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The Last Temptation of Christ

By Paul Schrader

EXT. NAZARETH - MORNING

From above:

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:

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:

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.

ZEBADÉE 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 your 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:

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:

unnaturally close to him. (SPECIAL EFFECT).

He sees:

plain.

He sees:

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:

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:

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, Sadducees, 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:

disciples turn their faces: others put handkerchiefs to their noses.

Jesus stands at the entrance of the tomb and yells. His voice

echoes:

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 corpses' 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

desicated 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:

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:

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:

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:

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 dessert 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:

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 COUNRYSIDE - 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: