

EXT. NAZARETH - MORNING

From above: Flying close over a thick grove of olive trees. MUSIC fades into the sound of wings beating through the air. We hear (OVER) the voice of a young man, thoughtful but strong.

JESUS (V.O.)

The feeling begins. It's a light tingling at first. Right on the top of my head. Very tender. Like a caress. Soft wings carrying me to Paradise. Then the pain starts.

Now we see JESUS, the son of Mary, 28 years-old, sleeping under an olive tree. The mid-morning sun (OVER-EXPOSED) shines on his stubby face. He is dreaming.

JESUS (V.O.)

It feels like the bird has grabbed me from behind. Just above the neck. Talons slip underneath the skin and work and claw their way up the back of my neck. Then the real pain begins. Each claw digs into the soft matter behind my brain, and then across the top of my head toward my eyes. Just before they reach my eyes, they dig down...

Jesus awakens. He looks around.

JESUS (V.O.)

And I remember. I have to make a cross.

While he is still speaking he reaches up to touch the back of his head, where the pain started. He pulls his fingers away. There is blood on them.

CUT TO:

INT. CARPENTER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Jesus shapes a long piece of timber with an adze. His patched tunic rests on the workbench. Walls are hung with tools.

A nail-studded belt hangs from a hook above his head. The belt is speckled with dried blood. Two drops of fresh blood

drip off the belt onto the ground.

JESUS (V.O.)

At first I fasted for three months.
Then I whipped myself before sleeping.
At first it worked, then the headaches
returned. I know it's God. Or the
devil. Who can tell them apart? They
exchange faces; God sometimes becomes
all darkness, the devil all light,
and they become confused in my mind.

Outside, there are NOISES of a crowd gathering nearby.
Undistracted, he finishes off the piece of timber, which has
become the crossbar of a cross. He places the crossbar between
two brackets on the wall, then puts himself halfway between
them and stretches out his arms, gauging the proper
proportion.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAZARETH STREET - DAY

Narrow and crowded with citizens on their way to a
crucifixion. A ROMAN SOLDIER watches them with professional
disinterest. His armour is non-existent, his uniform is
certainly not splendid. He looks like a sloppy traffic cop.
PEOPLE come from behind him and walk in front.

Over the soldier's left shoulder appears a man with blazing
red hair and beard, moving with the crowd. He walks close
behind the soldier for just a moment. Very professionally,
he cuts his throat. The soldier falls to the ground. The man
keeps walking calmly and the camera follows as, in the
background, people start to notice that a soldier has been
stabbed.

A WOMAN screams. Two other MEMBERS of the crowd grab her and
silence her, while SEVERAL OTHERS drag the body off into a
hut.

The red-haired man keeps walking. This is JUDAS.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAZARETH CARPENTER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Jesus looks toward the door, almost as if he has felt the
murder.

JESUS (V.O.)

Who is it? Who are you? Why are you following me?

Judas enters, sees Jesus working on the cross.

JUDAS

Are you ready?

Jesus doesn't answer.

JUDAS

I said are you ready?

He grabs him. Jesus still doesn't answer. He keeps working.

JUDAS

You're a disgrace.

Jesus smiles at him.

JESUS

I'm the disgrace? Judas, I see the blood on your knife.

Judas lets go of him. He takes the knife from inside his cloak and removes it from its scabbard. He wipes the blood off the blade with a rag.

JUDAS

Come with us. Help us.

JESUS

Leave me alone.

JUDAS

No. This time you won't finish.

He grabs Jesus' hands and holds them.

JUDAS

Listen. Everything's ready. We're going to save the Zealot. He could be the one we've been waiting for. You can't just pray for the Messiah. You've got to help him. You can't expect God to do everything. He needs our help too.

JESUS

He'll have to do it without me.

JUDAS

You might be killing the Messiah.
This Zealot today is not like all
the others. I feel it. He's different.
Don't finish the cross. Come with
us. Don't you want to be part of it?
You want the Romans to be here
forever?

JESUS

The Messiah has nothing to do with
the Romans.

JUDAS

Yes he does. How else do you expect
to be free? If this Zealot is the
Messiah and we don't save him, then
he'll die and we'll never know. But
if we save him, the miracle might
happen.

JESUS

What miracle?

JUDAS

The sign, the signal. The royal crown
of David will shine on his head.

JESUS

It can't be much of a miracle if we
have to help.

JUDAS

You're not even ashamed.

JESUS

No.

JUDAS

Romans can't find carpenters to make
crosses. Except for you. You throw
yourself into it like a madman.
Everybody thinks you're crazy. But
not me. I can see through this act
of yours. Fainting, hearing voices,

having visions. Everyone thinks you're a madman. But I know what you are. You're an enemy. You're worse than the Romans. You're a Jew who's killing Jews. And you're not ashamed. You don't even have any pride.

JESUS

No, I don't have any pride. I don't go to Synagogue. I disobey the commandments. I work on the Sabbath. Your Messiahs? You find them, I'll crucify them.

Judas hits Jesus across the mouth.

JUDAS

You're lucky you're a Jew.

JESUS

Why?

JUDAS

Anyone else would have been dead by now. You think Zealots are murderers? We're pathfinders, we're patriots, and you're in the way.

JESUS

Then get me out of the way.

Judas and Jesus stare each other down.

JUDAS

I will. In my time. Not yours. When I'm told.

JESUS

When did you ever need permission to kill anybody?

JUDAS

To kill a Roman, never. To kill a Jew, we all have to agree. We have more respect for Jews than you do. The next time I see you, you're dead.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARPENTER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

A CENTURION pushes his way through a small crowd.

Jesus stands ready outside the workshop, the crossbar resting against a wall. The crowd is taunting him with cries of "Crossmaker!," "Traitor," "Cooperator," "Collaborator," but he ignores them.

Someone throws something. A MAN in the crowd deliberately jostles him roughly, trying to start a fight. The Centurion breaks things up.

CENTURION

Leave him alone. You ready?

(as Jesus nods)

Come on.

Jesus buckles the nail-studded belt around his waist. The Centurion helps Jesus heft the cross-beam to his shoulders. The Centurion leads Jesus through a gauntlet the crowd has formed from the village to the crucifixion site on the edge of Nazareth. Ahead, six Roman soldiers lead the protesting ZEALOT. Two mounted soldiers flank the group. The Zealot's hands are tied behind him. His clothes are torn and bloody, his long hair and grey beard matted with blood and sweat.

ZEALOT

You're the people of Israel! God is with us! He's judging us now! Fight!

The soldiers push him along.

MAN IN CROWD

How long do we have to wait for the Messiah?

ANOTHER MAN

Until you die! Because he's not coming.

WOMAN IN CROWD

He forgot about us! He doesn't want us!

YOUNG MAN

Listen to the Zealot! God is strength.

MAN

Give us strength now!

A Roman soldier slams the Man against the wall, then shoves the crowd back as the Zealot passes. The crowd cools down a little.

Now the villagers heap abuse on Jesus. MARY, 56, mother of Jesus, pushes her way through the crowd. A MAN is about to throw a stone at Jesus. She grabs his arm, tries to pry the stone from his fingers.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)

Don't touch him. Get away from him.

She starts pushing people away in angry desperation.

WOMAN IN CROWD

You defend him.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)

Yes. He's my son. He doesn't know what he's doing.

The crowd now starts pushing Mary. She resists. A Centurion breaks up the melee. Jesus continues on his way.

The Zealot has reached the crucifixion site: a rocky, flint covered mound. The soldiers wait for the cross.

Children throw pebbles at Jesus as he approaches the Zealot. The Roman guards brace themselves for violence.

Jesus sets the cross down beside the Zealot who is held by guards.

Mary comes through the crowd, takes her son by the arm.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)

Alright. Come away now.

Jesus pulls away from her. She goes after him but a guard yanks her back into the crowd. The Centurion gathers some pieces of parchment together as the Zealot's voice rings out:

ZEALOT

Listen! Don't be afraid! God is strong. Rome is smoke. God will blow it away. Remember the Maccabees,

remember how they threw out the
Greeks! We'll throw out the Romans
the same way. There's only one God
of Hosts and he's our God!

CENTURION
(he's heard it all
before)
Finished?

Without waiting for an answer, the Centurion begins to read
the charges against the Zealot.

CENTURION
'This man naked before you now is
condemned for sedition, for lifting
his hand against Rome. Even as a boy
he pulled the Imperial Eagle from
walls. He ran to the mountains and
rallied the people to Revolution. He
promised a Messiah would come from
among the people to rise up and
destroy Rome...'

He starts paging through the parchment, his interest
wandering.

CENTURION
'...murder... betrayal' ...so on...
'looting...' and so on... 'and
therefore he is condemned to die.
Rome condemns him. All the Gods of
Rome condemn him.' And I condemn
him. Start.

The Zealot has been stripped naked and laid down on the cross-
bar. The guards prepare to drive the nails into his wrists.
A hush comes over the crowd.

The spike is placed in the Zealot's wrist. The hammer drives
it home. The Zealot's scream (almost ecstatic) is echoed by
the crowd.

Blood spurts from his wounds: a drop splatters on Jesus'
lips.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Close angle on Jesus, who is speaking vehemently.

JESUS
Speak softer! I can't understand!
Softer!

Silence.

JESUS
I still can't... stop... Are you
trying to make me understand, or do
you just want to hurt me?
(pause; then, as if
answering)
Well, if I don't belong here, with
men, where do I belong? Tell me! Or
do you just want to punish me?

Still silence.

Now we see the whole room, which is a small area just off
the kitchen. Jesus is alone. His Mother enters. Jesus looks
over.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
What are you hearing?

She sits near him and puts her hand over his.

JESUS
They want to know if I'm afraid.
Afraid! Of course I'm afraid!
(looking up)
Hear that? I am afraid. Is that what
you want? Alright.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
What do they want?

JESUS
They want me to speak. To go out and
speak!

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
Speak about what?

JESUS
About the Kingdom of Heaven. But I

don't care about the Kingdom of Heaven. I like earth. I like to eat, sleep, see a woman without my head being torn in half.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
But you can have that right now.

JESUS
No! Because anytime I try to get what everybody else has, the pain starts. And the voices.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
And so you make crosses!

JESUS
Yes, I make crosses! To keep him quiet. To make God hate me! To make him find somebody else.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
You're sure it's God? You're sure it's not the Devil?

JESUS
I'm not sure. I'm not sure of anything.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
If it's the devil, the devil can be cast out.

JESUS
What if it's God? You can't cast out God.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
But if it's God, why should he hurt you?

JESUS
Because he loves me. And I don't want him to love me. I want him to hate me! I want to crucify every one of his Messiahs.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
The more you dare God, the more you

make him angry. Maybe that's why
he's made you so unhappy here.

JESUS
Where?

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
Here. With people. Maybe you shouldn't
be here.

JESUS
If I don't belong with people, who
do I belong with, God?

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
I don't know. Go and ask him. Go
where God is.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGE OF NAZARETH - DAWN

Jesus begins his journey to go where God is. He walks with a
certainty we have not seen before.

Nazareth, seen behind him, is stirring to life. Jesus' path
takes him past the crucifixion site of the day before. At
the foot of the cross are several GUARDS who are dividing up
the Zealot's clothes. One of the Guards sees Jesus and calls
to him.

GUARD
Crossmaker! Here's your share.

The Guard throws the Zealot's bloody headcloth. Jesus holds
it for a moment.

GUARD
What's the matter? Don't you want
it?

JESUS
Yes. I want it.

He puts the headcloth on.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE NAZARETH - EARLY MORNING

Jesus strides across a grassy plain. Much of the "lake district" of Galilee was a fertile and pleasant valley. Jesus leans his body into the wind as he reaches a ridge.

JESUS (V.O.)

All this time I've been cursing him, trying to make him hate me. All that pain for something so simple, I should have realized. He just wants me to devote my life to him. If that's what it takes to stop the pain, I'm happy. Only one road leads to God. And it comes out in the desert. God's waiting for me in a well in the monastery. He does love me. I'll hide under his wings.

Jesus watches a small caravan in the distance and follows its path.

CUT TO:

EXT. GALILEE - DAY

Jesus passes two PEASANT GIRLS reaping in an open field. Their partially open dresses reveal their bodies. Their open sexuality intimidates Jesus.

PEASANT GIRL

Are you going to Magela?

JESUS

No. To the monastery.

They laugh.

SECOND GIRL

Then you take the other road.

PEASANT GIRL

If you really want to.

SECOND GIRL

Why not stop and have some bread with us?

They're teasing him a little now and he's slightly embarrassed.

JESUS

No, thank you. I can't.

They smile as they watch him go.

CUT TO:

LATER - JESUS

Walks alone along the windy seashore.

JESUS (V.O.)

Lord, thank you for everything, for
the loneliness, the hunger, the cold.
I don't need anything else.

Hearing FOOTSTEPS, he stops abruptly. Turns and looks.

JESUS (V.O.)

Who's that? Who's following me?

Seeing nothing, Jesus starts again. The FOOTSTEPS return --
LOUDER.

JESUS (V.O.)

Is that you?

He clutches his head, collapses to his knees in pain:

JESUS (V.O.)

Magdalene! Magdalene!

CUT TO:

EXT. MAGDALA - DAY

Three camels in the forefront of a caravan kneel to the ground. Their riders and the camels are completely covered with sand. As the camels rest, the riders open their cloaks revealing bright robes of red, blue and gold and exotic jewelry.

Jesus walks past the caravan on the main plaza of Magdala, where TOWNSPEOPLE are salting fish in a public market. The streets are crowded with camels, donkeys, Mongols on horseback, Afghans laden with rugs and blankets, Nubian slaves following their Greek and Roman masters. A Berber woman dances. She is caked with dust. As she dances, the dust flies

away, revealing her dress, her jewelry, her body.

Jesus passes a well where a woman is seated, drawing water. Her naked breasts are painted. He tries to avoid her glance.

JESUS (V.O.)

Thank you Lord for bringing me where
I did not want to come.

He pushes his way through the crowd until he reaches the home of Mary Magdalene. On her door, there is a painting of two intertwined snakes, one black, one white, and above the LINTEL, a painting of a large yellow lizard with its legs stretched out as if crucified. A row of camels, horses and donkeys stand outside. Jesus enters.

A young Indian nobleman with an aristocratic air, passes by Jesus and into the courtyard, Jesus stares and follows behind him.

JESUS (V.O.)

He must be one of God's angels. He
came down to show me the way.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY MAGDALENE'S COURTYARD - DAY

Jesus and the nobleman take their places seated on the ground in Magdalene's courtyard. About a dozen men wait for their turn with Magdalene.

Besides the young Indian nobleman (with three gold bands around his ankles), there are three Bedounin, three old men with painted eyelashes and nails, two young men with black beards and moustaches, and two rich black merchants. An old lady is off to one side crouched on the ground with a small cage containing some crabs. A small fire is beside her on which she is cooking food. There is no door to Magdalene's room where she does business, only a wispy half torn curtain floating in the infrequent breeze. This affords her waiting clients a half-darkened view of the proceedings. An Arab makes love to her. She is nude, and good at her work.

The young Indian nobleman lowers his eyelids, begins swaying his upper body back and forth and moves his lips as if in prayer. Jesus and the others glance at him. One of the black merchants pushes him with his knee and smiles.

BLACK MERCHANT

Prince of India, what does your God
have to say about all this?

INDIAN NOBLEMAN

(opening his eyes)

All what?

BLACK MERCHANT

Here, in front of you.

INDIAN NOBLEMAN

That everything is a dream.

One of the old men, using prayer beads, turns to them.

OLD MAN

Well, if it's a dream, then don't
wake us.

Jesus stares straight ahead. At that moment the Arab comes
out from Magdalene's room. All the men groan as if saying
"about time." The old man gets up and enters.

YOUNG MAN

Don't take all day, old man. There's
six more here before me.

CUT TO:

LATER - THE SUN

is waning. Three merchants wait with Jesus. Two are eating.

An Egyptian emerges from the Magdalene's house. Another man
gets up. Jesus defers to him.

CUT TO:

LATER - IT'S DARK

Jesus sits alone. The last customer closes the courtyard
door.

Jesus stands, enters Magdalene's room.

CUT TO:

INT. MAGDALENE'S ROOM - DARK - AMBERLIT - NIGHT

Mary, lies naked on a stack of blankets, covered with the sweat of all nations. Facing the wall, she calls:

MAGDALENE

Is there anyone else?

Jesus stops in the middle of the room.

Mary turns and recognizes Jesus. She instinctively pulls back.

MAGDALENE

What are you doing here.

JESUS

I want you to forgive me.

The Magdalene doesn't understand.

JESUS

I've done too many wrong things. I'm going to the desert. To the monastery. Before I go I want you to forgive me. Please.

MAGDALENE

Oh, I see. You sit out there all day with the others. Then you come in there with your head bowed, saying 'Forgive me, forgive me.' Well it's not that easy. Just because you need forgiveness don't ask me to do it.

JESUS

Mary, I'm sorry.

MAGDALENE

I don't want your pity. I'm fine, just fine. I don't need help from anybody. Especially you or your God.

JESUS

God can save your soul.

MAGDALENE

I don't want him. He's already broken my heart. Say the truth.

Mary is half in darkness. As she speaks her legs partially open and one hand slips between them. Her other hand covers her breasts.

MAGDALENE

You want to save my soul? This is where you'll find it. You're the same as the others only you can't admit it. You lie about it. You're pitiful. I hate you. Here's my body. Kiss it. Save it.

Jesus, angry, lunges for her and hits her hand away very hard. She pulls back on the couch and they stare at each other. When Magdalene speaks again she is calmer, but even sadder.

MAGDALENE

Is that the way you show you're a man? You never had the courage to be one. If you weren't hanging onto your mother, you were hanging onto me. Now you're hanging onto God, going to the desert to hide because you're scared. Well go. Whenever I see you my heart breaks. Don't look at me.

She stands and puts on a dress.

CUT TO:

LATER

Mary takes a casserole from the fire, pours it into a bowl and hands it to Jesus with a barley roll. Jesus eats ravenously.

MAGDALENE

Is that the way you eat? Without thanking God? Don't you think you should thank him for giving you all this: bread, beans, whores, wine...

JESUS

Let me eat and let me go.

Mary looks at him and touches his face. As she speaks, Jesus doesn't respond.

MAGDALENE

I remember when we were children.
When I was five and you were three.
I remember when we laid under the
tree together. I watched you. Later
I wanted you to come to me but not
before you suffered...

Magdalene is coming on to him. He is her lifetime love. No matter what he does, she will never stop loving him.

JESUS

Stop it.

He stands and walks over to the fire.

MAGDALENE

I never felt so much tenderness toward
anyone as I felt for you then... all
I ever wanted was you... nothing
else.

JESUS

And what do you think I wanted? Do
you think I wanted this? God help
me.

MAGDALENE

To do what?

It takes him a moment to answer, but when he finally speaks it is with some tenderness.

JESUS

To leave.

MAGDALENE

Please... stay.

(pause)

Here, it's cold. Sleep by the fire.

(she reaches for him)

Is it so bad, sharing a prostitute's
room? You'll still have your virginity
for the desert. I promise.

JESUS

I can't stay, Mary. I'm sorry.

CUT TO:

EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

A small desert commune huddled near the edge of a precipice. The monastery is actually an unconnected series of low mud huts. Jesus strides toward them. The wind blows.

VOICE

This way.

Jesus turns. And aged MASTER is revealed standing by the huts.

Jesus joins him. The Master looks into his careworn face and smiles serenely, then leads him inside.

CUT TO:

INT. MONASTERY - HUT - NIGHT

Jesus and the Master enter. Above the wind outside, Jesus can hear the sounds of prayer and singing.

JESUS

Do you pray this late at night?

MASTER

It's a funeral. The Master of the monastery died.

JESUS

I'll pray with you.

MASTER

(smiling)

No. Sleep well. You must be tired. 'First came the wings and then the angel.' God be praised.

He leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. MONASTERY HUT - MORNING

A monk, JEROBOAM, is shaking Jesus awake.

JEROBOAM

Who are you? What are you doing here?

JESUS
I was brought here.

JEROBOAM
By who?

JESUS
An old man.

JEROBOAM
There are a lot of old men here.
What was his name? Did he say
anything?

JESUS
He didn't say his name. He just said
'First came the wings and then the
angel.' That was all he said.

Jeroboam is startled.

CUT TO:

INT. MONASTERY HUT - DAY

Another hut. A simple room with a menorah. The Master who showed Jesus to the room lies on an open shroud on the floor, hands folded over his chest. His naked body is partially obscured by by mourners. One MONK kisses his closed eyes. ANOTHER his upturned palms, OTHERS his beard and his feet. Jesus and Jeroboam watch.

JESUS
This was the man who let me in last
night. Did he just die?

JEROBOAM
This was the Master of the monastery.
He's been dead since yesterday
morning. And you've come in his place.

CUT TO:

EXT. MONASTERY - DAY

Carrying the Master's remains, the monks move through blowing sand. The dunes seem almost to sway like the rise and fall

of the sea.

The procession, with Jesus at the end, stops at a pit. The monks, buffeted by the wind, roll the Master's remains into the pit.

Jeroboam shouts a prayer over the howling wind, but we cannot hear it.

JEROBOAM'S PRAYER:

JEROBOAM

The Master's soul has gone to heaven,
his body's work is completed. It
walked under the sun and moon, over
stone and sand, sinned, felt pain,
yearned for heaven. We commend his
remains to the earth and his soul to
our God. Flesh, the Master no longer
needs you. Melt away.

Even as he speaks, the wind leaves a fine layer of sand on the Master's body; the face, beard, and hands sink away.

CUT TO:

EXT. MONASTERY - DAY

Later. The sandstorm is over, the air is still. Jesus and Jeroboam walk close together. They are in the midst of conversation.

JEROBOAM

In our period of mourning for the
Master we believe we'll feel his
presence here for forty days, advising
us, scolding us. It actually appeared
to you. And showed you the way to
his room. His own room. He treated
you like a royal visitor. He
recognized you.

JESUS

He couldn't have recognized me for
anything. I only came here to serve
God and nothing else. That's all he
wants from me, I'm sure of it.

JEROBOAM

God brought you here, didn't he?

JESUS

All he brought here is my shame.

JEROBOAM

Shame is also a temptation.

JESUS

God hunts me. He drives his nails
into my heart. He wants to push me
over.

Jesus' hand sweeps out. We follow. He is gesturing toward
the steep precipice only a few yards away.

JESUS

He wants me to speak. But he didn't
touch my lips with burning coals.
How can I speak? I sinned.

JEROBOAM

We all sin.

JESUS

Not my sins. What does He want from
me? Can't he see what's inside me?
All my sins. I'm Lucifer.

JEROBOAM

Be quiet!

JESUS

No! I'm a liar. A hypocrite. I'm
afraid of everything. I never tell
the truth. I don't have the courage.
When I see a woman, I blush and look
away. But inside I have lust. For
God, I smother the lust, and that
satisfies my pride. But my pride
destroys Magdalene. I never steal or
fight, or kill... not because I don't
want to but because I'm afraid. I
want to rebel against everything,
everybody... against God!... but I'm
afraid. If you look inside me you
see fear, that's all. Fear is my
mother, my father, my God.

JEROBOAM

The more devils we have inside of us, the more chance we have to make angels. 'Angel' is the name for the devils who repent... so, you have to have faith. Have you ever slept with a woman?

JESUS

No...

JEROBOAM

And you don't want to?

JESUS

I do... No, I don't.

JEROBOAM

Why not?

JESUS

It's not enough for me.

JEROBOAM

Well, then what do you want?

(pause)

...Why don't you answer me?

JESUS

(smiling)

I am Saint Blasphemer, Father. So you'd better not ask me anything else, or I'll start my blasphemies.

JEROBOAM

Start your blasphemies. You'll be relieved. Start.

JESUS

There's Lucifer inside of me saying, You're not the son of the Carpenter, you're the son of King David. You're not a man, you're the son of man. And further: the son of God. And further than that: God.

Jeroboam is speechless.

JESUS

Do you want to ask me anything else?

JEROBOAM

No.

CUT TO:

INT. JESUS' HUT - NIGHT

Jesus sleeps on a woven mat.

He hears a HISSING SOUND. His eyes open, he sits up.

A snake emerges from a hole in the wall and slithers across the earthen floor. Another snake follows it. The snakes coil around each other and copulate.

Jesus watches, his back to the wall.

JESUS (V.O.)

Why now after all this time? Coupling.
This is why we were thrown out of
Paradise.

He looks at one of the snakes. It speaks to him in Mary Magdalene's voice.

MAGDALENE

Jesus, I forgive you.

(fast dolly in as) Jesus grabs his chest; the snakes hiss inside his breast.

JESUS

Leave me. Leave me alone.

Jesus breathes a sigh of relief. The snakes are gone. Jesus looks up. Jeroboam stands in the door. Jeroboam enters and puts his fingers to Jesus' lips.

(follow hand around and to lips 36 fps)

JESUS

They're gone.

Jeroboam nods. He has seen the snakes too.

JEROBOAM

God has just blessed you. The snakes

left. They came from you. Everything has two meanings, one obvious, the other hidden. Now maybe you have to leave.

JESUS

I have to stay. That's what God wants me to do.

JEROBOAM

I don't think you're supposed to stay. God is already talking to you. He must want something else.

JESUS

What else could he want from me?

JEROBOAM

He's purified you for a reason. To be his instrument. He must want to speak through you. Outside.

JESUS

To who?

JEROBOAM

To anyone who will listen.

JESUS

And say what?

JEROBOAM

Just open your mouth. You love mankind?

JESUS

I see men and I feel sorry for them, that's all.

JEROBOAM

That's enough. Go and speak to them.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT MONASTERY - NIGHT

(SPECIAL EFFECT) A huge full moon illuminates the group of huts.

CUT TO:

INT. JESUS' HUT - NIGHT

Dark at first. Then, a HISSING NOISE. Jesus lights a palm-sized lamp, listens.

Then, he cautiously peers out the opening of the hut. Then he is pulled through.

CUT TO:

EXT. MONASTERY - HUT - NIGHT

An arm grabs Jesus from behind and throws him against the wall.

Judas stands in front of him, panting, his dagger in his hand.

JUDAS
I hissed and you came.

JESUS
I'm ready.

JUDAS
Ready? You think we're going to a feast? I'm going to kill you.

JESUS
Good. I'm relieved. I'm happy to see you. You're just in time.

Judas is startled.

JESUS
God purified me tonight. I thought it was so I could go out and preach. But now I see. It's so I could die. And you're God's instrument. He brought us together.

Jesus opens his tunic.

JESUS
Here's my neck. Cut it. Come on, cut it. What's the matter? Is there anything wrong? I was purified, you

got your permission, it's all arranged
by God. So what are you waiting for?

They stare at each other.

JESUS
You can't do it, can you?

JUDAS
I can if I want.

JESUS
Why don't you want?

JUDAS
I do want.

JESUS
Fine.

He positions himself for killing again. There is another
pause.

JUDAS
Did you work some magic on me? When
I go to kill a man, I kill him.

JESUS
(thinking it out)
Maybe God doesn't want me to die. If
God really wanted me to die, you
wouldn't hesitate. You'd just kill
me.

JUDAS
No, you should die. What good are
you living? Why should God want you
alive? What good are you for Israel?
Do you have some secret?

JESUS
I have no secret. I know that I have
pity, though.

JUDAS
Pity! How far will that get us? What
good is that for Israel?

JESUS

It's good for men.

JUDAS

Men! The Greeks who killed us were men. So are the Romans. Don't pity men, pity Israel. The rest can go to hell.

JESUS

I feel pity for everything. Donkeys, sparrows, grass.

JUDAS

And ants? I suppose you feel pity for them too?

JESUS

Yes. Everything's a part of God. When I look into the ant, into his shiny black eye, I see the face of God.

JUDAS

What do you see when you look in my face?

JESUS

(matter of factly)

I see God too.

JUDAS

You see God everywhere, don't you? Maybe that's why you don't fear death.

JESUS

Why should I fear death? Death isn't a door that closes, it's a door that opens. It opens and you enter.

JUDAS

(pause)

If I don't kill you, what happens?

JESUS

I don't know. Whatever God decides. I'll speak to others. I can't think of anything else.

JUDAS

What are you going to say?

JESUS

I'll just open my mouth and God will do the talking.

JUDAS

See. I told you. You're not crazy at all, are you? If God does talk through you, then you're the messenger of God and I can't kill a messenger of God, can I? You've got my hand stopped.

JESUS

I didn't stop your hand, God did.

JUDAS

He's the only one who could.

JESUS

God didn't send you to kill me. Maybe he sent you here to follow me.

