

The Q Document

by
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THE Q DOCUMENT

EXT. DESERT - DAY

JESUS CHRIST, thin, wounded, hangs on a CROSS, moaning in agony. While Jesus hangs in the traditional position, the image itself is inverted, presented upside down.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

TITLE SEQUENCE

Barren desert landscape stretches as far as the eye can see.

We follow the hard, rocky ground until we arrive at a TORTOISE lying on its back, struggling to turn over.

Suddenly the bare FOOT of Jesus steps into frame.

Jesus looks affectionately toward the tortoise. He bends down and gently turns the tortoise right-side up. The tortoise then begins to slowly crawl away.

Jesus stares out at the seemingly endless desert, his eyes focused and pensive.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Drawn from the oral tradition of the early Church, the "Q Document" is a lost and ancient gospel. A gospel like those of Matthew and Luke, tell of Jesus' forty day fast in the desert while being tempted by Satan. Never proven to have existed and disputed by the Church, the Q Document has lead philosophers, historians, scientists and artists to offer their interpretation of what happened during Christ's isolation in the Judaeen desert and the temptations that aimed to destroy him.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus falls to his knees. He closes his eyes and bows his head.

JESUS CHRIST

Father. I speak to you now. The Spirit has lead me into this wasteland. And I know what I must do. To prove my devotion, I will not consume food or water, I will not indulge in earthly needs and desires (pauses) and I will await the Evil one... I will not falter. I will rely on your love to stay true. I am willing to starve for you. I am willing to die for you. Your will shall be done.

Jesus then opens his eyes and looks toward the sky. He searches the sky, but sees only clouds.

Jesus resumes prayer, eyes closed, hands clasped together.

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE TEXT: DAY ONE

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus walks quietly through the scenic desert.

He observes what nature there is to observe.

EXT. DESERT - EVENING

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE TEXT: DAY FOUR

Jesus is troubled and discontented. He looks out at the sunset and then falls to his knees, clasping his hands in prayer.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE TEXT: DAY FIVE

Jesus is shown not to have moved from his kneeled position, his eyes are still closed, his hands are still clasped, but his face is pained, already thinned from lack of nourishment.

Suddenly, Jesus springs to movement, opening him arms and groaning loudly in pain and relief. He looses his footing and slumps to his backside.

He runs his fingers over his dry, cracked lips.

He then removes his GARMENTS, a long, one-piece tunic. His body is moist with sweat.

Falling completely to the ground, Jesus proceeds to lie flat on his back.

JESUS CHRIST

(deliriously, intensely,
speaking rhetorically to
Satan)

Show yourself, Deceiver! Why have you not come? The Spirit told me you would. Is this your test? Isolation! (begins to mildly chuckle in delirium) I will be alone for 40 days, but you will be alone for all eternity!

Jesus then quickly regains his composure. He sits up and runs his hands over his face.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

(quietly, to himself
aloud)

Mother... I am glad you can not see me like this. Even as I await persecution, my impatience overwhelms me. Do not think ill of me. I promised you I would be strong, and I am determined... I've yet to look homeward toward you and Joseph, but Mother, how I miss you and long to be in your company again.

Jesus lies down on the ground again, curling himself into a fetal position.

INT./EXT - DWELLING - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Jesus is shown in a similar fetal position, but lying with and comforted by his mother MARY as she gently and affectionately strokes his back.

Mary carefully repositions herself and Jesus jolts awake.

MARY

I thought you had finally fallen asleep.

JESUS CHRIST
 (groggy)
 You know now is not the time to
 sleep, Mother.

MARY
 (playfully)
 You were snoring.

Jesus smirks.

JESUS CHRIST
 Well, perhaps I did shut my eyes
 for a moment.

MARY
 You may be the son of God, but you
 still need rest. The trial ahead of
 you will provide little comfort.

Jesus pauses for a moment, looks toward his Mother then looks
 away.

JESUS CHRIST
 Don't call me that.

Mary's brow furrows.

MARY
 What did I call you?

JESUS CHRIST
The son of God.

MARY
 But that's what you are -- the
 living God.

Jesus is silent, conflicted.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Never be ashamed of who you are.

JESUS CHRIST
 I'm not ashamed... I'm--

Jesus trails off.

MARY
 What?

JESUS CHRIST

(hesitantly)

I'm still not certain of why I was the one chosen for this honor, this responsibility.

MARY

Isn't that why you are preparing to go into the desert? To prove you are beyond human law, human frailty?

JESUS CHRIST

And what if I'm not?

MARY

You are Jesus. I know that you are. I only need to recall how you came to me, not by Man's touch, but by the hand of God--

JESUS CHRIST

(speaking over her)

Stop!

Mary becomes deeply concerned and rushes over to Jesus.

MARY

What is this? Where is this coming from? I've told you since childhood about the night the Spirit came and put you inside of me.

JESUS CHRIST

How?!

MARY

I do not know how! But it is so!

Silence resumes. Mary turns her back to Jesus and moves away from him.

MARY (CONT'D)

I thought you believed the truth about yourself.

JESUS CHRIST

I do believe, Mother. It's just difficult at times.

MARY

What about those that follow you? Why do you speak to them? Why do you tell them the way?

JESUS CHRIST
 (matter-of-factly)
 Because I feel it is the right
 thing to do.

Short pause.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)
 Listen to me... I am ashamed of
 these thoughts. They rip through me
 and I despise that I think them,
 but I do... I believe in who I am
 and what I have to say, but
 tomorrow morning I am to march into
 a wasteland with only faith to
 nourish me.

Jesus walks over to Mary, faces her toward him and grips her
 by the arms.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)
 Look into my eyes, Mother.

Mary slowly brings herself to look at Jesus. Tears fill her
 eyes.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)
 If I am wrong, I will perish. If I
 am not who you tell me I am, I will
 die in that desert. Do you
 understand? ...So tell me again,
 Mother... Save me if you can.

There is a long, intense pause. Mary stares deeply into
 Jesus' eyes. Tears roll down her cheeks.

MARY
 You are the son of God. A child of
 virgin birth and the savior of
 mankind.

Jesus looks earnestly at Mary and then pulls her close to him
 for an embrace.

JESUS CHRIST
 (whispering)
 I'm so sorry, Mother. I should have
 never doubted you, never doubted
 myself.

MARY
 (stern)
 You must extinguish this doubt
 Jesus.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Doubt is the Devil working his way inside of your mind. Do not even question, because what doesn't make sense to us, makes sense to God. He makes anything possible. His love is coursing through your veins.

JESUS CHRIST

I know.

MARY

You're right. You'll only have faith to nourish you, but faith is all you'll need. Everything else is but a requirement of man... When you thirst and when you starve, open up your heart. God will provide... Now say it.

JESUS CHRIST

God will provide.

MARY

Say it once more.

JESUS CHRIST

(strongly)
God will provide.

MARY

(tenderly)
Is there a voice inside of you, Jesus, telling you the right path?

JESUS CHRIST

There are many voices.

MARY

Listen to the one deepest in your soul. That is God. He is telling you who you are, giving you the strength to do what he's put you on this earth to do.

JESUS CHRIST

It's never been a question of the thoughts that fill my heart. If it is wrong to defend against hatred with love, then I will gladly be wrong.

Mary smiles.

MARY

That is your divinity, my son.
 These thoughts cannot come from
 Man. They are too cruel and
 foolish. The concept of love can
 only come from God.

Jesus embraces Mary again.

While Jesus' face is buried in her hair, Mary masks a look of distraught pain. She strokes the back of Jesus' head with her hand.

When Jesus' breaks away, Mary quickly resumes her tearful, but smiling face.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The sun is beating down on Jesus as he slowly stumbles along a canyon, his eyes closed, his body wet with sweat.

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE TEXT: DAY NINE

The sound of his mother's voice is heard in a whisper.

MARY (V.O.)

(whisper)

*"Extinguish doubt... Doubt is the
 Devil... Love can only come from
 God."*

Jesus is noticeably disoriented. He stumbles more severely toward an opening in the canyon, about a twelve foot drop.

Jesus tumbles into the opening, falling and injuring his ankle upon impact with the desert floor.

He lets out a loud shriek, gripping his ankle and rocking back and forth in pain.

Jesus looks toward the sky and sees the canyon walls. They appear impossibly high.

Grunting and breathing heavily, a look of panic on Jesus' face, he tries to stand only to fall again after putting weight on his ankle.

He looks at his wound. It is swollen and purple. Jesus then survey's his surroundings for anything to hoist himself up with, but the canyon is arid.

Jesus slumps his back against the wall of the canyon and sighs. Then through the pain he mutters:

JESUS CHRIST
 Friends, I pray your fears were not
 well founded...

I/E. - CAVE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Two DISCIPLES of Jesus stand in an ominously lit cave that's
 been used as a gathering space.

They speak to each other in troublesome tones.

DISCIPLE 1
 Why do you think he's called us
 here at such a late hour?

DISCIPLE 2
 I do not know.

DISCIPLE 1
 What if he doesn't come?

DISCIPLE 2
 He'll come.

DISCIPLE 1
 And if he doesn't?

DISCIPLE 2
 (aggressively)
 We wait.

DISCIPLE 1
 Yes, for the Romans to come and
 capture us.

Disciple 2 shrugs this off.

Disciple 1 is agitated. He pours himself some WINE and
 drinks, spilling some on himself.

DISCIPLE 1 (CONT'D)
 If he keeps talking the way he
 does, people are going to start
 paying attention.

DISCIPLE 2
 Isn't that the idea?

DISCIPLE 1
 Yes, but we don't want the wrong
 people paying attention. They'll
 kill him. They'll kill all of us.

DISCIPLE 2

Jesus speaks the truth. Sometimes people don't like hearing the truth.

Disciple 1 sarcastically chuckles.

DISCIPLE 1

There's no such thing. There is only what those with power tell us. That becomes our truth.

DISCIPLE 2

You're wrong, my friend.

DISCIPLE 1

It is what influences our lives! A lie, the truth, it's what we live with every day. What good is anything else?

DISCIPLE 2

Jesus stands for something more than the workings of our trivial lives. And I am prepared to stand behind him.

DISCIPLE 1

You're prepared to die for his truth?

DISCIPLE 2

I am.

DISCIPLE 1

You really believe all that he says? ...About what he is?

DISCIPLE 2

I do.

DISCIPLE 1

How can you follow so blindly?

DISCIPLE 2

(frustrated, explosive)
How can you call yourself a follower with questions like this? Have you not heard the name Cassius? He is being eternally chewed in the jowls of the hellhound Lucifer! Keep talking like this and I'll make sure you end up beside him.

DISCIPLE 1

Don't misunderstand me. I consider Jesus my brother. I **would** die for him if it came to that... I'm just not certain that it must.

DISCIPLE 2

And if it came to be that Jesus did not possess these gifts, if he is not who he claims to be?

DISCIPLE 1

Then it's possible we'll be killed in the name of an impractical sentiment. That is all I intend to say.

DISCIPLE 2

(suspicious)

What would you have us do?

DISCIPLE 1

I do not know, but we would have to do something...

A moment of silence occurs.

Jesus then suddenly enters and greets his Disciples with a warm smile.

DISCIPLE 2

(hiding guilt)

Jesus!

JESUS CHRIST

Hello, brothers. I apologize for keeping you.

Jesus walks before them and opens his hands to them.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

Come. We have much to discuss.

I/E. - CAVE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Jesus continues to speak with his two Disciples.

DISCIPLE 1

But Jesus, no man can survive for 40 days without food and water!

JESUS CHRIST

These are the requirements of men!
I'm filled with divine love, you
see. This is my path and I must
walk it.

DISCIPLE 2

I will go with you then. We will
fast together.

JESUS CHRIST

No! I must go alone.

DISCIPLE 1

It's suicide!

JESUS CHRIST

God will provide.

DISCIPLE 2

You know I will listen to all that
you say, and fulfill any demand
that you ask of me, but this is too
dangerous. Art you not a man like
me? I need nourishment to go on.

JESUS CHRIST

I would be dishonest if I told you
I wasn't frightened, but my fear
does not derive from doubt. It is
my own human weakness. But God is
great! And can do what no man can.
Brothers, I will be in his hands.

There is a pause. The Disciples are nervous, their words
bottled up inside their mouths.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

(comforting)

Pray with me now.

Jesus reaches out his hands to the Disciples.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The massive landscape seems endless and large sand dunes
tower over a small modern DOOR FRAME positioned in the center
of the desert.

JESUS CHRIST (V.O.)

(in a whisper)

I say to you, ask and it will be
given to you;

(MORE)

JESUS CHRIST (V.O.) (CONT'D)
search, and you will find; knock,
and the door will be opened for
you...

The door opens, revealing more desert landscape behind it.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus continues to sit in the canyon, his ankle badly wounded. He leans his head against the wall of the canyon and breaths deeply, shutting his eyes.

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE TEXT: DAY THIRTEEN

MONTAGE

-As multiple days pass Jesus slowly begins to be able to put weight on his foot.

-Superimposed title text of days Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen, Fourteen, etc. appear, each sequence showing Jesus looking more malnourished and slightly deranged.

-Jesus stares up toward the sky. A large blood-red SASH flies over the canyon, carried by the wind. Jesus reaches for it, but it vanishes from his view.

-He runs his hands over the canyon rock.

-He sleeps submerged in sand.

-Eventually Jesus can fully stand and he begins attempting to escape the canyon. He jumps, tries to get a hand on top of the opening but fails. He lands awkwardly on his ankle and shouts in pain.

-Jesus bangs in fists against the canyon walls in frustration.

-His eyes carry with them a sense of hopelessness.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Jesus sleeps against the canyon wall, shivering from the cold.

DREAM SEQUENCE

A nonspecific black room displays indistinguishable faces emerging from darkness.

A SKULL cloaked in white cloth is then shown. BLOOD pours over the skull, the cloth clinging to the bone.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Jesus awakes from his nightmare with a jump and a shriek.

He looks around, peering upward into the darkened sky.

JESUS CHRIST
(frightened)
Who's there? Show yourself. Is it
He who I await?

A deep, frightening voice is heard belonging to THE ANGEL OF DEATH.

ANGEL OF DEATH (O.S.)
It is I who awaits you.

Jesus is visibly afraid.

JESUS CHRIST
Who are you?

The Angel of Death approaches the ledge of the canyon and reveals himself to Jesus. He is a large, tall figure dressed in a white cloak wet with dark blood.

Jesus reacts in terror.

ANGEL OF DEATH
Do you not recognize me from the
prophecy? I am one of your angels.

Jesus pauses for a moment, his fear ceases.

JESUS CHRIST
Azrael.

The Angel of Death nods.

ANGEL OF DEATH
Why are you at the bottom of this
canyon?

JESUS CHRIST
I mistakenly fell and injured
myself.

The Angel of Death looks down at Jesus, surveying him.

ANGEL OF DEATH
It is not fatal.

The Angel of Death turns away from Jesus and exits view.

Jesus calls after him.

JESUS CHRIST
Azrael! Come back!

Suddenly Jesus is transported out of the canyon, standing above ground. He is shocked, looking around and regaining his senses.

He sees the Angel of Death standing beside a WHITE HORSE.

ANGEL OF DEATH
You are free once more. For now.

The Angel of Death yet again goes to leave.

JESUS CHRIST
Wait! Stop... Why have you appeared to me? It is not yet my time.

ANGEL OF DEATH
No, you have much left to do. But you are close. I could smell you. Your decay.

JESUS CHRIST
I have not eaten in many days.

ANGEL OF DEATH
You are the Almighty. Why do you not wish for nourishment and have nourishment appear before you?

JESUS CHRIST
I am sacrificing for my God, the Father.

ANGEL OF DEATH
To prove something you already know?

JESUS CHRIST
For them, out there.

Jesus motions into the distant landscape.

ANGEL OF DEATH
It is not one's sacrifice that inspires man.

JESUS CHRIST

What then inspires man? If I may ask.

The Angel of Death takes a thoughtful pause.

ANGEL OF DEATH

Fear.

Jesus looks discouraged.

JESUS CHRIST

I do not envy you with a thought such as that, Death.

ANGEL OF DEATH

But how I envy you.

JESUS CHRIST

Why me? I am not yet the king I am destined to be. I am merely a man.

ANGEL OF DEATH

Merely? Man is the Creator's fullest realization.

JESUS CHRIST

I do not understand. They have no idea what lies beyond this earth. Without this knowledge, they are incomplete.

ANGEL OF DEATH

For my gifts and my knowledge, I lack substance. I am an idea cloaked in cloth. You are a man, made of flesh and bone. You can feel and be felt.

JESUS CHRIST

But I am temporary, where you are eternal. Man is nothing if not the infant of existence.

ANGEL OF DEATH

Man has never known his place. You do not appreciate the life you have been given and now it will end.

JESUS CHRIST

I've seen this in visions. I know of my destiny. It is true, I will die...for a much greater cause.

ANGEL OF DEATH
If you like...

JESUS CHRIST
(getting frustrated)
No, not if I like. I'm here to save
man from the torments of Satan! I'm
here to die for their sins! I'm
their father, their friend,
their...

ANGEL OF DEATH
(cutting Jesus off)
Once you leave this earth, you will
be silent to the brotherhood of
which you were born. The creatures
who need you most, you will be
further away from than you are
sitting in this desert, alone,
without direction, without meaning.

JESUS CHRIST
I have meaning. I believe in what I
do...I must, mustn't I?

ANGEL OF DEATH
Faith requires courage I do not
possess.

JESUS CHRIST
But you accuse me of abandoning my
children!

ANGEL OF DEATH
It is not a matter of faith to know
that you will gone. I know the
darkness in death, the silence. I
exist in it without the fortune of
being dead. You will no longer be
by their side... but I will be.
Doesn't that make me a more
suitable king?

JESUS CHRIST
Why do you long to be a man so?

ANGEL OF DEATH
To watch a creature die is to know
its true nature. Most die in the
fear they've lived in, but some
cease to be with dignity and grace.
This grace was not bestowed upon
beings such as you and I.

JESUS CHRIST

But I've told you, I'm still just a man.

ANGEL OF DEATH

But you do not live as such. You know you shall die and be seated beside your father. A true man must endure doubt. For all of your silence, you've been granted assurance. For all of man's gifts, he's been granted ignorance.

Jesus listens intently.

JESUS CHRIST

If I am not a man, what am I?

ANGEL OF DEATH

I will leave you now King of Kings, but we will meet again. Soon. (to horse) Come, Despair!

The horse approaches the Angel of Death and they both vanish into the dark desert.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus lies on the ground perfectly still. He appears dead.

Suddenly he reawakens with a gasp for air.

He sits up and pauses, thinking to himself.

He then lies back on the ground and stretches himself out as if he were on the cross.

He stretches his body, putting himself in discomfort. He eventually goes limp and breathes deeply.

He places his hand over his heart, listens to it thumping.

The thumping becomes louder and louder. The sound becomes maddening. Finally Jesus removes his hand from over his heart.

He lies in the dirt, deep in thought.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus continues to walk deeper into the desert. His eyes suggest he is deep in thought. He hears his mother's voice.

MARY (V.O.)
 You are a very special boy. The
 most special...

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING SPACE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A YOUNG JESUS (8-10) lies in bed, awaiting his mother.

YOUNG JESUS
 Mother... will you be alive
 forever.?

Mary smiles as she sits down on the bed beside Jesus.

MARY
 What kind of question is that for a
 child to ask?

YOUNG JESUS
 Adin told me his mother died giving
 birth to him and that you were
 going to die someday.

MARY
 Is that so? Well, in the Kingdom of
 Heaven, yes, I will be alive
 forever. But on earth, sadly no.
 Adin was right, I will die someday.
 All of us die eventually.

YOUNG JESUS
 Will I die?

MARY
 I'm afraid so.

YOUNG JESUS
 What will happen to my body?

Mary's eyes get big.

MARY
 Something miraculous.

YOUNG JESUS
 What?

MARY
 Well, you know that you are a very
 special boy. The most special.
 (MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

God the father sent you to me so you could spread his word.

YOUNG JESUS

Can you tell me the story again?

MARY

Yes, but afterward you must go to sleep.

Young Jesus nods in agreement.

MARY (CONT'D)

One night an angel named Gabriel came to me and he said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored. The Lord is with you." At first I was frightened, but he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Young Jesus listens intently, his eyes glazed over with wonder.

MARY (CONT'D)

I said, "How will this be, as I am a virgin, never touched by man." The angel responded, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Young Jesus smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

And so you see, you are very special. And you must believe how special you are or God will know. Do you believe?

Young Jesus shakes his head "yes."

MARY (CONT'D)

Good boy.

Mary leans over and blows out the CANDLES beside Jesus' bed.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus walks and comes to a halt. He looks up into the sky.

He then grips his stomach. His hunger pains are severe. He falls to one knee, shakes off his pain and gets to his feet.

JESUS CHRIST

(under his breath)

I believe.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

As Jesus journeys forward, he comes upon a small POOL OF BLOOD that leads to a wild BEAST amid eating its prey.

Jesus freezes. The Beast looks up from its meal toward him. Its jaws are stained with the animal's blood.

INSERT:

A quick flash shows Jesus, his mouth smeared with blood like the Beast's.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The Beast continues to stare Jesus down, but then he resumes his meal and Jesus backs away slowly.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Jesus sits beside a hand-made FIRE. A GROWL sound comes from the outer darkness.

Jesus looks in the direction of the sound, frightful.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus stumbles about, clinching his stomach in pain.

He urinates a thick brown stream of urine against the side of a boulder.

Eventually, Jesus slams against the boulder and slides down into a slouched, seated position. The pain subsides and his body goes limp.

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE TEXT: DAY TWENTY

Jesus screams out.

