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Final 24: David Koresh

2007

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Every few years we start to hear news about another cult that has popped up somewhere and its followers have finally gone over the edge, taking their interpretation of religion to such extremes that it threatens not only their followers but quite often law enforcement. It's not really anything that's new and there will always be someone who manages to fall into the role of leader and will manage to get their flock to follow their every word. I would almost be willing to put money down on the fact that before the "dreaded" date of December 21st, 2012 arrives we will see another cult pop up ready to do battle with the forces of evil.

As we've seen, cults are a very dangerous thing though often they are left unchecked until it's too late. Those loyal hang on their leaders every word, they refuse to listen to reason even when faced with any truth that might show that they are in fact wrong, and they are more than happy to try and impose their will on those who don't believe. I suppose by that account, we can consider the Global Warming fanatics to be nothing more than cultists trying to force the Green Religion down the throats of everyone else, though it does seem that their leader, His Holiness Al Gore, has run into a little trouble. Closer to the world of more accepted religions however, there is the case of David Koresh, the leader of the Branch Davidian sect and, as most of us know, his desire to lead his followers ended in tragedy at the Mount Carmel Center in Waco, Texas.

Final 24 is a Canadian produced documentary series which focuses on the last day of several famous as well as notorious personalities. However, it isn't exactly the ticking clock that is winding down to the moment of inevitable death as you might assume. We were sent three different volumes to look at and my decision was to start with Koresh. I remember the media covering the events in Waco, seeing live coverage of the FBI trying to negotiate and then the fire which took the life of Koresh and those who remained in the compound, but it was also an event that I really didn't pay too much attention to.

As I assume the other episodes will do, the series goes into some detail on the life of Koresh prior to what occurred in Waco. He was bullied in school, called retarded (or Mr. Retardo), but became fascinated by both music and religion, something that he wanted to combine later as he understood that this blend

could be the thing that would lead others to follow his words. The episode includes interviews with former followers of the Brach Davidian faith under Koresh and it's easy to see just what type of damage a cult can do. While some seem to have snapped out of their trance and come back to reality, others are still convinced that one day Koresh will rise from the grave even his own mother (though she was murdered in 2009 by her own sister, so even if he does miraculously come back to life, she won't be around to see it.)

What I found interesting though is that there's a pattern that can be found here that is true with other cult leaders, most of them at least. The fact that they want to control those around them is something we expect, but it goes beyond religious teachings. With what I've read and seen with many of these religious leaders, many of them take their control to levels where they forbid sex, annul marriages, and in the case of Koresh and many others, they are nothing more than pedophiles using the "word of God" to somehow manage to convince others that engaging in sexual practices with underage girls (or boys in some cases) is completely acceptable.

The documentary though isn't something that is necessarily one sided, it does try and present things from both sides which is why you'll find interviews with followers as well as those who tried to stop the activities, and it also provides evidence that doesn't seem to be trying to work some liberal agenda into things. It merely paints the picture as it happened as well as the history of what lead up to the final moments of Koresh's life. Obviously some members of the flock might have a different opinion and it will be something that the government can be blamed for, but stockpiling weapons "just in case" really is nothing more than trying to make preparations to fight the government in some way in my opinion . . . unless there's some zombie outbreak somewhere that I don't know about in which case, I guess I'll need to prepare myself as well.

The disc doesn't include any extras though I'm sure it could have. I would think that with the interviews that are seen during the documentary there are bound to be some things that couldn't be used which could have been added or perhaps even some archival news footage.

Final 24: David Koresh gives a bit of insight into the mind of a cult leader and will help to play out what lead to the "battle" at Mount Caramel. It seems that with cult leaders, they have almost evolved to the mental state of serial killers with each one trying to outdo what others have done, though Koresh hasn't come close to topping Jim Jones, not that having a number of people take their lives in the name of religion by those who claim to be profits is a good thing.

-mike-

Directed by:
Karl Jason

Written by:
Karl Jason
Michael Allcock

Narrated by:
Danny Wallace

DVD Features:
Aspect Ratio: 1.33:1
Audio: English Dolby Digital 2.0

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