JUDAS

The one's I follow are the ones who follow Israel.

Judas puts his knife away.

CUT TO:

EXT. GALILEE - DAY

Judas and Jesus walk across the plain toward Magdala.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAGDALA - DAY

Mary Magdalene is hurled into a shallow pit, her knees and elbows bloody from being dragged down the street.

Jesus and Judas enter the village. They hear a commotion and hurry toward the crowd.

The crowd, in a festive mood, hurl insults and spit at her.

JUDAS

It's Magdalene. She deserves it.

Jesus steps into the center of the pit as the crowd starts to throw stones. One of them hits Jesus on the chest. He looks over at the man who threw the stone. We have never seen Jesus like this before: neither has anyone in the crowd.

Two little KIDS take one look, giggle nervously, and run away. Judas is riveted. On the other side of the small crowd, PHILIP, PETER, ANDREW and JOHN watch this unexpected confrontation with fascination.

MAN IN CROWD

Get out of here. This isn't your business. You want to get hurt?

More stones are thrown. Jesus doesn't move. Magdalene, has grabbed his leg for reassurance.

ZEBADDEE pushes his way through the crowd.

ZEBEDEE

You heard what he said, idiot. Move.

JESUS

No. I don't want this.

ZEBEDEE

Oh, listen to this. He doesn't want this. Well, we want it.

JESUS

Why?

ZEBEDEE

(livid)

We don't have to tell you why...

Peter, in the crowd, interrupts angrily.

PETER

Bad enough we live in a whorehouse. But does it have to be a Roman whorehouse? Our women can't even look in a mirror on the Sabbath, and this one goes with Romans on the Sabbath. She broke Moses' law. So she dies.

Jesus picks up two stones from the ground.

JESUS

Who's never sinned? Which one of you has never sinned? Whichever one of you's never sinned should come up here and throw these.

Zebedee steps forward immediately, carrying his own small stone.

ZEBEDEE

I've got nothing to hide.

JESUS

Good. Take one of these. They're bigger. You're not going to do much damage with the small one.

Zebedee hesitates.

JESUS

Be careful, Zebedee. There is a God. He's seen you cheat your workers. He's seen you with that widow, what's her name...

WOMAN IN THE CROWD

Judith!

JESUS

...Judith. Aren't you afraid God will paralyze you if you lift that stone? That your hand will wither and hang at your side?

Zebedee drops the rock and moves back. Several MEN start toward Jesus, but Judas steps between them, braced for action. They stop.

Jesus helps Mary to her feet. Judas calls to the crowd:

JUDAS

Follow us, follow the Rabbi. He wants to talk to you.

Judas, Jesus and Magdalene walk away from the pit. A large segment of the crowd follows.

WOMAN IN CROWD

Who is he?

MAN

It's Jesus. From Nazareth.

SECOND MAN

Nothing good can come out of Nazareth.
Even the scriptures say it.

They start back, away from the crowd, toward the town.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE IN MAGDALA - DAY

The nearby summit of the hill which was the site of some ancient pagan temple, probably Mesopotamian. Fragments of several carved capitals of columns lay on the ground along with pieces of pagan Gods (winged lions with women's heads, etc.).

Magdalene sits near Jesus' feet; Judas stands in the background. The crowd waits to hear what Jesus has to say. Jesus looks out over the poverty-stricken villagers, the peaceful country-side:

JESUS (V.O.)

This is what I've always been afraid
of. There's so much to say. God has
so many miracles.

A pause. The words start to come.

JESUS

Come closer everybody. My brothers.
My sisters. I'm calling you that
because we're all a family. A little
closer. My voice isn't very strong,
and I've got something to tell you.

The crowd gets closer, still more curious than anything else.

JESUS

I'm sorry if I have to tell you
stories. But it seems to be the only
way I can tell you what I have to.

(pause)

A farmer was planting in his field.

Some seed fell on the ground and the birds ate it. Some seed fell on rocks and dried up. But some seed fell on rich soil, grew into wheat and fed a lot of people.

Long silence. No one has any idea what the hell he's talking about.

JESUS

Didn't you hear me? Are you people deaf?

ZEBEDEE

(indignant)

We can hear fine. It's not us. Can't you be more... clear.

Jesus thinks for a moment. He is also hiding annoyance.

JESUS

I'm the farmer. The farmer's me.

ZEBEDEE

Wait a minute. I get it. Don't tell me. We must be the stones. We're the ground, is that it? That's just fine. And two and two makes four.

(to crowd:)

Another lunatic.

JOHN, Zebedee's youngest son, who has an air of perpetual abstraction, leaves his father and approaches Jesus.

JOHN

Rabbi, tell me. If you're the farmer and we're the stones, what is the seed?

Jesus is baffled.

JOHN

What's the seed?

JESUS

(surprised)

Love one another. Love one another!

This is too much for the crowd to take.

ANDREW

Alright, let's say we accept that.
Maybe that's even good advice. But
for some other world. Not here. we're
starving. Feed us first, then talk.

While the crowd makes noise, Judas steps near to Jesus and
talks to him so the others can't hear.

JUDAS

What are you talking about, love?
This is your message? We should all
love the Romans? That's like putting
our neck on the knife.

Jesus takes a step forward, going with the momentum of his
strong feelings.

JESUS

Listen, I used to think God was angry
too. But not any more. He used to
jump on me like a wild bird and dig
his claws into my head. But then one
morning he came to me. He blew over
me like a cool breeze and said 'Stand
up.' And here I am.

ZEBEDEE

Go to hell!

MAN IN CROWD

These are all stories for children.
They can't help us.

Jesus starts into the crowd, confronting them directly.

JESUS

What are you hungry for? And you,
you're thirsty. What are you thirsty
for? For justice. Justice.

ANDREW

And bread.

JESUS

Bread too, bread too. I'm telling
you, whoever's hungry for justice,
whoever's thirsty for justice...

they're the one's who'll be blessed.
They'll be filled with bread. They'll
never be thirsty again.

Jesus works his way through the crowd, really winning them
over. He points at somebody else.

JESUS

And you. You're in mourning. But
mourners will be blessed. You'll
have God's comfort, you won't need
it from men.

Now he addresses the crowd at large.

JESUS

And the meek... they're the ones
who'll be blessed. And the
suffering... they'll be blessed too.
and the merciful, and the peacemakers.
And the poor, and the sick, and the
outcasts... you will all be blessed.
Because Heaven is yours.

Now the crowd is really with him.

JESUS

But believe me. The ones who are
laughing now...

He indicates a couple of skeptics in the crowd.

JESUS

...will be crying later. The ones
who are fed now will be hungry soon.
And the rich... will be poor forever.

The crowd, agitated and excited, starts to run off.

FIRST VOICE

Let's kill the rich!

SECOND VOICE

Why bother with the rich? Kill the
Romans.

JESUS

(protests)

I didn't say death. I said love! I

said love!

ZEBEDEE

(motions to his son)

Let's go.

JOHN

No. Go on without me.

JAMES looks as if he wants to stay too, but Zebedee pulls him by the arm and stalks off. John and Andrew stay behind with Peter, Philip and Judas.

Mary Magdalene stands next to Jesus now.

MAGDALENE

Rabbi. I can help. Let me go with you.

JESUS

(interrupts)

No. Stay here. Tell people about me.
Show them how to live.

He kneels and wipes her bloody feet with his tunic.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEA OF GENNASARET - DAY

Another day. Jesus leads his little band along the seashore: Peter, John, and Andrew walk with Jesus; Judas and Philip follow. Two peasant women, a street urchin and a couple of dogs bring up the rear. They approach Zebedee, who works with James, Nathaniel and two other fishermen.

ZEBEDEE

(to John)

Where have you been? We've been working all morning.

John steps over to his brother James and starts pulling him away.

JOHN

What are you doing this for, after what we heard. Come with us.

Zebedee grabs James' other arm.

ZEBEDEE

What do you think you're doing?

He swats both John and James on the ear. The other disciples laugh.

JUDAS

(laughing)

Watch it, Zebedee, you'll lose another son.

JESUS

Zebedee, do you really need them? You can hire other men. They won't be your sons, so you'll have to pay them...

ZEBEDEE

Pay them! I can't afford to pay them. I can't afford to pay anybody. Look, my nets have been empty for weeks.

JESUS

Look at them now.

The nets are teeming with fish.

ZEBEDEE

How'd you do that?

JESUS

Maybe the current changed.

(pause)

Zebedee, let your sons come with me. They can fish for men.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEA OF GENNASARET - AFTERNOON

Later the same day. Jesus and the disciples, now with James among them, walk past a stand of tall reeds.

CUT TO:

EXT. GALILEE - NIGHT

The disciples sleep in an olive grove. Jesus, awake, sits on

a nearby knoll, looking into the night.

Judas walks over and sits next to him:

JUDAS

Rabbi, can I talk to you?

He sits next to him.

JUDAS

I'm not like these other men. I mean, they're good enough. But they're weak. How are they going to fight for you? They couldn't even fight for themselves. Where'd you find them? One's worse than the other. This is no army.

JESUS

I don't need soldiers.

JUDAS

You wanted me. And if I love somebody, I'd die for them. If I hate somebody, I'll kill them. I can even kill somebody I love if he does the wrong thing. Do you understand?

JESUS

I understand.

JUDAS

The other day when you said turn the other cheek to the man that hit you, I didn't like that. Only an angel could do that, only an angel or a dog. I'm a free man. I don't turn my cheek to anyone. You do need soldiers.

JESUS

Will soldiers make me free?

JUDAS

You want freedom for Israel?

JESUS

I want freedom for the soul.

JUDAS

First you free the body, then the soul. You know that. The Romans come first.

JESUS

The soul is first. If you don't change what the soul needs, you'll only replace Roman domination with another domination and nothing'll ever change. First you have to change man inside. Then man can change what's around him. It's wanting wealth and power that makes the soul want to dominate others. That's the wanting we have to change, we have to free the soul first. With love.

JUDAS

We all want that eventually. But right now the only way is to start from the bottom. You build a house from the foundation up...

(he turns)

Who's there?

Andrew, sleepy-eyed, walks over, concerned:

ANDREW

It's me, Andrew. Is everything...

JESUS

(interrupting)

Go back to sleep. Judas and I are talking.

Andrew turns and leaves. Judas waits, then speaks.

JUDAS

I still don't know who you are.

JESUS

Neither do I.

JUDAS

You can't look to the others for answers. All they can do is follow you. It's between you and me. When I went to kill you in the monastery, God took my strength away. That's

what made me think, even if I didn't want to... that's what made me think you might be the one. The Messiah. Maybe you are, maybe you aren't, maybe you don't even know yourself if you are. That's why I said to myself, be patient for once in your life. See what he does, see what he says, and if he's not the Messiah there's plenty of time to kill him.

JESUS

How can I be the Messiah? First of all I wanted to kill those people when I saw them torturing Magdalene. Then when I opened my mouth, out came the word 'love.' Why? How can we tell?

JUDAS

Alright. You say God talks through you and right now I believe you. There's another one he talks through.

JESUS

The Baptist.

JUDAS

We'll go to see him. He stands out there every day preaching 'He is coming, he is coming.' As soon as he sees you he'll know who you are. He'll know if you're the one.

JESUS

I'm afraid, Judas. Stay here.

Judas spreads his blanket on the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. GALILEE - NIGHT

Later that night. Judas and Jesus are asleep in each other's arms. Then Jesus appears to wake. On the ground in front of him is an apple. He reaches for it, takes a bite, extracts some seeds and the core. He scatters them on the ground. He watches where they fall.

And now we see: a tree has grown, ripe red apples hanging from its every branch.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER OF JORDAN - DAY

Jesus and his followers reach the edge of the Dead Sea. Andrew, a disciple of the Baptist, points ahead.

ANDREW

Up ahead. The water forms a pool in the caves. I'll show you.

JESUS

You're tired. Stay here.

ANDREW

No, I'd better come. It could be dangerous.

JESUS

NO. I want to go alone.

Jesus walks through the burning heat toward the caves. Judas, following behind, runs to catch up.

JUDAS

What about me! I'm supposed to be with you.

JESUS

Come on.

They walk down a slope. Jesus in front. Judas behind. John the Baptist's voice echoes in the distance.

Offscreen Voice:

THE BAPTIST (O.S.)

'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house, and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.'

(2 SAMUEL XII, 11)

They push their way through a mixture of lower class Israelites, Ethiopians (painted nails, eyelashes, etc.), Chaldeans (brass rings in their noses, etc.) Some who have been or are about to be Baptized are naked.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. BAPTIST'S CAVE - DAY

Jesus and Judas approach. They enter a small cave like an antechamber in which the light has a slight greenish tint.

In the larger cave, the BAPTIST is preaching. Jesus gasps when he first sees him: a wild man, unkempt, unwashed, (hair like a Rastafarian). He shouts in the wind:

THE BAPTIST

"Roll on the ground, bite the dust, howl! The Lord of Hosts says: 'On this day I will command the sun to set at noon; I will crush the horns of the new moon and spill darkness over the earth. I will reverse your laughter, turn it into tears, and your songs I will turn into lamentations. I will blow and all your finery -- hands, feet, noses, ears, hairs -- will fall to the ground.'"

He's awesome. Even Judas is taken back. He grabs Jesus:

JUDAS

God. He sounds like the Messiah.

JESUS

No, the Messiah won't have an ax in his hand.

Judas pushes Jesus forward.

JUDAS

We'll see. Go in front. Let him see you.

Jesus walks slowly toward the Baptist, his eyes fixed on the prophet. The crowd flails and shouts; one half-naked woman slashes herself with sharp stones (throws herself on the ground, etc.).

JESUS (V.O.)

Even from behind, I knew I had seen him before. Where? When? Was it a dream? Yes, it was. But in the dream he was all dressed in white.

Jesus steps behind the Baptist. John suddenly turns at him.

THE BAPTIST

Who are you?

JESUS

(his voice anxious)

Do you recognize me?

THE BAPTIST

Who are you?

JESUS

Have you read Isaiah? Do you know the prophets? What does Isaiah say?

THE BAPTIST

He says, "Prepare the way of the Lord." Are you telling me that's you?

JESUS

I don't know.

(demanding)

Tell me.

The Baptist looks around: the crowd wails in SILENT MOTION. A sudden calmness. We see them from Judas' P.O.V. Judas strains to hear but can't. The Baptist knows Jesus.

THE BAPTIST

Why are you here?

JESUS

To be baptized.

THE BAPTIST

I don't dare. If you are the Master, you should baptize me.

JESUS

Baptize me.

Jesus kneels at John's feet, throws off his robe (his nakedness partially hidden by people in the foreground). Judas looks on.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER OF JORDAN - NIGHT

Jesus and the Baptist sit in the cave by a fire built near the baptismal pool. An eerie blue-green light falls on the walls of the cave; their faces are reflected in the pool water. A group of pilgrims camp in the back of the cave. Music is heard.

Jesus and the Baptist are weary from hours of debate.

JESUS

Isn't love enough?

THE BAPTIST

No. The tree is rotten. You have to take the ax and cut it down.

JESUS

If I was a woodcutter, I'd cut. If I was fire, I'd burn. But I'm a heart and I love.

THE BAPTIST

I'm a heart also but I can't love what's unjust. I can't love evil. What I can't love I attack. God demands it. God demands anger.

JESUS

Anger? Aren't we all brothers?

THE BAPTIST

You think love is God's only way? Go to the Dead Sea. Look in the bottom, you'll see the two whores, Sodom and Gomorrah. God was angry. He threw fire at them, turned over the dry land and the sea swallowed them up. That's God's way. 'On the day of the Lord, blood will flow from wood, the stones of the houses will come alive and kill their owners!' That day is

here. He gave me the ax, now I give
it to you.

Jesus, frightened, turns away:

JESUS
That's not the answer.

THE BAPTIST
(aggravated)
No? Then what is the answer?

JESUS
I don't know. I think it's love.

THE BAPTIST
Well I know. And if you won't listen
to me who will you listen to? To
God? The God of Israel's a god of
the desert. If you want to speak to
him, then you go to the desert.

JESUS
(a beat)
I'll go to Idumaea.

THE BAPTIST
But be careful. The desert's full of
sweet voices and death.

The Baptist walks over to Jesus.

JESUS
Thank you Baptist.

John kisses Jesus on the mouth.

JESUS (V.O.)
His tongue felt like a burning coal
in my mouth.

Judas watches from a hole in the ceiling of the cave. From
his P.O.V. he can't hear anything.

Jesus walks away, not looking back.

CUT TO:

EXT. IDUMAEA DESERT - SUNSET

Jesus runs across the desert as if pursued. He stops, pants, continues. The earth underneath is cracked. The whole landscape shimmers with heat under a huge white sun. (SPECIAL EFFECT). The image is tinted warm red.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NEXT DAY

Jesus wanders through the wild, uninhabited terrain. The sun, like a blast furnace, blows sand into his face.

He starts to draw a large circle.

JESUS (V.O.)

I'm not going to leave this circle.
I won't leave until you talk to me.
No hums. No thunder. No headaches.
Just talk to me in human words.
Whatever path you want, I'll take.
Love or the ax or anything else. Or
if you want me to stay here and die
I'll do that too. But you have to
tell me.

He sits in the center of the circle.

He sees: the sun, looming huge in the sky, seeming to be unnaturally close to him. (SPECIAL EFFECT).

He sees: in the far distance, birds flying across a great plain.

He sees: on the flat desert, the plain of Sodom, a herd of gazelles.

He continues to watch as we...

FADE OUT:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

FADE IN. Days have past. The hunger and deprivation are beginning to show on Jesus' face. His clothes are the color of soil.

JESUS

I don't want... I don't want to be alone.

He puts his head down, but hears sounds and looks into the moonlit night. SOUNDS: of water; bracelets; laughing. Then a large SERPENT coils at the edge of the circle, speaking in a half-human, half-animal voice.

SERPENT

I felt sorry for you. You were lonely. You cried, so I came.

JESUS

I didn't call you. Who are you?

SERPENT

Your soul.

JESUS

My soul.

SERPENT

You're afraid of being alone. Just like Adam. He called me and I reached into his ribs and gave him a wife.

JESUS

You're here to trick me.

SERPENT

Trick you? To love and care for a woman? To have a family -- this is a trick? Why are you trying to save the world? Aren't your own sins enough for you? What arrogance to think it's your duty to save the world. The world doesn't have to be saved. Find love.

JESUS

I have love.

SERPENT

Look into my eyes, look at my breasts...

The Serpent's voice dissolves into the soft, comforting voice of Mary Magdalene.

SERPENT

...Do you recognize them? Say the word. Nod your head and we'll be in my bed together.

Jesus looks up, eyes glaring.

SERPENT

(compassionately)

Oh, Jesus.

The Serpent suddenly explodes, leaving no trace. Jesus places his head between his legs and begins to sob, as if he has lost a loved one.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

FADE IN. Another week has passed. Jesus' clothes are torn and tattered by the desert winds. He awakens.

JESUS (V.O.)

After ten days the hunger went away.

He hears a sound. A LION stands at the edge of the circle.

LION

Welcome, Jesus. Congratulations. You've overcome the small temptations of a woman, a family. We're both bigger than that. A woman's not enough, we need the whole world.

JESUS

Who are you?

LION

I'm you. I'm your heart. Your heart is so hungry. It pretends to be humble but it secretly wants to conquer the world. I will set my four feet down, one in Babylon, one in Jerusalem, one in Alexandria, the last in Rome.

JESUS

I've never wanted a kingdom on earth. The Kingdom of Heaven's good enough for me.

The Lion's voice transforms into Judas':

LION

You're a liar. You've always wanted power. When you were making crosses for the Romans in Nazareth, your head was exploding with dreams of power. You said it was God, but you really wanted to rule others. Now you will. Any country you want. All countries. You will rule Babylon. You will rule Jerusalem. You will rule Alexandria. You will even rule Rome.

Jesus, shaking, reaches out toward the Lion.

JESUS

Liar! Step into my circle so I can pull out your tongue.

The Lion steps into the circle, and, as he does, disappears.

FADE OUT:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

FADE IN. Jesus lies sleeping. Another week has past. He's a wasted skeleton.

An ARCHANGEL stands at the circle's edge. The Angel appears as a normal ten-year-old boy speaking in the voice of a young girl. Jesus strains to see through his swollen eyelids:

JESUS

Archangel... go farther back. You're blinding me.

ARCHANGEL

I'm the one you've been waiting for. Remember when you were a child, you cried, 'Make me a God. God, make me a God.'

JESUS

But I was just a child then.

ARCHANGEL

Adonai. You are God. The Baptist
knew it. It's time you admit it. I
salute you, Son, only Son of God.
Join me in power. We will rule
together over the living and the
dead. You'll give life and take life.
You'll sit on the throne and I'll
sit at your hand. Imagine how strong
we could be together.

Jesus suddenly realizes who he's talking to:

JESUS

Satan!

The ripe tree from Jesus' dream appears behind the Archangel.
The Angel offers an apple.

Jesus bites into the apple: it turns into blood in his mouth.
The blood splashes down his chest.

ANGEL

(smiling)

We'll see each other again.

The Archangel turns and leaves. Jesus picks up a stick at
his feet. The stick is an ax.

We see from over Jesus' shoulder. John the Baptist crouches
down into the frame, puts his hand on Jesus' shoulder and
speaks:

THE BAPTIST

Don't be afraid. You are the One. I
was the one who came before you. My
work is finished. Now I can die. The
Lord wants me to tell you to stand
up, his day is here. Take the ax.
Run and carry the message to men.

Jesus rises and strikes at the root of the tree with an ax.
Entire scene turns red.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - DAY

MARY and MARTHA, sisters in their early thirties, are working

in their house. Mary sits at a weaving loom; Martha near the fire.

The door opens. An emaciated figure in tattered clothes stands silhouetted in the doorway. The sisters turn, aghast.

JESUS

I'm a foreigner. From Galilee. I need rest. The door was open. Excuse me... I...

MARY

We're alone. Our brother Lazarus is out.

MARTHA

What difference does that make? Come in. Don't listen to her. She's afraid of her own shadow. I'm Martha and this is my sister, Mary. There's not much here, but you're welcome to it. Who are you?

JESUS

Jesus of Nazareth.

MARTHA

(laughing, teasing)

A good man?

JESUS

Yes, good.

Jesus staggers over to the hearth.

JESUS

(smiles as he sits)

...I do my best.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

Jesus, washed and wearing a new tunic, eats bread and olives. Martha hands him a wine flask. Sitting by the fire, they almost look like a family. Jesus raises his pot of wine in a toast.

JESUS

Martha. Mary. I swear to you if there's another flood and if it's up to me to invite you into the ark, I'd do it. You'd both be on it. Because tonight a stranger came to your door. You fed him, dressed him, made him comfortable, spoke kindly to him, and the Kingdom of Heaven came down and went in his heart.

They drink. Mary and Martha look at Jesus flirtatiously.

MARY

Go on.

JESUS

(eating)

What should I say? Silence is good, It says everything.

MARY

It doesn't say everything to me. A kind word now and then helps.

MARTHA

Do you have a wife?

JESUS

(thinks)

No.

MARY

If you only knew what goes through a woman's mind when she weaves. You'd pity her, Jesus.

JESUS

I do know. I was once a woman, in another life, and I used to weave.

MARY

And what did you think about?

JESUS

God. And you?

MARTHA

God. But we think about men more.

MARY

God is a man after all. And men can
be husbands.

Jesus smiles, but deliberately chooses not to pursue this
subject. There is a brief silence.

JESUS

You know the Baptist? He died, didn't
he?

MARY

He was killed... by Herod. You didn't
know?

JESUS

No... I knew.

MARTHA

They say the King was drunk and cut
off his head to satisfy a little
girl... It happened in his palace in
Jerusalem.

MARY

No, at his palace in Tiberias.

JESUS

(not listening)

Jerusalem.

MARTHA

Is that where you're going, to
Jerusalem?

MARY

I envy you.

JESUS

Not now. Eventually.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN CAVES - NIGHT

The disciples sit around a pool of water and two small fires.
Other fires and groups of people are scattered around and
behind them throughout the cave. One group plays music. The
cave walls are washed in blue-green light; a brilliant streak

of violent red cuts across the rock of the back wall.

JAMES

Now they say they're going to kill everyone who was baptized.

PHILIP

Nobody told you to get baptized.

PETER

You were baptized too. You begged for it. So be quiet.

JAMES

I can just imagine Galilee right now. The sea... I hear the fishing is so good that you just touch the nets and the fish jump in.

NATHANIEL

Don't talk about fish. It reminds me of my sheep. I don't know what's happened to them.

PETER

Maybe we should wait for him in Galilee.

JAMES

We promised the Master we'd wait here for him.

NATHANIEL

That was a month ago. He talks to the Baptist, then disappears.

JOHN

Brothers. I don't understand you. Think of the last words the Baptist said. He said 'Jesus of Nazareth, leave the desert. I am finished. Return to mankind!'

PHILIP

How do you know the Baptist really said that?

JOHN

(insisting)

Everybody says he did. But even if he didn't say it, those words are important because people believe them. I don't want to blaspheme, but what if our Master... what if he's the one?

JAMES
What one?

JOHN
The one.

There is silence.

PHILIP
But we don't know if the Baptist really said that. I mean, what if...

They argue.

JUDAS
(interrupting)
We're waiting here!

PETER
I don't know now.
(pause)
I don't think we should go to Galilee.
We should wait here, maybe.

JUDAS
(to Peter, sarcastic)
Changed your mind when you heard what John said, uh? 'The one?' That's what I like about you Peter, nobody can change your mind. Not you. What good are you?!

The apostles in front of Judas suddenly look past him. Judas turns and stands up.

John sinks to his knees.

JOHN
Master.

Reverse angle shows Jesus standing before them.

PETER

Rabbi. John heard your foot-steps in his heart... in a way... and we were just preparing to welcome you.

JESUS

Were you baptized?

PETER

Yes.

JESUS

John baptized with water and they killed him. Now I'll baptize with fire.

JUDAS

Is that what the Baptist told you?

JESUS

I have an invitation for you.

Momentary silence.

PETER

Is there a celebration?

JESUS

No, I'm not inviting you to a celebration. I'm inviting you to a war.

Jesus is standing at the edge of the pool. He reaches into his chest and rips out his own heart. He offers it at arm's length to the disciples. Blood drips from the ventricles.

JESUS

This is my heart. Take it. I lead the way to the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God's inside us. It's the Devil's kingdom that's outside, all around us. We'll turn an ax against the Devil's kingdom, against the world. If you have sheep, give them away. If you have nets, let them rot. If you have a family, children, leave them behind.

CAMERA tilts down following drops of heart blood which are

dripping into the pool. The water begins to glow red.

Jesus now stands before them no longer holding his heart,
but the ax the Baptist gave him in the desert.

JESUS

I once believed in love, now I carry
this. Who's with me?

Judas falls to his knees in the water and kisses Jesus' feet.

JUDAS

Adonai!

CUT TO:

EXT. SAMARIA - DAY

Jesus and his followers (they have grown in number) walk
through the Samaritan lowlands.

The group advances with determination and purpose. Judas
walks at Jesus' right; Peter at his left. Women and children
follow them.

They come upon pits dug into the ground. The soil is colored
a strong green. Suddenly, bare arms come up out of some of
the pits. Heads pop up from others. Then, seven deranged men
and women, their naked bodies colored green from the soil,
crawl out of the pits and run toward Jesus. They flail at
him, some fall at his feet. Some beg in jibberish.

Judas and Peter try to ward them off. Jesus is angry -- not
at the men, but at the evil spirits that possess them.

He slaps one man, kicks another: he grabs one by the head
and pushes on him causing him to fall:

JESUS

Satan! Leave them! Get out!

Judas and Peter hold Jesus as he touches each of the insane
people. They are in the thick of what looks like a brawl. At
one point, Jesus almost faints but is carried forward by the
two apostles. Jesus shouts as he touches the possessed. After
they have been confronted by Jesus, they grow suddenly calm.
Some are confused, some praise Jesus. Jesus is held by the
apostles, partially for protection and partially for strength.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANOTHER SAMARIA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A BLINDMAN, led by his BROTHER and SISTER, approach Jesus and the disciples. His reputation has spread through the countryside.

Jesus stops. He takes ground herbal powder from his sleeve and mixes it with sand. He spits into the mixture, then applies it to the Blind Man's eyes.

JESUS

Moses, Elijah, Isaiah -- touch my
mouth, touch my lips.

Jesus kisses the man's mud-caked eyes. The clay falls from the Blind Man's eyes. His gruesomely deformed eyes are now normal: he can see.

JESUS

Go to the temple. Let the high priests
see you.