JESUS CHRIST

(shouting to the sky)

Father! Is this what you want for me!? I've prayed to you, asked for you guidance and received no answer! Why do you not speak to me!? I was strong! Prepared to face Satan against the most desirable of claims! But now I feel, if he offered one drink of water I'd take it! Father!? Are you there?!

Playful girl's LAUGHTER is then abruptly heard.

The sound startles Jesus. He looks around frantically.

The laughter is heard again.

Jesus follows the laughter to behind the boulder. He cautiously looks around the mass of stone and finds a voluptuous nude TEMPTRESS standing beside a SNAKE.

She is giggling and taunting the snake. She then motions sensually toward Jesus, attempting to lure him closer.

Jesus jumps back in shock and horror. He shakes his head manically, trying to dispel the image.

He then very cautiously looks around the boulder again. The Temptress and snake have vanished, only SNAKE SKIN blows in the slight breeze.

The voice of Jesus' mother Mary comes from behind Jesus.

MARY (O.S.)

Don't be frightened Jesus.

Jesus spins around, sees his mother and is in disbelief.

JESUS CHRIST

(confused)

Mother? Is that you?

MARY

Yes, my son.

JESUS CHRIST
Is this a vision?

Jesus extends his hand to his mother.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)
(fighting back tears)
Can I touch you?

MARY
That woman is the one who is
manipulating your mind, Jesus. I am
in your heart. Do not be surprised
by Satan's foul tricks. He is
everywhere... And remember it is
not only I who loves you...

EXT. LIVING SPACE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Jesus enters a small domesticated living space lit only by
bee's wax CANDLES. They are positioned all around the room,
creating a soft yellow light.

A beautiful woman awaits Jesus inside the cave. This is MARY
MAGDALENE. She is nervously awaiting him and immediately
shows signs of relief when Jesus enters. She rushes to him
and embraces him.

They look into each other's eyes passionately. Mary leans in
and gives Jesus a soft KISS on the lips.

MARY MAGDALENE
I thought you weren't coming.

JESUS CHRIST
You know it is difficult to get
away.

MARY MAGDALENE
I know.

Tension-filled pause.

JESUS CHRIST
I spoke with my disciples.

MARY MAGDALENE
And?

JESUS CHRIST
They are concerned, Mary. And
rightfully so.

MARY MAGDALENE
Then you have your answer.

JESUS CHRIST
But I never asked a question.

Mary becomes frustrated. She moves away from Jesus and gets into her BED, covering herself up with blankets.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)
We've spoken about this. I must go into the desert tomorrow. I have no choice. My father wishes it of me, and so I must.

MARY MAGDALENE
Your father? Your father has never spoken two words to you. How could he? He's in Heaven and we're down here. It's your mother that's told you to do this.

JESUS CHRIST
Don't speak about her that way. I am the man I am because of her.

MARY MAGDALENE
And you're about to kill yourself.

JESUS CHRIST
I must prove to everyone who I am! My words are not enough!

MARY MAGDALENE
But you act as though you are not frightened. As though you have no qualms about leaving me here to worry about you.

Jesus softens.

JESUS CHRIST
That is where you are wrong.

Jesus sits on the end of Mary's bed.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)
I can confide in you things I can not admit to my disciples. Things I can not even acknowledge myself... I *am* frightened. Of course I am... I am uncertain. I do not know what God expects of me. I do not know what I'll find in that desert.

Jesus becomes emotional, his frustration evident in a sigh.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

I am so full of love, but I do not know how to show this love... or to whom I should give it. You? Them? (motions toward the outside world) God? ...Part of me wishes I can stay here with you and reject what's been demanded of me... but none of this changes what I must do. I have no choice.

Mary looks affectionately toward Jesus, the love she feels for him evident in her glassy-eyed gaze. She uncovers herself from the bed blanket, presenting her clothed, but available body.

Jesus looks down at her, a sense of longing in his eyes.

He then picks up the blanket and covers Mary once more.

MARY MAGDALENE

I just fear too much has been asked of you. How can it be? How can any of this be? ...How will you ever be able to return home?

JESUS CHRIST

We share this fear. But something *inside* is telling me that what I'm about to do is important... that I am important, that what begins tomorrow will be remembered for all time...

MARY MAGDALENE

Then you will be at the mercy of time and how do you know that it will be kind to you?

Jesus huffs in acknowledgement of Mary's valid observation.

JESUS CHRIST

That is in fact what I fear most. For those whose duty it is to tell my story... how they can never know the truth of it?... That whatever record will exist... shall be wrong.

Mary removes a piece of FABRIC from her person and hands it to Jesus.

MARY MAGDALENE

I want you to take this with you into the desert. It means I will be with you and that you'll never be alone.

Jesus accepts the piece of fabric, folds it up and conceals it within his clothing.

He looks into Mary's eyes, a deep sadness present.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus holds Mary Magdalene's fabric in his hand while squatting on the ledge of a canyon. He rubs it with his fingers. He then lets it go and the fabric drifts into the canyon.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus walks through the desert. He nearly steps on a SNAKE, the same snake first introduced with the Temptress. Jesus only becomes aware of his dangerous misstep when the snake hisses from beneath him, causing Jesus to jump back.

The snake looks at Jesus.

JESUS CHRIST

(to snake)

Where is your woman, serpent?

The snake continues to stare toward Jesus.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

(to snake, falsely peaceful)

Not much to say? No food to tempt me with? Well then, I'll tell you this: you're wasting your time tormenting me. You will find neither fear nor hatred here.

The snake remains perfectly still, staring a hole into Jesus. Their eyes lock. Tension builds.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

(animated, frustrated)

Did you hear me?!

The snake begins to slither away. Jesus watches him go.

Slowly, from the camera's perspective, an invisible "force" moves toward Jesus, approaching him from behind.

The "force" comes right up on Jesus' shoulder before Jesus becomes aware of its presence. He quickly turns around, confronting the force.

Briefly breaking the "fourth wall," Jesus lunges toward the force, swiping at it with an open hand.

We then reveal from a distance that Jesus is confronting nothing but air. He stops flailing, troubled by the fact that his mind is playing tricks on him.

DREAM SEQUENCE

Jesus again finds himself in a nondescript black room. The Temptress runs her hands over his body.

He resists her sexual advances, gritting his teeth and tightly closing his eyes.

The Temptress is then seen running her hands along her own body seductively, moaning loudly as Jesus lies before her mortified, but unable to look away.

EXT. DESERT - DUSK

Jesus awakens violently and finds his hand in the remains of a dwindling campfire. He pulls it out and rubs his tender flesh as he notices the sunset in the distance.

He reaches over and handles a few small pieces of WOOD, but then tosses them aside, suggesting that they are not enough to start a proper fire.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Jesus lies shivering on the ground, clutching himself and attempting to sleep.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE TEXT: DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

Jesus wanders through the desert, sluggishly, incoherently.

He then notices a PIECE OF WOOD sticking up from the sand. His eyes widen and he pounces, falling to the ground and animalistically crawling toward it. He digs it up out of the sand and rejoices as though he has just found gold.

JESUS CHRIST

(to God)

Oh, thank you, Father! I knew you would not abandon me! With this shard and others like it, I can keep myself warm! I knew you would answer my prayers.

Suddenly a voice startles Jesus.

BLIND MAN

Who are you speaking to?

Jesus spins around and faces the voice, which belongs to a BLIND MAN. He is weatherbeaten, sunburned and crusty from exposure.

JESUS CHRIST

(suspiciously)

Where did you come from?

