cannon balls while thousands of miles out at sea gives one the sense of total lunacy. Despite this bitter action, the story is of Captain Jack's loyalty and duty to his mother country, England. Captain Jack's challenge is not only to capture the enemy vessel, but to also maintain the morale and support of his men despite all costs.

Captain Jack is portrayed as a religious man who leads the crew in prayers. Yet, he continually placed his men at risk by ignoring his original orders so he could pursue the enemy vessel. For these actions, he was accused of being prideful and self-serving.

A disturbing aspect of the film is how critical deception was as a survival tactic and war strategy. This position is counter to Biblical teaching which emphasizes honesty and teaches us that God rewards truth and directness over lies and deception. Why did deception work for Captain Jack?

While the movie does not answer this question, it gives us an opportunity to consider our own morals and values. Are we willing to win at all costs? What value do we place on human life - particularly those lives that have been entrusted to our safekeeping?

For history buffs, the film is a sterling portrayal of life during this adventurous era. One certainly gets a flavor and a feel for life on board a sailing vessel, and all the drama and thrills that go with it. While not necessarily a great movie, it is certainly worth seeing.

*By Natalie and Curt Levang*