CUT TO:

EXT CANA - DAY

On a small hillside. A group of children, at the right of the frame, sees Jesus and the disciples approaching to the left along a path below. They giggle and run away to announce Jesus' arrival. A couple wave at him as they go.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANA - NIGHT

Six virgins, carrying lit lamps, sing a psalm at the wedding of Nathaniel's cousin. It's a festive, happy occasion.

Jesus exchanges small talk with a group waiting for the ceremony to begin. Everyone is in high spirits.

Mary Magdalene steps next to Jesus. She looks like a changed woman: simply dressed, radiant.

Jesus smiles and takes her hand. An OLD MAN says to Mary:

OLD MAN

You don't belong at a wedding. We're here to celebrate purity.

JESUS

Listen to me. What do you think the Kingdom of Heaven's like? It's like a wedding. God's the Bridegroom and Man's soul is the Bride. The wedding takes place in Heaven and everyone's invited.

(points to Mary)

God's Kingdom is large enough for everybody.

OLD MAN

Nazarene, that's against the law.

JESUS

The Law is against my heart.

CUT TO:

LATER

The ceremony is over. People are dancing. Jesus, the disciples and the guests are laughing, drinking and swapping stories. (MS SEE PG. 219 BOOK) Jesus' hand rests on Magdalene's shoulder. The wine has loosened everyone's spirits. Nathaniel is nearby frantically talking with his wife and two other family members.

JAMES

Nathaniel, what's wrong.

NATHANIEL

(walks over, mortified)

I didn't buy enough wine. More people came and stayed late and now we've run out.

Jesus points to several large vats:

JESUS

What's in those?

NATHANIEL

Water.

JESUS

No. It's wine.

NATHANIEL

No, no. It's water.

JESUS

Go over there and make sure. It's wine, I'm telling you.

Nathaniel, still unconvinced, goes over to a vat and tastes.

NATHANIEL

You're right. It is wine.

JAMES

(as a joke)

It's another miracle.

CUT TO:

LATER

Jesus, a little drunk and very happy, dances with men and women. Magdalene watches him, a mixture of reverence and longing on her face.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAZARETH - DAY

Sabbath. The faithful, fresh from synagogue, mill about under the date palms in the manner of churchmen over the centuries.

These are not common people. On the contrary, they represent the Jewish hierarchy: the severely moral Pharisees, Saducees, in collusion with the Romans; and the landowners and shopkeepers who supported the synagogue.

Jesus calls out:

JESUS

Brothers! Sisters! My old friends!
Listen to me! Listen to me.

The churchmen, curious, gather around.

JESUS

(continuing)

The prophet was talking about me.

God talked to me in the desert. He gave me a great secret and told me to bring it to you -- didn't you hear me coming? I ran here first -- to Nazareth -- where I grew up -- to give you the news. The Lord's Kingdom is here.

VILLAGER #1
(taunting)

You do miracles. Do a miracle for us, make us believe in you. Otherwise, go away!

JESUS
(impassioned)

The Messiah doesn't need miracles. He is the miracle. The Day of the Lord is here. Are you ready? I've come to tear down the world around you. The old world will be replaced by the new world. The Kingdom of Heaven! The Kingdom of God! So call the poor and give them your food. What do you care about your possessions? Your gold and silver will rust and their rust will eat your flesh like fire. Flood and fire will come down, and the new Ark will float above the flames. I hold the keys and I open the Ark and I select. My brothers of Nazareth, you're the first I invite. Come and enter.

The villagers boo and laugh. Some children put stones in their hands.

VILLAGER #1
A boat. We're in the desert and he tells us about a boat.

VILLAGER #2
Aren't you the son of Mary? Right? Who are you to tell us about God.

VILLAGER #3
You made better crosses than speeches.
(to companion as he
walks away)

Go get somebody from his family.
This is embarrassing.

JESUS
What are you laughing at? Everything
you have will burn!! Soon! Leave
your homes! Come with me to Jerusalem!

VILLAGER #2
This is what happens when a man
doesn't marry. The semen backs up
into his brain.

Someone throws a stone; it grazes Jesus' head, drawing blood.

VILLAGER #4
Go home! You're full of devils.

JESUS
(wiping blood from
his brow)
This is my home!

Peter and Judas rush to Jesus' defense. Judas puts his hand
to his dagger.

VILLAGER #2
Kill him!

He throws another rock.

PETER
What are you doing that for? That's
a shame.

VILLAGER #2
He's a sorcerer. He's calling the
fire to come down on us!

POOR VILLAGER
Don't touch him! God's Kingdom is
for the poor. It's our Kingdom!

The rich and poor scuffle. Judas, Jesus, Peter and the others,
all disgusted, break free from the brawl. Jesus looks back,
confused and angry.

JESUS
(yelling back at crowd)

If I could touch every stone, breathe
on every twig, they would rise up
and join me! Come with me! Jerusalem
is falling. I can feel it!

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE NAZARETH - DAY

Jesus and his followers head across the plain toward Samaria.
He turns to Judas who walks at his side:

JESUS

See these misfits. They're crippled,
they're blind, they're poor. That's
our army. They shout and the Old
Jerusalem will fall.

JUDAS

We'll need more men than this.

JESUS

God will provide them. We're going
to build a New Jerusalem.

Mary comes out of the crowd near him and grabs Jesus' arm.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)

Son. Please. Come back with me.

JESUS

Who are you woman?

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)

You know who I am. Don't you recognize
me? I'm your mother.

JESUS

I have no mother. I have no family.
Only my father who's in heaven. Get
away from me.

He shakes off her arm. She trips, Jesus keeps walking,
followed by the disciples. Peter and a WOMAN help Mary to
her feet. Peter walks on as Mary and the woman turn back to
town.

WOMAN

Mary... why are you crying? Didn't

you see them?

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
See what?

WOMAN
When he spoke to you, thousands of
blue wings, behind him, I swear to
you Mary, there were armies of angels.

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
I didn't see anything. What good are
angels to me? I wanted children and
grand-children behind him, not angels.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALONG THE JORDAN RIVER - DAY

Jesus and his ragtag "army" continue their southward march.

Martha and Mary, dressed in black, approach Jesus.

MARTHA
Rabbi, forgive us. Our brother Lazarus
is very sick.

MARY
We heard you've healed the sick,
made cripples walk, that you preformed
miracles...

JESUS
(interrupts)
Take me to him.

CUT TO:

LAZARUS' TOMB - SUNSET

Jesus, Mary, Martha and the disciples stand before the tomb,
which is sealed by a large boulder. There is a small crowd
of mourners nearby.

JESUS
When was he buried?

BETHANY WOMAN
Three days ago.

JESUS

Roll the stone away.

Judas and Peter elicit the help of two others and lean their shoulders to it.

JESUS (V.O.)

What can I do? How much can I do?

The stone moves: a hideous stench gusts from the tomb. Some disciples turn their faces: others put handkerchiefs to their noses.

Jesus stands at the entrance of the tomb and yells. His voice echoes: a wild, strange cry, like something from another world.

JESUS

Lazarus! In the name of the prophets,
in the name of Jeremiah and my Father,
in the name of most Holy God, I demand
that you rise and come out!

At first, nothing. Then we begin to hear a soft rustling inside the tomb. Jesus is apprehensive. He stares at the tomb's entrance. Suddenly a decomposed skeletal human hand reaches out. The crowd gasps. Jesus, startled, jumps. Slowly, Jesus reaches out, moves a bit closer and clasps the corpse's hand. He is terrified. Suddenly, the corpse pulls back as if to yank Jesus into the tomb. Jesus is more frightened. He stands his ground. Then, Jesus decides to pull and the corpse comes out. The disciples and the crowd are stunned. The desiccated figure, Lazarus, is covered head to toe in white burial cloth. His free hand slowly unwraps the cloth from his face. Strips of rotting flesh hang loose. Lazarus embraces Jesus.

LAZARUS

Adonai.

Jesus is shocked by his own miracle.

JESUS (V.O.)

Is the power of God so strong? If it
can raise the dead, can it also move
mountains? Can it destroy Rome? Tear
the world in half? God help me.

Jesus embraces Lazarus.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM - EARLY MORNING SUNRISE

Jesus and his companions are walking along the ruins.
("Excavations in Jerusalem") The city wall is behind them.

Then from above, ("St. Steven's Gate") they enter the Roman ruins. An arch towers above them, a pool below them. some inhabitants of the ruins watch.

They enter the temple plaza.

Jesus enters the temple grounds with his central core of disciples. They have come to worship.

But they are stopped cold by the sight that greets them. Arranged all around the stairs that lead to the temple are money-changers, merchants, beggars and whores. A tall, shiny bronze statue of Tiberius towers over the plaza floor, which is stained with the blood of sacrificial animals. Jesus turns to Peter.

JESUS

We came here to pray. What is this?

PETER

The money-changers? Its' for the temple tax... for the feast.

Jesus calmly addresses a money-changer.

JESUS

How's the exchange today? Making a good profit?

MONEY-CHANGER

Fair. Can I help you?

Jesus stares for a moment and then with one violent blow sends the counter filled with coins sailing into the money-changer's face.

Jesus, now enraged, strides past the booths, overturning the tables. Scales, weights and coins from all over the world scatter in every direction. The vendors rush to retrieve their money.

Other vendors and customers turn on Jesus. Judas, Peter and the others forcibly fight them off. Jesus calls out:

JESUS

This is my Father's house. It's a place for worship, not a bank, or a market.

The disciples circle Jesus for his protection. The RABBI, surrounded by SADDUCESS, steps out of the temple.

RABBI

Nazarene, what are you doing?

JESUS

God doesn't need a grand house. He doesn't need cyprus and bloody animals. He doesn't need shekels.

RABBI

You expect people to pay the tax in Roman coins? They have images of false gods on them. You want pagan gods in the temple? All foreign coins have to be changed to shekels. That the law.

JESUS

I abolish the law. I give a new law and a new hope!

RABBI

What, did God change his mind about the old law?

JESUS

(exasperated)

No, no. He just thinks our hearts are ready now to hold more.

RABBI

(not listening)

This chaos is your new law? How can you presume...

JESUS

How can I presume? Because I am the fulfillment of the old law and the

beginning of the new.

SADDUCEE
(shocked)

Watch what you're saying.

Peter, becoming concerned with the drift of this argument, whispers to Jesus.

PETER
Maybe we should go...

Jesus pushes him away.

JESUS
When I say, 'I,' Rabbi, I am saying
'God.'

RABBI
That's blasphemy!

JESUS
Didn't you hear? I'm the Saint of
Blasphemy. Don't make any mistakes.
I haven't come to bring peace, I've
come to bring a sword.

SADDUCEE
Talking like that will get you killed.

JESUS
I'm sick of all of you. This temple
will be destroyed in three days. One
stone won't be left standing on
another. You think God belongs only
to you?! He doesn't! God's an immortal
spirit and belongs to everybody --
to the whole world. You're not
special! God is not an Israelite!

Even the disciples are shocked by this heresy. They escort Jesus out of the temple grounds for his own safety.

As they reach the bottom of the temple steps they are mobbed. The beggars press on Jesus, pulling at his arms and legs.

MOB MEMBER #1
Magician! Heal me.

MOB MEMBER #2
Cure us. Make us rich.

MOB MEMBER #3
Heal me. Do a miracle. You want me
to enter the Kingdom of Heaven
crippled like this?

JESUS
(pushes them away)
Get away. You sicken me. You're
selfish! You're full of hate! God
won't help you.

MOB MEMBER #1
Cure us or you won't leave this city
alive!

JESUS
You don't demand from God!

The disciples intervene and pull Jesus away. The mob follows.
Suddenly, four Roman Calvary men stampede into the mob
whipping beggars and everyone else. Jesus and the disciples
break loose from the fray.

ROMAN OFFICER
You, all of you stop. Which one of
you is Jesus of Nazareth?

The disciples groan.

JESUS
I am.

ROMAN OFFICER
Come with us. The Procurator wants
to see you.

The calvarymen lead Jesus away, leaving the disciples behind.

As they watch him go, SAUL, a Zealot, comes up behind Judas
and draws him aside.

SAUL
We need you. What are you doing with
this magician? First you were supposed
to kill him. Now he acts like a
prophet and you follow him.

JUDAS

What are you saying? Didn't you just hear him?

SAUL

I heard him. He talks about a new law, he talks about using a sword. But we took an oath to use the sword against Rome. I don't see anything against Rome here. All I see here is Jew against Jew.

Judas walks away from him.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN THEATRE - DAY

The Roman soldiers escort Jesus into the open theatre.

Pilate confers with two soldiers at a table near the stage. He watches a play in rehearsal. (See Director, Production Designer, and Costumer for details of play.)

Pilate is informed of Jesus' presence and turns to him.

PILATE

Are you Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews?

JESUS

I'm no king.

PILATE

You aren't the Messiah? They say you are. You say you are.

JESUS

My kingdom's not on this earth.

PILATE

Oh? Where is it then? In the air, maybe?

JESUS

In heaven.

PILATE

Good. Keep it there. They tell me you do miracles. Is this good magic or bad magic? Can you do a trick for us?

JESUS

I'm not a pet. I don't do tricks.

PILATE

That's disappointing. I was hoping to see something.

JESUS

The prophet Daniel had a vision. A huge statue had a gold head, and silver shoulders...

PILATE

(interrupts)

Don't tell me stories. I'm not a dumb Jew.

JESUS

Listen. Learn.

PILATE

(daring him)

Go ahead. Teach me something.

JESUS

The stomach was bronze, the legs were iron, the feet were clay. A stone was thrown. The clay feet broke and the statue collapsed.

PILATE

Is that it?

JESUS

God is the thrower. I'm the stone. Rome is the statue.

PILATE

Clearly. But that's how you're going to bring down the Roman Empire? One stone? Only you?

Jesus starts to speak, then stops.

JESUS (V.O.)
God, give me the answer. I don't
know what to say.

PILATE
No answer?

JESUS (V.O.)
Please speak to me. I need words.

A pain suddenly surges through the back of Jesus' neck. His
knees buckle. For a moment he seems crippled.

PILATE
You're not a stone. You're excrement.
Get him out of here.

Jesus is confused, humiliated, and in pain. Soldiers start
to lead him out.

PILATE
And my wife dreams about you. She
should see you now.

Pilate turns back to the play.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lazarus, his back to us, is resting and looking out over the
valley. His hand reaches for a cup of water. The fingers are
more whole. He seems to be healing.

It is midday, Lazarus thinks he is by himself.

VOICE
Lazarus. Lazarus.

He turns in the direction of the voice. We see Saul, the
Zealot who spoke to Judas in the temple at Jerusalem.

SAUL
Feeling better?

LAZARUS
I like the light.

SAUL

What was it like? Which is better,
life or death?

LAZARUS

Well, I was a little surprised. There
wasn't that much difference...

SAUL

Well, let me help you make up your
mind.

Another arm comes in from behind and grabs Lazarus around
the neck. Saul pulls a sword and very professionally plunges
it into Lazarus' chest, ripping upwards towards his heart.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE JERUSALEM - NIGHT

Judas, who has been looking for Jesus, finds him alone on
the road leading out of the city. He sits beside him.

JUDAS

I've been looking all over for you.
For two days. We're really worried
about you. I have to tell you. They
killed Lazarus.

Jesus collects his thoughts.

JESUS

Who?

JUDAS

Zealots.

JESUS

Your people. Why?

JUDAS

Because he was the living proof of
your power. Zealots say you're paid
by the Romans to tell the people
only heaven is important. Not their
life now. Not being dominated by
Romans. That's very dangerous.

JESUS

(quietly)

Yes. It make everything clearer.

JUDAS

Clearer? What are you talking about, clearer? It just makes everything worse. We want a revolution, the Zealots want a revolution but now they're against us. We can't let that happen. We need them.

JESUS

Do you want to join them, then?

JUDAS

No. They're my brothers, but you're my master.

JESUS

You are the strongest, aren't you? Of all my friends, you're the strongest. I have to tell you something.

JUDAS

Tell me whatever you want. You can depend on me.

JESUS

You know why I came to Jerusalem?

JUDAS

This is where we're going to fight. This is where the revolution's going to happen.

Jesus nods.

JESUS

Last night Isaiah came to me.

JUDAS

(eager)

What did he say?

JESUS

He opened his book and I read in giant letters: 'He has borne our faults; he was wounded for our transgressions. He was afflicted,

yet he opened not his mouth. Despised and rejected by all, he went forward without resisting, like a lamb led to the slaughter.'

JUDAS

(pause)

So? What does that have to do with you?

JESUS

Judas. I'm the lamb. I'm the one who is going to die.

JUDAS

What do you mean, die? Die? Did you change your mind again.

JESUS

No.

Judas jumps up.

JUDAS

Then what are you talking about? That can't be. If you're the Messiah, why do you have to die?

JESUS

Don't shout. You'll understand soon. At first I didn't understand myself.

JUDAS

Every day you have a different plan. I can't believe it. First it's love, then it's the ax, now you have to die. What good could that do. We need you alive.

JESUS

I can't help it. God only talks to me a little at a time. He only shows me as much as I have to know. Now I finally understand. All my life. All my life I've been followed. By footsteps. By voices. By headaches. By shadows. And you know what the shadow is? It's the cross. I have to die on the cross. And I have to die

willingly... We need courage, Judas.
We need faith. I'm the fulfillment
of the prophecy. The cross is the
way I have to take.

Judas is dumbfounded, and his anger is mounting.

JESUS

So we go to Jerusalem. We go back to
the temple. Whatever happens there
will put me on the cross.

JUDAS

(barely controlling
his anger)

And after you die on the cross? What
happens then?

JESUS

I'll come back to judge the living
and the dead.

JUDAS

(pause)

I don't believe you.

JESUS

If you don't believe, nobody will.
You have to believe. You're the
strongest.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE JERUSALEM - DAY

A blazing sun. Jesus and the disciples on the march. Following
close behind is an entourage of twenty toughs.

James turns to Judas.

JAMES

I'm worried he's going to change his
mind again.

JUDAS

No he won't. We're taking the temple.

JAMES

What if we don't.

JUDAS
We'll die.

JAMES
(looking around)
There aren't many of us. And nobody
back there looks like a soldier.

JUDAS
God will provide.

Near them, Nathaniel and Philip are talking.

NATHANIEL
What do you want?

PHILIP
What do you mean?

NATHANIEL
When we build the New Jerusalem and
set up the new government.

PHILIP
(thinks)
Well, I guess I'd like more sheep.
You know, my other sheep, I don't
even know where they are now. This
time I want a large herd. I'd hire
other shepherds to take care of them.
You know, Laban, that man who has a
large farm north of Tiberias? I'd
like one like that.

NATHANIEL
Yeah.

PHILIP
How about you?

NATHANIEL
First, I'd like to be able to worship
in the temple. I mean really worship --
without Roman banners and soldiers
standing around.

PHILIP
(nods)

Of course. But what else?

Behind them, John, Andrew and Thomas argue.

THOMAS
I'm not afraid.

JOHN
Then don't act like it.

THOMAS
I'll do anything the Master asks...
anything but get crucified.

ANDREW
You're a coward.

THOMAS
Call me a coward after you've been
hanging up there for two days and
the crows come and suck out your
eyes.

JOHN
I made my decision. If you can't
make yours, leave now before we enter
the Kingdom.

THOMAS
(touches his chest)
I'm ready. I have my knife.

Peter passes by and rushes a little anxiously to catch up with Jesus, who is walking at the front of the line.

PETER
I've been talking with the others,
and listening, and a lot of us are a
little concerned, we're wondering...
well... will you have legions of
angels meeting us there? Or anyone?
Besides who's here?

Jesus doesn't answer, but he puts his arm around Peter's shoulder.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERUSALEM - DAY

Jesus and his followers -- about a hundred strong -- pass through "The excavations around Jerusalem." The city wall is behind them. More people begin to join the ranks.

They enter "St. Stephen's Gate" (the arch over a pool of water). The mob grows around them. Some have palm branches.

They are now in the "Underground City." Jesus is riding a donkey. Women and children wave palm branches, throw flowers, lay down palms and shawls in Jesus' path. They cheer "Rosanna, Rosanna."

A new chant -- abetted by Judas and his followers -- goes up: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

The procession reaches the temple plaza. Jesus dismounts and looks around.

Outside the temple walls, stalls occupy every nook and cranny. Hundreds of people are selling, buying, bargaining, hawking their wares: merchants, money-changers, innkeepers, prostitutes.

Jesus, full of rage, followed by the disciples, sweeps down on the wine stands and workshops, overturning the tables, striking the tradesmen with his goad. (determined crane - MS)

JESUS
Get out! Away!

Jesus mounts the temple steps. Smoke seems to be coming from his body. This is his moment.

Behind him, everyone loots stalls and routs merchants with great enthusiasm, as if Jesus' solitary act of anger last time in the temple had now become an example for mob action.

On the top of the temple steps, Jesus pauses momentarily.

JESUS (V.O.)
Lord, I hope this is what you want.
Please let it happen quickly, while
I have the strength.

Now he turns to face the mob.

JESUS

I am here to set fire to the world!
In the desert The Baptist said,
'Repent, Repent! The day of the Lord
is coming!' but I'm saying it's too
late to repent. The Day of the Lord's
already here! I am the Day of the
Lord. I come with the baptism of
fire!

The poor in the mob yell: "Fire! Fire -- burn it all down!"

The TEMPLE GUARDS (usually Levites) grab their lances and
swords. Judas' cohorts draw their weapons.

Suddenly, there is a blast of trumpets. ROMAN SENTRIES,
heavily armed, appear on top of the temple walls. There are
dozens of them, and they are ready to fight.

The people look up. Jesus stops. Peter is still rallying the
crowd, lighted torch in his hand.

PETER

Let's go! Now's the time!

The crowd looks from the Romans to Jesus. For the moment,
the crowd is still with him. Judas whispers urgently to Jesus.

JUDAS

They're all with you! They're waiting
for your signal! Give it!

Peter looks over at Jesus.

PETER

Come on! Now!

Jesus looks from the Romans on the wall to the ground.

JESUS (V.O.)

Please. I'm waiting too. Put the ax
in my hands. Not the cross. Let me
die like this.

JOHN

If you don't give the sign now, we're
finished. We'll be killed for what
we did today.

PHILIP

We came here to fight, not to die!

Jesus remains still.

JUDAS

Master, we knew they would be strong!
We knew it would be like this.

The Roman Soldiers swarm off the walls and start down into the temple.

Jesus looks at his hands: blood oozes from his palms. He closes his fists to hide the stigmata and raises his eyes to Judas.

JESUS

Judas. Come beside me.

Judas puts his arm around Jesus. The crowd, confused and furious, starts to scatter. Some of them throw things at the disciples as they all scramble to avoid the violence of the Roman soldiers.

JESUS

(to Judas)

Stay by my side.

The other disciples swarm around Jesus and Judas and form a wedge. As the Roman soldiers disperse through the temple courtyard, Jesus and the disciples are swept by the frantic crowd into a side street leading to the Underground City below the temple.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERUSALEM - SUNSET

Passover preparations are underway. At twilight we see the "excavations in Jerusalem." Over a hundred people in black move across them. Large candles cover the entire site.

We see now elderly Jews cleansing themselves at the ritual baths. The steam rises to the sky.

The "Underground City" is teeming with men, women, children, (animals) preparing for the celebration. They wear black and white shawls and are bathed in candlelight. Psalms, music and voices are heard.

Jesus and Judas are walking and watching carefully. They stop at a selected spot between two trees.

JUDAS

There's got to be something else you can do.

JESUS

I wish there was. At the temple I prayed. I prayed to die. But it's not God's will. I have to die on the cross. I prayed out of weakness and I'm weakening even more. You've got to give me strength.

JUDAS

I won't let you die.

JESUS

You've got to. There's no other way. The world around us is Satan's world. It will be destroyed! The world of God will come! But only by my dying! By my sacrifice on the cross! Forget everything else! Understand that.

JUDAS

No I can't. I'm not strong enough.

JESUS

You are. You're the strongest. You're part of God's plan too. You once made me a promise. You said if I ever strayed, if I ever shied away from revolution, you would kill me. Remember?

Judas nods.

JESUS

I've strayed, haven't I?

JUDAS

Yes.

JESUS

Then you have to keep your word. You have to kill me.

JUDAS

If God wants that, then let God do it. I won't.

JESUS

He will do it. Through you. The Temple Guards want to arrest me where there aren't any crowds. Tonight we'll be in Gethsemane. Arrange for them to find me. It will be terrible. But only for three days. Only three days! Then I'll come back. We'll all be together in triumph.

JUDAS

No.

JESUS

You've got to! Don't abandon me now. Without you, the world can't be saved, There'll be no redemption. Without us together, the sacrifice can't be made.

JUDAS

Could you betray God? If you were me, could you betray your Master?

JESUS

No. That's why God gave me the easier job... to be crucified.

CUT TO:

INT. UPPER ROOM - NIGHT

Three seven-branched candelabra illuminate the lamb, wine and unleavened bread.

The disciples are seated on cushions on the ground. Food is brought in from an adjacent room.

Mary, Martha and Magdalene have all come to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival with Jesus and his disciples and prepare the ritual meal.

Jesus fills the disciples cups from a pitcher of salt water.

JESUS

Our ancestors in Egypt celebrated
Passover before they escaped to the
freedom of the desert. On this
Passover we come out of another kind
of slavery and enter another kind of
freedom.

PHILIP

Oh, please. We're hiding here like
criminals, we can't go out the door,
and even if we could we wouldn't
want to because we've been so
humiliated, we'd like to respect
you...

JOHN

Respect him? We love him.

PHILIP

...yes, alright, yes, we love him,
that goes without saying, but at
least he could...

JESUS

(interrupting)

First... first... first we drink
salt water to remember the tears and
pain our ancestors suffered in the
land of Israel.

Jesus swallows his drink in a single gulp; Judas is the first
to do likewise. Mary brings a tray of bitter herbs. As the
disciples eat, Jesus watches.

JESUS

Tonight we go further. This passover
celebrates the passage from death to
eternal life. I'll lead the way, you
will follow. John, you know the
prophets. Isaiah says, 'He had neither
beauty nor luster that we should
turn our eyes to him. He was despised
and rejected by men...'

JOHN

(continues)

'...But he took on himself all our
pains. He was wounded for our
transgressions, he was bruised for

our inequities, and with his stripes
we are healed.'

JESUS

(interrupting)

'...He was scourged and he was
afflicted. Yet, like a lamb led to
the slaughter, he opened not his
mouth.'

(a beat)

My dear, wonderful friends. I am the
lamb. And I won't open my mouth.
They've been leading me to the
slaughter ever since I was born.

The disciples exchange fearful glances.

PETER

If you die, I'll die first. Because
I'll be at your side.

JESUS

Be quiet. What did you have before I
found you? All of you. Nothing.

(no answer)

Now you have God's love -- and eternal
life. Don't worry. You won't die
yet. There's still a lot of work to
do. We haven't come to rule, but to
serve. In three days I'll rise from
the dead to lead you.

The disciples stare in shocked silence. Jesus has either
gone completely mad -- or he is the Messiah.

Jesus breaks the bread loaves and passes them around. He
pours wine for the others:

JESUS

Eat, this is my body. Drink, this is
my blood. I will be in you always.

As they do, the bread and the wine transubstantiate into
flesh and blood in their mouths. They blanch and cough; some
blood falls on the table. Peter removes the substance from
his mouth with his hand and examines it: it has the
consistency of blood and flesh. This is literally hard for
all the disciples to swallow. But they all persevere, and,
finally, they all manage to do it. As they wipe their bloody

mouths, John starts to weep. Jesus turns and looks at Judas.

Judas exits... Peter shouts angrily after him:.

PETER

Judas, where are you going?

(to Jesus)

Where's he going?

JESUS

Don't get in the way. Tonight we'll
go to Gethsemane to pray.

CUT TO:

EXT. GETHSEMANE - NIGHT

As they climb the steep hills of Gethsemane, Jesus leaves most of his group behind and proceeds with Peter, James and John. Passing through thick, gnarled olive groves, they reach a clearing marked by three boulders. (looks like a Henry Moore sculpture). The leaves glisten on the trees all around them.

JESUS

Wait for me here.

Jesus walks alone until he finds a secluded spot. Pulling his tunic around him, he kneels beneath an ancient tree.

JESUS

Father, Father in heaven. Father on earth. The world you created that we can see is beautiful. But the world you created that we can't see is beautiful too. I don't know -- forgive me -- Father, I don't know which is the more beautiful.

Jesus scoops up a handful of soil and smells it. "What perfume" he thinks. Then as he rubs the soil on his cheeks, neck and lips, he speaks.