BLIND MAN

I'm afraid I wouldn't know, traveler. I am blind and therefore little help in determining where I've been and where I will be.

JESUS CHRIST

Are you here alone?

BLIND MAN

Not anymore.

JESUS CHRIST

How did you come to be here, a blind man by his lonesome?

BLIND MAN

I'm uncertain you would believe me if I explained myself.

JESUS CHRIST

I'm willing to listen if you're willing to speak.

BLIND MAN

(hesitantly)

God spoke to me...

Jesus is surprised to hear this.

JESUS CHRIST

And he told you to wander out into this desert?

BLIND MAN

No, but when I told my children that I had experienced the presence of the Almighty, they thought me mad... "What would God want with a weak, blind fool?" they said. And so I was given a ration of food and water, brought to the edge of this desert and told to walk. My children did not want me to besmirch their name, the very name I built for them...

Jesus is silent.

BLIND MAN (CONT'D)

I knew you would not believe me.

JESUS CHRIST

In fact I do. I know you speak the truth.

BLIND MAN

How?

JESUS CHRIST

Because I am the son of the Creator.

The Blind Man immediately becomes emotional and gasps in astonishment and humility, falling to his knees before Jesus.

BLIND MAN

Jesus?

JESUS CHRIST

Yes, my son.

BLIND MAN

(elated)

This is why the Almighty spoke to me, why my own children doomed me to this sandy grave.

JESUS CHRIST

How do you mean?

BLIND MAN

So I could find you. I've heard the stories that you've cured the blind, made it so they can see...

Jesus is made uncomfortable by this, uneasy.

JESUS CHRIST

I've spoken what is true knowledge to those in ignorance, I've shown the way to those who before could not see the path...

BLIND MAN

(animated, emotional)

Oh, heal me, Father! Please! Cure me of this darkness and allow me to return to my children a full man! Let me show them the power of your glory!

JESUS CHRIST

(hesitantly)

I am uncertain--

BLIND MAN

(cutting Jesus off, suddenly harsh)

You are the son of the Almighty, are you not?

JESUS CHRIST

Yes, but--

BLIND MAN

You've come to help us...

JESUS CHRIST

Yes.

BLIND MAN

Then help me! Prove to me you are who you say you are!

JESUS CHRIST

(strongly)

I am.

BLIND MAN

And you'll let me die?

Jesus hesitates again, looking down at the piece of wood in his hand. He then approaches the Blind Man and slowly places his free hand over the Blind Man's eyes.

JESUS CHRIST

(to God)

Father, restore this man's sight.
Allow him to see so that he may
follow you into the Kingdom of
Heaven.

Jesus presses his hand over the Blind Man's face with force.

Tension builds.

Jesus then quickly removes his hand. The Blind Man's face is revealed to be at peace, his eyes closed.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

(to the Blind Man)

Open your eyes.

The Blind Man does, dramatically revealing he is still blind and his eyes are rolling in the back of his head, only the bloodshot whites visible.

Jesus groans loudly and backs away from the Blind Man in shock as the Blind Man laments loudly.

BLIND MAN

I am still in darkness!

Jesus raises his hands before him and stares down at them, his face pained with anger and sadness.

JESUS CHRIST

Forgive me! I can not help you!

The Blind Man begins to sob.

BLIND MAN

(lamenting)

If God can not help me, who can?

JESUS CHRIST

(in a whisper, repeatedly)

I'm sorry...I'm sorry...I'm sorry.

Jesus falls to his knees.

The Blind Man crawls to Jesus.

BLIND MAN

Hold still, Father. Forgive my
impertinence. There must be a
reason you could not heal me.
Perhaps I do not deserve to see.

This pains Jesus.

BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
I want to look at the face of my
Lord.

The Blind Man raises his hands and places them on Jesus' face. He begins to feel his features.

BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
I can see that you're lost.

Tears fill Jesus' eyes. The Blind Man lowers his hands.

JESUS CHRIST
I cannot help you. We're just two
men stuck in these dunes.

BLIND MAN
I have not lost faith. Some were
meant to follow without seeing.

The Blind Man then takes Jesus' hands in his own, feeling the piece of wood.

The Blind Man's face suddenly becomes one of extreme anger.

BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
So that's why you're here!

Jesus is confused.

BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
To steal my wood! It took me six
days to find this single piece!

JESUS CHRIST
(defending himself)
No! No! I--

BLIND MAN
You're no Messiah! You're an
imposter! A thief!

Suddenly the Blind Man wallops Jesus with a closed fist, knocking Jesus to the desert floor.

Jesus looks up at the Blind Man in disbelief. The Blind Man proceeds to pounce on him, continuing an assault of blows.

The two begin to roll and fight, Jesus trying to protect himself.

Finally, Jesus gets the advantage and rolls the Blind Man onto his back, Jesus atop him.

Jesus raises his fist in anger, about to strike a powerful blow when it's revealed that the Blind Man has vanished, only his empty clothes remaining.

Jesus begins to feverishly dig in the sand. He finds a SKELETON beneath the surface.

Jesus gets to his feet and stumbles backward. He screams in frustration and throws the piece of wood.

Realizing a moment later what he's done, he immediately runs after the wood, searches for it frantically, locates it and holds it close to him.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus lies on his back in the sand, half conscious, clutching the piece of wood. His lips are cracked from dryness and bleeding.

JESUS CHRIST
(in strained whisper)
Water...water...water...

A thunderous voice belonging to the EARTH itself is heard.

EARTH (V.O.)
There is no water here and that
piece of wood you hold will not be
enough to begin a fire.

Jesus lifts his head and searches for the source of the voice.

EARTH (V.O.)
I apologize, this is one of my more
barren faces.

JESUS CHRIST
Who are you?

Jesus sees no one and puts his head back on the ground.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)
When will these games be over?

EARTH
This is no game, Jesus. I am the
Earth beneath you.
(MORE)

EARTH (CONT'D)

The very ground you walk on and it would appear I am your only friend out here.

Jesus sits up slowly and looks toward the ground.

JESUS CHRIST

But the Earth does not have a voice.

EARTH

Only to those who can not hear it. My trees sing. My waves roar. Listen.

INSERT:

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Jesus is in the middle of the ocean. Waves crash around him.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus finds himself back on the desert floor, but he is soaking wet.

JESUS CHRIST

How are you doing this? This cannot be.

EARTH

You are not the man to question reality. In a world were a virgin can bear a child, why can't that world have a voice?

Jesus is troubled by this statement.

JESUS CHRIST

(as though trying to convince himself)

It was my father who created you on the first day. With him anything is possible.

EARTH

I do not know who created me. That uncertainty we share. Millions of years have provided no answers.

JESUS CHRIST

Why have you chosen to speak to me?
What is it you want?

EARTH

Because you are in pain and yet you are so temporary. Even I am not eternal, though I have been here long before you were born and I will be here long after you are dead. On a scale such as mine your trials are infinitesimal. Humans feel as though they are crucial. They are not. I have seen creatures evolve and I have seen them expire. This is also your fate. Know that and find peace.

JESUS CHRIST

I can not agree with you, Earth. Human beings are the only creatures that can think, understand and reason. We are in control of our emotions. Is that not crucial? Is that not proof of purpose?

EARTH

Purpose? I am suspended in the infinite darkness of space... surrounded by unending nothingness, the size of one grain of sand in comparison to the universe. What does that make you? Despite your ability to *understand*, you do not understand this.

