

# The Miracle Maker (2000)

Not Rated. Running time: 1 hour 30 min.

Our content advisories (1-10): Violence 4; Language 0;  
Sex/Nudity 1.

Our star rating (1-5): 5

*But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*

*John 21:25*

The Claymation Jesus film *The Miracle Maker* aired on ABC Television in 2000 and is now available on DVD. The clay figures, which are made to “move” by means of stop-motion photography, are beautifully crafted, as are the miniature sets. The outstanding voice cast includes Ralph Fiennes as Jesus, Miranda Richardson as Mary Magdalene, Richard E. Grant as John the Baptist, William Hurt as Jairus, David Thewliss as Judas Iscariot, Alfred Molina as Simon the Pharisee, and Ian Holm as Pontius Pilate.

At 90 minutes, the average length of a feature cartoon, *The Miracle Maker* has to leave out many important events of Christ’s life—the Transfiguration, the feeding of the 5000, the scourging (just as well for children watching), and most of the words from the cross (unfortunately, “Father forgive them...” was one)—but the essence of Jesus’ story is captured so winsomely that adults can enjoy this retelling of the gospel story as much as children

Appropriately, the story of Jesus is told through the eyes of a little girl whom he heals, Jairus’s daughter, given the name of Tamara. She first sees Jesus’ act of kindness, when, while he is doing carpentry work on the synagogue across from her

house, he prevents the overseer from whipping the insane woman who has interrupted their work—Mary Magdalene (for once portrayed, not as the traditional prostitute, but as the gospel writers described, as the woman from whom Jesus had expelled seven demons).

The claymation is replaced by regular flat animation whenever there are flashbacks or interior reflections or thought processes. So we see the claymation Jesus and disciples enter the Garden of Gethsemane, and then when Satan appears, the process changes to animation, Satan waving his hand and opening an escape route through the olive trees so that Jesus can easily escape those coming to arrest him. Thanks to the strong yet compassionate voice of Ralph Fiennes, joined to the strikingly crafted clay image, this Jesus is indeed “the Miracle Maker,” healing people out of love and standing firm before his enemies.

Like the CBS film *Jesus*, this film takes a cue from Luke 4:13, “When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.” This is Luke’s conclusion to the Temptation in the Wilderness, and in both *Jesus* and this film Satan does indeed come to the Garden of Gethsemane to tempt Jesus, anxious to escape from crucifixion. For me the woeful voice of Ralph Fiennes pleading to have the cup taken away makes this scene the most moving of all the Jesus films. This excellent film should be in every church and pastor’s library!

*Note a lengthy discussion guide for the film is in my forthcoming book *Jesus Christ: Movie Star*, scheduled for publication in mid-2014. Check out [ReadtheSpirit](#) for an announcement when it is available. **Update:** The book has been published. You can check out the contents & a few pages on [Amazon Books](#).*