JESUS

This is my body too. Together we
will die.

Jesus' body weakens. He starts to sweat.

JESUS

Abba, Father, we've been together a long time. I never asked to be chosen, but, I always obeyed. You've done many miracles for others. You opened the Red Sea for Moses. You saved Noah. You took Elijah directly to heaven in a fiery chariot. Now you ask me to be crucified. Can I ask you one last time? Do I have to die? Is there any other way? Do I have to drink from this cup? Can't you take it away from me?

Jesus waits for an answer that doesn't come. The wind blows through the olive trees.

Jesus looks over, sees Peter, James and John asleep.

Now, in front of him, a GUARDIAN ANGEL in the form of one of the sleeping disciples appears and sets a clay cup before Jesus.

JESUS

Is this your answer?

The Angel drinks from the cup then hands it to Jesus.

Jesus reaches for the cup, but the Angel no longer holds it. His hand is empty. Then, slowly, the Angel's hand reaches forward and lightly caresses the top of Jesus' head to comfort him.

JESUS

Your will be done. I only ask for strength.

Jesus wipes the sweat and tears from his face and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. GETHSEMANE - NIGHT

At the three-point rock Jesus finds Peter, James and John fast asleep. John's head rests peacefully on his brother's chest. Peter lies flat with his arms outstretched. Jesus is tempted not to wake them.

JESUS

(softly)
Couldn't you stay awake with me for
just an hour?

Peter is the first to awake.

PETER
I'm sorry.

Jesus hears the sound of soldiers in the distance.

JESUS
It doesn't matter. It's too late.

Jesus hears the evening nightingale overheard. A feeling of peace sweeps over him. He smiles at James and John as they awaken. (moving camera here to end of scene?)

Judas and a band of Romans and armed Temple Guards carrying long torches burst into the clearing. Peter pulls his dagger; Jesus pushes him back. Judas greets his master.

JUDAS
Welcome, Rabbi.

Judas kisses him fiercely on the mouth. Jesus gratefully embraces his faithful disciple. Tears stream down Judas' cheek.

Peter attacks and slices off one of the Temple Guard's ears.

Jesus pushes Judas unwillingly away. He turns to Peter, touches the knife simply (36 f.p.s.).

JESUS
No. You live by this, you die by it.

The knife falls to the ground (36 f.p.s.). Two guards grab Peter but he wrestles them off and runs away. Jesus picks up the severed ear (36 f.p.s.) and miraculously restores it to the Levite (36 f.p.s.).

JESUS
Welcome. You're the messengers of
God. Let's go.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTONIA - DAY

Jesus again stands before Pilate. He is bloody, beaten, exhausted from lack of sleep. A clique of Temple Guards, Pharisees and Sadducees stand in one corner of the hall.

PILATE

You're back.

(pause)

Hello.

(pause)

So now you're a king. Is that right?

Jesus stares at the sky.

PILATE

Don't look in the air. Look at me. Answer me. I can crucify you. You know that? Now... are you a king?

JESUS

Some say so.

PILATE

Ah yes. Well last time you took that line with me, you fooled me. I don't like to be fooled. What you did in the temple makes it very clear. You're just another of these religious revolutionaries making difficulties. You take the people into the desert, you talk about God, love, mercy and the new kingdom, but you're just the same as the Zealots. You all promise glory and bring death. There's a new Messiah every week and a new one dies every week and Rome continues.

JESUS

Remember the statue. And the stone. And the clay feet.

PILATE

How could I forget. Still think your kingdom will replace Rome?

JESUS

No. My kingdom is not on earth.

PILATE

No, it wouldn't be. You're a little smarter than the others. After all, what's a revolution on earth compared to a revolution in people's hearts?

JESUS

It's a revolution that will come with love, not by the sword.

PILATE

Either way it's dangerous. It's against Rome. It's against the way the world is. And either way, I don't care. Sword or love, it's all the same. I don't care how you want to change things. We don't want them changed. So you know what has to happen. We have a small space for you up on Golgotha. Right next to the bones of your predecessors. Three thousand skulls there, very likely more by now. Maybe you people should go out and count them sometime. Maybe then you'd learn your lesson. But probably not.

Pilate looks over at the Pharisees and Sadducees.

PILATE

Do you gentlemen have anything to add?

SADDUCEE

We can't condone the killing of any Jew. But everything this man does and everything he says could lead to revolution. We don't want revolution. Action against a power like Rome is hopeless. It invites reprisals that would mean the extinction of the Jewish people. It's the death of one man against the death of millions. There's no alternative for us.

PHARISEE

Many of our own people believe this man is being paid by Rome anyway.

PILATE

Fine. It's agreed.
 (to Jesus)
But just so people appreciate your
rank, we'll write it all out for
them. "King of the Jews."

CUT TO:

EXT. ANTONIA - DAY

Direct overhead angle: We see down a thick column. Jesus is
tied to it, naked. (obscured nudity) He is scourged.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANTONIA - LATER

Weakened, bloody, naked (obscured nudity), Jesus is being
swung by the arm like a rag doll into a solid wall (pan).
Closer, we see his face as it hits the wall, smashing his
nose.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANTONIA - LATER

Close of a crown of thorns (rather, a skullcap of them),
being hit onto his head with the broad edge of a sword.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANTONIA - LATER

In the distance, Roman soldiers lead Jesus onto the balcony
overlooking the temple plaza and present him to the awaiting
mob. His tunic is drenched with blood.

The crowd watching this ceremony is literally divided against
itself. Half is cheering and carousing, a real lynch mob.
The other half is angry and shouting to stop the crucifixion.
Soldiers manage to contain these little pockets of action.

PETER stands watching with his back pressed against a wall.
A BEGGAR turns to him.

 BEGGAR
I've seen you. You're one of his
followers.

PETER

No. It must be somebody else.

BEGGAR

No, it's you.

PETER

You don't know what you're talking about.

Peter turns quickly and disappears into the crowd.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERUSALEM STREETS (UNDERGROUND CITY) - DAY

Peter is running down an alley when, turning a corner, he runs into Philip, also fleeing.

They don't even speak. After a fleeting recognition, they sprint in opposite directions.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERUSALEM (THE EXCAVATIONS IN JERUSALEM AND AVDAT) - DAY

Roman soldiers lead Jesus through the peasant streets outside Golgtha. The blood has dried on his tunic. He still wears his thorny "crown."

The cross-bar Jesus carries scrapes alongside the walls of the houses because the paths are extremely narrow. (high angle looking down on these open roofed dwellings and the narrow passageways.) They are jammed with people (36-48 f.p.s.). Men, women, children, (animals), in the windows and open doorways try to get a glimpse of Jesus. The atmosphere has changed. Now it's just another show. A multiple crucifixion: Laughter. Ridicule. Figs for sale. Jesus weakens. He's knees buckle, the weight of the cross-bar throws him off balance and he falls. A Roman soldier pulls him back up by a rope around his neck.

We see close shots of people, their faces. Their eyes, (36-48 f.p.s.). Some turn away. Some cry. Some are mocking. One woman in a window, her head covered with a shawl, turns away (moving, 36-48 f.p.s.).

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLGOTHA (ADVAT) - DAY

Golgotha, the hill of the skull. The rocks are bleached white. There are many crosses, most of them with no cross-bars. Some are simply trees with no branches (see DeMassina). One or two crosses bear half-eaten decomposed corpses. On the ground, we see human skulls and bones, skeletal arms and hands mixed with the rocks.

A curious crowd has already assembled at the crucifixion site. Toward the rear, afraid to approach, Magdalene, Mary, Martha and Jesus' Mother stand in a tight group.

The Romans bring Jesus to the peak of the hill and strip him. Two other criminals are prepared for crucifixion.

Jesus looks at the rough-hewn cross laid before him (P.O.V. move in?). He searches the crowd.

JESUS (V.O.)

Mother? Magdalene? Where are you?

He sees his Mother and tries to gesture to her.

JESUS (V.O.)

(continuing)

Forgive me for being a bad son.

TWO SOLDIERS grab Jesus by the arms:

FIRST SOLDIER

Alright, You Majesty, on your throne.

They stretch Jesus out on the cross while slave laborers finish preparing the post hole for the cross.

JESUS (V.O.)

Don't desert me here. Don't leave me.

The Soldiers place the crude spikes against Jesus' wrists. The sound of METAL AGAINST METAL rings out as the hammer comes down. (see nail driven through from behind wood).

A bloody mist sprays on Jesus' face. He grimaces but does not cry out.

Martha and the three Marys hide their faces. Near Jesus, the

other criminals are being impaled. (trees, see DeMassina)

The Romans fasten ropes around Jesus' arms. The spikes alone will not support his weight.

It takes three soldiers to hoist Jesus' cross upright. Now, suddenly, he is above the masses. All of Jerusalem is within view.

His body jars in to place. The pain is excruciating. His fellow criminals howl in agony.

Jesus surveys the mob: a sea of hostile faces. He finds Magdalene, Mary, Martha and his Mother standing together.

The Sadducees are satisfied; the Romans are complacent. Groups of townspeople and schoolboys point out the sufferings of the condemned men.

JESUS (V.O.)
(continuing)
Father, forgive them.

The sky changes color. A fierce wind blows across the rocky hill.

Writhing on the cross, Jesus looks to heaven and screams:

JESUS
Eli, Eli...

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLGOTHA - DAY

The sky turns a pleasant pale blue. Jesus looks up at the thick white cumulous clouds floating on the horizon. Birds sing in the distance.

He thinks: Am I dead? No, the crowd is still there, SILENT. On either side of Jesus, his fellow criminals writhe in silent agony.

An old man appears before him, standing.

JESUS
Who are you?

The man does not answer.

JESUS

Are you my father?

ANGEL

No, but I was sent by him. I'm the angel who guards you.

He is now closer to Jesus.

ANGEL

Your father is the God of Mercy, not punishment. He saw you and said, 'Aren't you his Guardian Angel? Well, go down and save him. He's suffered enough.' Remember when he told Abraham to sacrifice his son? Just as Abraham lifted his knife, God saved Isaac. If he saved Abraham's son, don't you think he'd want to save his own? He tested you, and he's pleased. He doesn't want your blood. He said, "Let him die in a dream. But let him have his life." Come with me.

JESUS

All this pain is a dream?

ANGEL

Just a dream.

In three separate shots, the Angel takes out the nails in Jesus' body.

First, the Angel extracts the nail in the feet, then kisses the wound, stopping the flow of blood.

Then, the Angel does the same to the left hand.

Then, the same is done on the right hand.

In a moment Jesus and the Guardian Angel are standing at the foot of the cross. They pass through the silent crowd unnoticed. Jesus looks over his shoulder: his cross is empty. He begins to understand.

JESUS

I don't have to be sacrificed.

ANGEL

No. No you don't.

Jesus smiles. This is finally the answer he's been waiting for. He is free of God.

JESUS

I'm not the Messiah.

ANGEL

No. No you're not.

JESUS

Thank God.

They start to walk away from the cross down the hill. We still see the crucifixion site in the background.

JESUS

What about all the others?

ANGEL

Don't look behind, God gave you the gift of life. Look ahead.

JESUS

But what about the people? What will happen?

ANGEL

They can see you crucified. Or they'll see you dead. Or they can see you any way they want.

JESUS

What happens later if they see me alive?

ANGEL

They'll see any one you want them to see. Even you. If you want.

JESUS

Where are the disciples?

ANGEL

Oh, they were frightened and ran away.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUDEAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

They walk through the pleasant landscape of the Jordan Valley. All is quiet, peaceful. A light morning fog envelops them.

JESUS

Is this the Kingdom of God I spoke about?

ANGEL

(laughing)

No, this is earth.

JESUS

Why has it changed so much?

ANGEL

It hasn't changed, you have. Now, you can see its real beauty. Harmony between the earth and the heart, that's the Kingdom of Heaven. Maybe you'll find this hard to believe. But we angels often look down on man and envy you.

Ahead (possibly in a wooded area), Jesus sees a group in ceremonial dress. Virgins dressed in white, merchants carrying incense and gifts,

JESUS

What is this?

ANGEL

A wedding ceremony.

JESUS

Who's getting married?

ANGEL

You are.

Mary Magdalene, dressed in white, steps from the group. Jesus' face bursts into a smile. He rushes into her arms.

JESUS

What's wrong? Why are you crying?

MAGDALENE

I'm thanking God for bringing you here.

He holds her tight.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUDEAN HOUSE - NIGHT

A small hut in wooded area. Moonlight shimmers off the river and a fog filters through the wooded area.

The Guardian Angel sits on a stool in front of the door.

CUT TO:

INT. JUDEAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Jesus and Magdalene make love on blankets spread over straw. He kisses her breasts, her lips. He kisses her abdomen below the navel, taking in the sweat and scent of her body as he did the soil in Gethsemane.

MAGDALENE

We can have a child.

JESUS

Yes.

Jesus continues kissing her body.

The Guardian Angel steps into the darkened room, stands over their bed and makes a strange sign in the air that may be a blessing.

ANGEL

Bless you, children.

They look at him for a brief moment, then resume kissing. The Angel withdraws quietly to a corner and sits, guarding.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUDEAN HOUSE - DAY

The house shows sign of domestication. Magdalene sits outside in the sun. She is several months pregnant.

She sits with her back to the camera, very much in the manner of Lazarus in a previous scene. The camera dollies in. She turns and smiles.

A shadow of a hand falls down across her face and bosom onto her belly.

MAGDALENE
Death is kind.

Her own hands hug her stomach lightly as she starts to fall over. She dies as if she's gone to sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUDEAN HOUSE - DAY

Jesus' face in grief. He's kneeling over the body of Magdalene.

JESUS
Magdalene...

The Angel comes into the frame. Jesus gets up and grabs an ax. The Angel stops him.

ANGEL
Where are you going?

Jesus doesn't answer but starts to walk -- determined. The Guardian Angel calls after him.

ANGEL
Who are you going to kill, Jesus?

Jesus keeps walking.

ANGEL
God. Are you going to kill God?

Jesus stops and looks back.

ANGEL
It was God who killed her.

The Guardian Angel holds him in his arms and caresses his hair and shoulders as he leads him away.

ANGEL

God took her at the height of her happiness. Now she's immortal. She won't see her love fade or her flesh rot away. Can she be happier? I was there the whole time he was killing her and I saw what happened.

They sit on a bench near the house.

JESUS

But it wasn't right... it wasn't right for him to kill her.