Jesus is greatly disturbed. He gets to his feet and stands solemnly.

JESUS CHRIST

What do you want me to say? That my life is meaningless? Well, I won't. I don't believe that.

EARTH

Not meaningless. Just not crucial. Humility would go a long way in bringing about a happiness to your species. I speak to you now in the hope that you can help your kind find it, that happiness... before time makes it seem as though you were never here at all...

INTERLUDE/MONTAGE -

As Jesus stumbles disoriented, completely disassociated with reality, modern images in vignette form of a variety of people misusing the words of Christ are shown set to the music Arvo Pärt's "My Heart's in the Highlands," as performed by Else Torp and Christopher Bowers.

The Interlude/Montage ends at dawn with Jesus reaching the top of a sand dune. In the distance is a wooden CROSS sticking out of the ground. Behind it, several hundred feet away in the distance and atop another dune sits a second CROSS. Jesus looks out at them, madness about his face.

A black TAIL is shown coiled around the base of one of the crosses. It slowly unravels, slithering on the sand, and disappearing behind the cross.

Jesus is then shown on the cross once again, still upside down, but the image begins to rotate 90 degrees.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE TEXT: DAY THIRTY

Jesus looks up toward the sky.

JESUS CHRIST

Father... I know you can hear me. I've been told I should not question you and I have willingly suppressed the doubts I have in myself. I am willing to go blindly to my death for you, but please tell me... Why? Why is humanity so vile that you must sacrifice me to pay their debt? What have they done that can not be forgiven through your infinite love?

Jesus takes a long pause.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

Why me and why Mother? She was but a girl when you chose her. And I was already a growing child when I learned of you and my greater purpose. Do you fault me for my uncertainty? Am I not the son you envisioned? Am I worthy? ...Am I too like those who have betrayed you?

Jesus pauses for a moment, hoping for a response from his father, but there is only silence.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus rests in a shady spot. He has trouble breathing and coughs.

Suddenly and miraculously, a 1930s-era MOVIE CAMERA falls out of the sky smashing into many pieces upon impact with the ground.

The loud, abrupt noise startles Jesus and he rushes over to the smashed camera. He looks toward the sky totally confounded.

Only empty sky is visible.

Jesus then examines the fragments of the camera more closely, getting to his knees and taking them in his hands.

Jesus is even more confounded.

The noise of *something* sneaking behind Jesus is then heard. Jesus quickly spins around in an attempt to identify the noise. Nothing is there.

The noise is heard a second time coming from behind Jesus. He spins around again, and still, nothing is there.

Jesus then sees what appears to be the taunting snake from before. Now thoroughly at wit's end with the animal, he trudges toward the snake with determination.

He reaches down to grab the snake and instead finds a black tail coming from a hole in the sand. He is surprised. He then tugs on the tail and upon realizing something is attached to it beneath the ground, begins to pull with all his might.

A cloud of dust is kicked up as Jesus unearths the tail and its owner, a black-skinned DEMON with red eyes.

Once the dust settles, it is revealed that both Jesus and the Demon have been knocked to the desert floor. They sit disoriented from the tussle.

The Demon shakes the sand off himself, comically wagging like a dog.

DEMON
(angry, annoyed)
What the hell did you do that for?

Jesus lets out a frightened shriek once he clears his eyes of sand. He scrambles to his feet, cowering away, but then gaining his composure attempts to display dominance over the Demon by standing firm.

JESUS CHRIST
(powerfully)
The beast finally shows himself.

DEMON
(comically offended)
Hey, you don't look so great yourself, pal. You seem about a quart low.

The Demon gets to his feet and continues to brush himself off.

JESUS CHRIST
(powerfully)
I have allowed myself to waste away! I've waited and I've waited for you to come!

Jesus motions toward the Demon fiercely physical, as though he is about to attack him, kicking up more dust.

DEMON
(coughing from the dust)
Hey, hey! I don't know what you're talking about!

JESUS CHRIST
Will you stoop so low as to claim ignorance? You are the Evil One.
(then in a whisper) *Satan*.

The Demon hesitates for a moment and then begins to laugh a wildly giggly, childish laugh.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)
Why are you laughing?

DEMON
I'm not...(mimicking and mocking)
Satan.

JESUS CHRIST
You're not?

DEMON
Nope! (continues to laugh)

JESUS CHRIST

But your flesh, your eyes... You are as I imagined the Evil One.

DEMON

I wish I could tell you that you were right. But I'm just one of your run-of-the-mill demons.

JESUS CHRIST

Demons?

DEMON

One of the shunned, the despised, the forsaken.

The Demon does a modest bow.

JESUS CHRIST

Then you've come on *His* behalf! This is part of the Evil One's test.

DEMON

Look, you were the one who pulled me out of the ground. I was just on my way home.

Jesus is puzzled.

JESUS CHRIST

To Hell?

DEMON

Bingo! (laughs)

JESUS CHRIST

By burrowing into the desert?

DEMON

Do you know a better way? There's no lift where you can just push a button. "*Going down!*" Believe me, I wish there was. This caliche is hell on the claws.

Jesus is thoroughly confused. He listens in a daze.

JESUS CHRIST

(fumbling the words)

If this isn't a test...why are you here?

DEMON

Whoa, whoa. What's with all the questions? I'm just a lowly demon. Bottom of the food chain. It's like asking an angel to describe the face of God... An impossibility. I regret that I have no answers for you, but I do not.

JESUS CHRIST

(forceful)

You will answer me. I know you're here for a reason! He's tried to trick me before! And I will not be fooled again!

The Demon pauses and looks at Jesus knowingly.

DEMON

Have you ever heard of The Absurd?

Jesus doesn't respond.

DEMON (CONT'D)

The theory that says even *searching* for meaning in something... anything... everything ...is absurdity... Some questions don't have answers. There are things in this life without meaning, things that can never make sense. I'm the perfect example! (giggles) Look how ridiculous I am! (laughs)

JESUS CHRIST

But you're defined. You have context. Therefore, you have origin.

DEMON

No one can remember their previous forms - what we were before what we are now and on and on. But I have a hunch about what put me here... I'm what you call a dyslexic agnostic insomniac. I lie awake at night and wonder if there really *is* a *dog*.

The Demon lets out an uproarious and infectious laugh.

Jesus smirks, catches himself, and resumes a serious face.

DEMON (CONT'D)
 (trailing off his laugh)
 God, I kill myself! - Now think
 what a existisitential can-of-worms
 THAT phrase is! (laughs)

JESUS CHRIST
 (softer tone)
 I do not fear you Demon as I once
 did. I do not sense you are here to
 harm me, but I do not believe our
 encounter is random.

DEMON
 Listen, I'll make you a deal. We'll
 play a game. If you win, I'll tell
 you everything you want to know.
 Okay?

JESUS CHRIST
 So... you do know why you're here?

DEMON
 (mocking)
 Oh, you're good. I'm not sure I
 want to play this game anymore.

JESUS CHRIST
 What game?

DEMON
 Have you ever heard of 'chess?'

Jesus opens his mouth to respond but is cut off.

DEMON (CONT'D)
 Of course you haven't! It's a
 classic. And luckily, I always
 bring a set, a table and two chairs
 with me wherever I go (giggles).

The Demon magically reveals a chess set up. He then waves
 Jesus over to the table.

They walk over together and sit down across from one another.

Jesus examines the board, picking up one of the pieces in his
 hand and studying it.

DEMON (CONT'D)
 I feel like I've seen this in a
 movie before (giggles).

Jesus looks up at him, a confused look on his face.

DEMON (CONT'D)

So! First thing's first. Pawns.
They only move forward, not back.
They can only take diagonally. Got
that?

JESUS CHRIST

Um...not-

The Demon proceeds to rush through the explanation.

DEMON

Now these go this way, these go
this way, these go up and down and
side to side and she can go
anywhere she wants. Just like a
woman (chuckles). Ready?

JESUS CHRIST

I don't-

DEMON

Good! Your move.

Jesus hesitates.

DEMON (CONT'D)

(impatiently)
Come on, come on.

JESUS CHRIST

And if I beat you, you'll tell me
anything I want to know?

DEMON

Well, not *anything*. I only know
what someone with three-quarters of
a brain could know.

JESUS CHRIST

You know what I meant.

DEMON

(smirking)
I'll do you one better. For every
piece of mine you remove from the
board, I will answer a question.
But that's the last thing I'm gonna
give ya. I already let you be
white. Just seemed appropriate.

Jesus thinks to himself, his eyes remaining on the Demon.

JESUS CHRIST

Fine.

Jesus slowly moves a pawn on the far left side of the board one space forward.

The Demon stares down blankly toward Jesus' move.

DEMON

It is obvious that I am a much better chess player than you.

JESUS CHRIST

Just go.

The Demon immediately makes a move.

Jesus thinks for a moment and then moves another pawn.

DEMON

(sarcastically)

That's definitely a move you could make, sure.

Jesus rolls his eyes.

The Demon makes another move, bringing out his Bishop.

DEMON (CONT'D)

I've got another one for you. A Buddhist walks up to a hotdog vendor and says, "Make me one with everything."

The Demon bursts into a fit of laughter again. Jesus pretends to understand and forces a small chuckle.

Jesus then stares intently at the board. He puts his hand over a pawn, letting it hover as he thinks.

Impossibly, the Demon appears over Jesus' shoulder

DEMON (CONT'D)

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

Jesus is startled by the Demon's sudden appearance.

He jumps up, gets frustrated with the game and knocks over the board, sending pieces into the sand.

JESUS CHRIST

All right! You have had your fun! I have not understood a single thing you've said to me and now I've had enough! Tell me what is going on!

DEMON

So we'll call it a draw?

JESUS CHRIST

(end of his rope)

ANSWER ME!

The Demon becomes serious. He looks at Jesus silently for a moment.

DEMON

Tell me, what do you think is going on?

JESUS CHRIST

No, no. Not this game.

DEMON

I'm trying to answer you. What do you think is going on?

JESUS CHRIST

(first directed toward
Demon, then to himself)

I am stranded in this forsaken place! I'm alone. I was asked a great task... but I'm not sure I want to complete it anymore. And now you've come and I'm so confused. What could you possibly mean?

DEMON

Not to mention, I may not even be here.

This catches Jesus off guard, but the Demon's words strike a nerve in Jesus. Jesus looks at him intently, waiting for his next words.

JESUS CHRIST

(voice faintly quivering)

What makes you say that Demon?

DEMON

You ask for the meaning of my appearance, but how can you be sure that you're talking to me? That I'm even here?

JESUS CHRIST

Explain... please!

DEMON

How do you know you're even here, that any of this is happening at all?

JESUS CHRIST

Stop it! Enough with these infernal questions! I do not know!

DEMON

You've given so much with your heart... but perhaps your mind has failed you.

JESUS CHRIST

I know what is before me, what is real and what is dream.

DEMON

Do you really believe that?

JESUS CHRIST

(distraught)

But I can see! I can smell! I can touch!

Jesus bends down and takes a fistful of sand in his grasp, showing it to the Demon and letting it fall through his fingers.

DEMON

(softly giggling)

If only seeing, smelling and touching were enough to make things real...

Jesus looks deeply toward the Demon.

The Demon stares back at him unflinchingly, his eyes wide, red and piercing.

EXT. DESERT - EVENING

Jesus crouches over a small collection of wood. He feverishly attempts to start a fire by rubbing the scraps of wood together.

JESUS CHRIST

(to himself)

Of course it's real! Of course I'm here! I'm here! Look at me!

He begins to lose his composure and haphazardly drives one of the pieces of wood into the flesh of his hand.

He reacts in pain, grunting with anger.

Calming down, Jesus examines his hand. Blood drips from a wound in his palm.

He dabs a small amount of blood onto the finger of the opposite hand and begins running the finger over his dry lips.

His face reads blissful relief for a moment and then insufferable pain.

Wrapping his arms around his waist, Jesus falls to his knees and begins heaving.

Suddenly, "satanic" whispers are heard rushing past Jesus' ear.

He freezes. Again, the whisper is heard.

Jesus rises to his feet. The sound seems to be in front of him now. He begins to chase after it.

He follows the sound behind a mound of sand and discovers a small pool of WATER.

Jesus panics, stopping his movement in a stunned halt.

The whisper sound returns and the word "drink" is barely audible.

Jesus trudges forward, falling before the water, his face directly above it.

He lowers his face, but just as he's about to bring his lips to the surface of the water, he stops, looking deeply into his own reflection.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

No...I mustn't.

He stares at himself a moment in silence.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

This is not the face of a king.
 There's no more God here than in
 Hades...(abruptly shouting) FATHER!
 SHOW YOURSELF NOW OR LOSE A SON!
 You make me a man and then ask of
 me divinity! There is no Satan
 here! Only I! Where is this BEAST
 you speak of! I DO NOT SEE HIM! I
 only see the depths of which I am
 capable. Is that not villainy? Am I
 too not a whore of Babylon!? For I
 would sell all I have for a drink
 of cool refreshment! ...I will open
 my mouth and drink from this water
 and replenish my body and mind!
 Because YOU do not provide! Do you
 hear me, Father?

Jesus lowers his face to the water again, but stops himself, his head shivering in restraint. He shouts a fiery, soul-rattling scream before finally dunking his face into the water.

As soon as his face meets with the liquid, the water vanishes and his mouth is filled with sand.

A faint maniacal LAUGH is heard.

He violently coughs up the sand from his mouth.

Jesus then has a physical, mental and emotional breakdown. He begins screaming at Satan.

His body contorts, he claws at his eyes, he smears the blood from his hand wound over his face and body. He is broken utterly.

He sees the drop-off of a cliff nearby and drags himself toward it.

He stands on the edge and looks down at the steep drop beneath him.

It is insinuated that he's contemplating suicide.

An authoritative voice intervenes. This is the voice of the Egyptian God HORUS.

HORUS (O.S.)

Do it if you desire the simple way.

Jesus is not startled or even phased by Horus' presence.

JESUS CHRIST

Whoever you are, leave me alone. I can not abide one more visitor from this world, the next or my own mind. I've hardly known isolation in this desolate place.

HORUS

Must it only be from one?

Jesus continues to stare toward the drop in front of him.

HORUS (CONT'D)

I am Horus and I come from Egypt.

JESUS CHRIST

You've come a long way. Are you another ghost? Another puff of smoke? I suppose you're here to tell me not to do this, that the world needs me.

HORUS

Whether you live or die is immaterial to me.

Jesus looks toward Horus for the first time. He sees the God, a tall, muscular man wearing a HEADPIECE made from the head of an eagle.