ANGEL

You didn't question God when he let you live. You can't question why he let her die. Be patient. Trust in God's way. Listen, only one woman exists in the world, one woman with many faces. This one falls, the next one gets up. Mary Magdalene died, Mary, Lazarus' sister lives. She's Magdalene with a different face. She's carrying your greatest joy inside her. Your son. Come with me.

The Guardian Angel helps Jesus to his feet. They exit frame.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

We are moving in to a close view of their doorway, Jesus' and the Guardian Angel's P.O.V. as they approach.

ANGEL (V.O.)

This is the way the Savior comes:
gradually -- from embrace to embrace --
from son to son. This is the road.

JESUS (V.O.)

I understand...

Martha enters the doorway, looks out and sees them.

MARTHA

Oh, Mary look!

Mary joins her in the doorway. Both women wear black, as do

most people in these Bethany scenes.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY AND MARTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jesus enters. The Guardian Angel remains outside.

Mary touches Jesus' chest.

MARY

Rabbi, I want to see if it's really
you.

MARTHA

It's real flesh -- like us. Don't
you see? And look, there's a shadow
on our doorstep.

Jesus turns and goes to the doorway. From outside, over the
Guardian Angel's shoulder, we see Jesus approach. Mary and
Martha remain in the background.

JESUS

(to Guardian Angel)
Come in.

ANGEL

Come here.

Jesus leans forward to listen.

ANGEL

Master, I'm sorry about Magdalene.
I'll never leave you alone again.
I'll always protect you. I don't
want you to take the wrong road again
and get lost.

Martha walks over to them.

MARTHA

You must be hungry. I'll cook for
you and your friend.

The Angel goes into the home with them.

CUT TO:

INT MARY AND MARTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT (LATER)

They all sit around the fire. Jesus cleans his bowl with a piece of bread. He smiles at Mary.

MARTHA

Rabbi, I like your friend.

JESUS

(expansive)

Nothing was enough for me before.
And now look at this. Can you believe
it? A small house is big enough for
me, some bread, some friends. I'm
not going to fight with God anymore.
I'm not going to build crosses
anymore. I'm going to build cradles
and beds.

Mary reaches out to touch Jesus. He takes her hand. Martha, noticing this, gets up and leaves quietly. Mary and Jesus embrace. The Angel watches.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - DAY

Years have passed. An older Jesus sits out front hewing a chair. Two children play nearby.

ANGEL

Are you satisfied with me? Do you
have any complaints?

Jesus stops working, sets the chair on its' side.

JESUS

None.

(pause)

I'm ashamed when I think of it.

ANGEL

Of what?

JESUS

What a twisted road I took to find
God.

ANGEL

Don't worry. I won't leave you. I
like you.

Jesus rests in the sunlight. Martha walks over to them. She
has been washing clothes.

JESUS
Where's Mary?

MARTHA
In the olive groves. She won't be
back until this evening.

Martha pauses a moment, then takes Jesus' hand.

MARTHA
(continuing)
Let's go inside. It's too hot out
here.

Martha goes inside.

MARTHA
Come inside.

Jesus looks towards Martha, then the Guardian Angel.

ANGEL
There's only one woman in the world.
Go inside.

Jesus stands.

JESUS
(to the Guardian Angel)
Watch the children.

The Angel smiles as Jesus enters the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. BETHANY - DAY

Years have passed. Jesus and Martha return from the market
with four of their children, ages two through ten. Jesus
carries the youngest, who is laughing, under his arm, like a
bundle. The Guardian Angel walks with them.

Ahead, Mary sits in front of the house repairing a dress.

Two girls play with straw dolls in the dirt beside her.

The two youngest children, boys, race toward Mary. One snatches a doll from one of the girls as they race off again. Mary scolds them as they go.

From the distance, we hear the SOUND of someone preaching in the townsquare. The voice attracts Jesus' attention. He calls to his eldest son.

JESUS

Don't forget to thank God for the food and make sure you save me some.

ANGEL

Aren't you going to dinner?

JESUS

I'll be back soon. I want to hear what he's saying.

ANGEL

You don't have to go there...

They walk off, arguing in a friendly way.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWNSQUARE - DAY

Paul -- who we recognize as the Zealot Saul who killed Lazarus -- preaches to a handful of villagers. Standing straight, radiating confidence, he speaks with the evangelistic fervor of a born-again Christian.

PAUL

I used to be a sinner. The worst sinner. I did everything. Whored, drank, murdered. I killed anyone who violated the Law of Moses. Then, I was struck by a burning light and a voice called to me, 'Saul, why are you persecuting me? Why are you against me?' 'Who are you?' I said. 'Jesus,' the voice said, and he gave me my sight. I opened my eyes and I was baptized and became Paul. I bring the good news to every country.

Jesus comes closer, the Angel by his side.

PAUL

I bring this news. About Jesus of Nazareth. He wasn't the son of Mary, he was the son of God. His mother was a virgin. The angel Gabriel came to earth and put God's seed in her womb. That's how he was born. He took on our sins, he was tortured, crucified -- but three days later he rose again and was taken up to heaven. Death was conquered, praise God! Death was conquered, sins were forgiven and the Kingdom of Heaven's now open to everyone.

Jesus can restrain himself no longer. He calls out:

JESUS

Did you ever see this resurrected Jesus of Nazareth? I mean, with your own eyes?

PAUL

No. But I saw a blinding flash of light and I heard his voice.

JESUS

You're a liar!

PAUL

His disciples saw him. They were hiding in an attic with the doors locked when suddenly he appeared. Only one, Thomas, wasn't convinced but he put his fingers in his wounds and gave Jesus some fish, which he ate.

JESUS

Liar!

(to people around him)

He's a liar!

Disgusted, Jesus turns and walks away. His angel follows.

In the background, Paul comes after him.

Jesus feels Paul's footsteps drawing closer. He's about to explode. Suddenly, he turns on his heel, grabs Paul by the shoulders and shakes him violently.

JESUS

(continuing)

You're a liar! I'm Jesus of Nazareth. I was never crucified. I never came back from the dead. I'm a man like everyone else. Why are you spreading these lies?

ANGEL

Quiet.

PAUL

What are you talking about?

JESUS

I'm the son of Mary and Joseph, who preached in Galilee. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were my disciples. We marched on Jerusalem, they brought me before Pilate, but God saved me.

Jesus' Angel doesn't like this conversation; he tugs violently at his sleeve. Jesus shoves him aside. Paul takes Jesus around a corner where they won't be seen.

PAUL

No he didn't!

JESUS

Now I live like a man. I have a family. I eat, work, have children. Do you understand what I'm saying? Don't go around the world spreading these lies about me.

(shouts)

Because, I'll tell everyone the truth.

Now it's Paul's turn to explode.

PAUL

Look around you! Look at these people. Do you see the suffering and unhappiness in this world? Their only hope is the Resurrected Jesus.

I don't care whether you're Jesus or not. The Resurrected Jesus will save the world -- that's what matters.

JESUS

The world can't be saved by lies.

PAUL

I created the truth. I make it out of longing and faith. I don't struggle to find truth -- I build it. If it's necessary to crucify you to save the world, then I'll crucify you. And I'll resurrect you too, whether you like it or not.

JESUS

I won't let you. I'll tell everyone the truth.

PAUL

Shout all you want. Who'll believe you? You started all this, now it can't be stopped. The faithful will grab you and call you a blasphemer and throw you in a fire.

JESUS

No, that wouldn't happen.

PAUL

How do you know? You don't know how much people need God. You don't know what a joy it is to hold the cross, to put hope in the hearts of men, to suffer, to be killed -- all for the sake of Christ. Jesus Christ. Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God. Messiah.

Jesus is listening intently now.

PAUL

(continuing)

Not you. Not for your sake.

(pause)

I'm glad I met you. Now I can forget you. My Jesus is much more powerful.

Paul returns to the townsquare to preach. Jesus, exhausted,

dazed, starts back toward his house. The Guardian Angel faithfully follows.

CUT TO:

EXT HOUSE - DAY

At the house, Mary and Martha wait for him. Jesus embraces them. His Angel takes his hand. Jesus turns to his "family."

JESUS

Don't ever leave me. I'm happy here.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - DAY

Jesus, now in his 50's, sits in the vine arbor beside the house. His Guardian Angel, unchanged by time, sits beside him. Jesus turns to him:

JESUS

Remember when Mary and I planted these vines -- how many years have we been eating these grapes?

ANGEL

I don't remember.

JESUS

(reflecting)

In my hands her hair became white...
Mary, white... in my hands... she became white.

ANGEL

You know, this will all have to pass soon.

JESUS

Why? Are you leaving me?

ANGEL

Yes. We have to go on. You've grown old. You've done well. We've both done well.

The Angel looks at Jesus who has suddenly aged to his 80's. Jesus does not react to this transformation.

Now SOUNDS of yelling and screaming come from the street. A woman's WAIL pierces the air. Jesus and the Angel turn to look.

Mary and Martha, aged similarly, rush from the house. Jesus and the Angel stand.

JESUS
What is it?

MARTHA
They're burning Jerusalem. The city
is destroyed.

MARY
The Romans are killing everyone.

Jesus takes them by their arms.

JESUS
Let's go inside.

They go inside, but Jesus peers out the entrance. We see people running away. CAMERA tilts up to the sky, which is red from the flames of Jerusalem. (SPECIAL EFFECT).

CUT TO:

INT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

Jesus lies dying. He is facing the entrance, in which we can see glimmers of the still-burning sky.

Mary and Martha stand close around him. Jesus is in no pain. He seems to be at peace.

Suddenly looming in the entranceway, silhouetted against the red sky, is the figure of an old man. He starts down the few stone steps into the room where Jesus lies. He is followed by two other men. The Guardian Angel recognizes them instantly and starts toward them.

PETER
Let us through. We're sent by God.
(to Jesus)
He told us you would show yourself
to us. He said you were dying.

JESUS

Is that Peter? I can't tell. That is Peter. What happened to you?

PETER

The years.

JESUS

The years?

(he points)

This one I know. No matter how old you get, I know. This is Philip. You were the best of all shepherds, because you had no sheep. They were all in your head.

PHILIP

Have I changed so little in all this time?

JESUS

Only for the better, I hope.

Jesus points to the mutilated man standing next to Peter. The man's face is a mask of injury: he is missing his nose, and one eye, and one ear.

JESUS

And you? They cut out your eye, your ear. Your face... who are you?

JOHN

(bows)

Rabbi.

JESUS

John!

JOHN

The Romans tortured me and cut away my face. I saw Jerusalem burn. I saw the Ark of the Covenant taken from the temple.

JESUS

The ark?

PHILIP

The Temple's destroyed, just as you

predicted.

PETER
There's somebody else. Outside.

PHILIP
Him you'll know. Be careful, he's
still angry.

Judas is silhouetted in the entranceway.

JESUS
Judas!
(Judas doesn't answer)
Judas, come in. Do you hear me? I've
missed you so much.

Now Judas advances slowly.

PETER
He hears you. He's just not going to
say anything.

JOHN
He's been fighting in Jerusalem.
Look at his hands. There's still
blood on them.

PHILIP
(warning protectively)
Judas...

The other disciples stand up.

PETER
(reprimanding)
Judas, the Master is speaking to
you. Answer him.

JUDAS
Traitor!

Everyone freezes.

JUDAS
Traitor. Your place was on the cross.
That's where God put you. But when
death got too close you ran away,
you got scared and ran away and hid

yourself in the life of some... man.
We did what we were supposed to do.
You didn't. You're a coward.

PETER

Don't you have any respect.

JUDAS

For him? He was supposed to save
man. But all he did is save himself.

JESUS

No. You just don't understand...

JUDAS

Understand? Rabbi, you broke my heart.
Sometimes I curse the day I ever met
you. We held the world in our hands.
Remember what you said to me? You
took me in your arms, do you remember?
And you begged me. "Betray me, betray
me. I have to be crucified. I have
to be resurrected to save the world."

The wounds in Jesus' hands and feet begin to bleed.

JUDAS

(continuing)

"I am the lamb," you said. "Death is
the door. Judas, my brother, don't
be afraid. Help me go through the
door." And I loved you so much I
went and betrayed you. But you...
you... what are you doing here? What
business do you have here? With women,
with children... what's good for a
man isn't good enough for God. Why
weren't you crucified?

Judas is crying.

PETER

Look at his wounds, Judas. He's
bleeding. You're hurting him, that's
enough.

JUDAS

He was going to be the New Covenant.
Now there's no more Israel.

JESUS
But my Guardian Angel...

JUDAS
Your Guradian Angel! Look at him!

All their eyes turn to the Guardian Angel. As they watch he transforms into a death figure in a black monk's habit.

JUDAS
Satan.

Judas looks back at Jesus.

JUDAS
If you die this way, you die like a man. If you die like that, you deny God. Your Father. Then there's no sacrifice. Then there's no salvation.

Jesus looks over at Mary and Martha, then back at the disciples. They have disappeared.

He looks again, and for the last time, at Mary and Martha. Now they are gone too.

He is left alone in the room with the death figure.

DEATH FIGURE
I told you we would meet again.

Jesus starts to try to pull himself up off the floor. The death figure stands in front of him.

DEATH FIGURE
There's nothing you can do. You lived this life. You accepted it. It's over now. Just finish it and die like a man.

But Jesus starts to crawl across the floor.

He crawls past the death figure, who watches, turning to see Jesus leave through the entranceway.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

Jesus crawls into the deserted street. The village is still.

There is a red glow in the distance: Jerusalem is burning.

He surveys the empty street. Blood still stains his hands and feet.

The old man gets on his hands and knees in the middle of the road. He lifts his head toward heaven.

JESUS

Abba, father, will you still listen to me? Are you still there? Will you listen to a selfish, unfaithful son? I fought you when you called. I resisted. I thought I knew more. I didn't want to be your son. Can you forgive me? I didn't fight hard enough. I want to take your hand; I want to save my fellow men. Father, take me back. Make a feast. Welcome me home. I want to be your son. I want to pay the price. I want to be crucified and rise again. I want to be the Messiah.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLGOTHA - DAY

Jesus is back on the cross, 37 years before. The CAMERA tracks rapidly up his side stopping on his face.

He has regained his 33 year-old Nazarene form.

All that we have seen since he last cried out in pain has taken place inside a second. He finished his cry.

JESUS

...lama sabachthani!

Jesus looks around, realizes where he is. The past thirty-seven years have been a dream. He has resisted the last temptation. He looks to heaven and says:

JESUS

It is finished.

THE END