JESUS CHRIST

Then you've come to warn me. To trick me? Perhaps to kill me?

HORUS

I'm here to help you.

JESUS CHRIST

What makes you believe you can help me?

HORUS

Because I am you. Or at the very least I understand what you are feeling at this very moment.

Jesus peeks over the edge of the canyon, seeing the drop beneath him.

JESUS CHRIST

How could you possibly understand?

HORUS

We are more similar than you know,
Jesus.

JESUS CHRIST

Haven't you heard? I'm the only one
of my kind. A God stuck in a man's
body. All the frailty of being
human with none of the ignorance,
none of the peace.

HORUS

Humans are rarely at peace. That's
why they need you. Without you they
can not comprehend their existence.

JESUS CHRIST

Then I feel sorry for them. The
answers are out there.

HORUS

Peace is not about answers. It's
about embracing the mystery.

Jesus studies Horus for a moment, paying attention to his
headpiece.

JESUS CHRIST

I've tired of hearing myself ask
this, but what is it you want of
me?

HORUS

Jesus, there are things that must
be brought to your attention, but
first let me ask you a question.

Jesus awaits the question.

HORUS (CONT'D)

What is your fondest memory?

Jesus is surprised to hear this question.

JESUS CHRIST

What could that possibly matter?

HORUS

Answer.

Jesus thinks.

JESUS CHRIST

When I was a boy... I discovered that I liked to build things. I had a natural talent for it. I loved to wander into a wooded area, surrounded by trees. The solitude was pleasant. That's where I would find the wood to build my creations; little things. And I built a box for my mother to keep belongings in. Maybe something precious to her, to keep it safe. I remember handing it to her and the look she had on her face. It filled me with such happiness, that I had created something. It wasn't perfect. The lid didn't close quite right and it squeaked, but she loved it (Jesus pauses, basking in the memory). Anyway, it was before I was told about my true calling. Perhaps I think of it as the last time I didn't have to be anyone other than myself, doing something I enjoyed for someone I love.

HORUS

Do you feel better?

JESUS CHRIST

(more at peace)

I do.

HORUS

Are you thinking clearly?

JESUS CHRIST

For the first time that I've come here.

Jesus steps away from the canyon edge.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

Thank you.

HORUS

Do not thank me. I needed to be sure you were prepared to hear what I have to tell you.

JESUS CHRIST

Tell me what you must.

HORUS

Jesus... you are not the only one of your kind. In fact you are part of legions of fantastic beings that have all attempted to serve mankind.

Jesus is intrigued.

HORUS (CONT'D)

You see, I too was also born of a virgin. My arrival on earth was announced by a star. In my lifetime I was followed by twelve disciples and I was even crucified, buried and resurrected as the prophecies foretell you shall be...

Jesus is profoundly confused.

HORUS (CONT'D)

I lived more than three thousand years ago, but was tempted in a desert not unlike this one.

JESUS CHRIST

I don't understand... What is it you're telling me?

HORUS

That this immense responsibility, the one weighing on your shoulders, the one that was pushing you toward this ledge, is a figment of your imagination. A necessary device to establish to the people of this time that you are indeed their savior, the man who's not only come to redeem them, but who's come to explain them. Just as I was for my people. And now I am studied as a fiction... as you will be.

Jesus becomes defensive.

JESUS CHRIST

Don't say another word! You slippery phantom. Your tactics serve you well! I almost trusted you.

HORUS

Jesus, listen to yourself. What has your faith turned you into?

JESUS CHRIST

A man who sees when someone is trying to corrupt him! People are dying every day! They are being tortured and pillaged every day! Are you telling me that is in my imagination?!

HORUS

We are characters in a story to them. What is true and what is false is less important than what is comfortable.

JESUS CHRIST

No! You may be some ancient discarded deity, but I am here with them in this world! I am a protector of the meek. I spend time with the dejected and downtrodden, the prostitutes and the beggars. They are the ones who need me the most and I am there for them.

HORUS

They will forget you as they have forgotten me.

JESUS CHRIST

You are wrong!

Horus pauses for a moment.

HORUS

I am not the only one...

Many other gods begin to emerge from the darkness: OSIRIS, KRISHNA, MITHRA and BUDDHA.

OSIRIS

It's true, Jesus. I taught my people how to be baptized in holy water.

KRISHNA

And I will one day return to earth in the flesh to battle the Prince of Evil.

MITHRA

I was of virgin birth and placed in a manger. I performed miracles to prove my power to my followers.

BUDDHA

And I, like you, Jesus, taught
chastity, temperance, tolerance,
compassion, love, and the equality
of all.

HORUS

All of us, even if remembered in
name, are all but ignored by those
who claim to follow us. Your
sacrifice has brought you here to
this ledge, a way out if you
choose. See it as the second chance
it is. All your choices have been
made for you, Jesus. You finally
can make one of your own.

JESUS CHRIST

Is it pain all of you want to cause
me? Is it torment? You'd like to
see me jump!

BUDDHA

No, Jesus. We want you to cherish
the choice we never had, the choice
your father gave to the people that
will inevitably forsake you.

JESUS CHRIST

I don't know what to do. I am being
pulled in so many directions and
yet I can not distinguish one from
the other. When I entered this
desert I thought I knew so clearly
my mission.

KRISHNA

There is a truth inside of you that
you won't let yourself see.

JESUS CHRIST

Lies! My eyes are open!

KRISHNA

It is not enough to follow. You
must find the path on your own.
Look inside of yourself, Jesus.
Tell us what you see...

All the Gods close in around Jesus.

INT. NONDESCRIPT ROOM - FANTASY

Jesus finds himself in a large, empty room. He walks toward a BLACK CURTAIN.

He parts the curtain and finds a LITTLE PERSON behind it.

Taken aback Jesus pauses for a moment.

JESUS CHRIST
Greetings.

LITTLE PERSON
(mimicking)
Greetings.

JESUS CHRIST
Where am I?

LITTLE PERSON
(mimicking)
Where am I?

JESUS CHRIST
I'm searching for something. Do you
know where I can find it?

LITTLE PERSON
(mimicking)
--Where I can find it?

JESUS CHRIST
You're the voice inside myself.

The Little Person takes on a strange, sympathetic tone.

LITTLE PERSON
I'm the voice inside myself.

JESUS CHRIST
You see all that I cannot.

LITTLE PERSON
I see all that you cannot.

Jesus looks to his right and finds a modern DOOR.

JESUS CHRIST
Is what I'm looking for behind this
door?

LITTLE PERSON
Behind this door.

Jesus moves toward the door, hesitantly reaching toward the knob.

JESUS CHRIST
I'm afraid.

LITTLE PERSON
(mimicking)
I'm afraid.

JESUS CHRIST
I know there's things here I don't want to see.

LITTLE PERSON
Things you know, but choose not to see.

Jesus twists the handle and opens the door.

Blinding sunlight pours in through the doorway revealing the vast desert.

Jesus walks through the door and finds himself surrounded by sand dunes, the door disappearing behind him.

His mother Mary appears to him.

Jesus runs to his mother, falls to her feet and embraces her legs.

JESUS CHRIST
Oh! Mother! Help me!

MARY
I can not help you. I told you not to let your doubts get the best of you and you have failed me.

JESUS CHRIST
No! Mother I have not! I've done what you've told me.

MARY
You are weak.

Jesus begins to sob into his Mother's cloak.

JESUS CHRIST
I don't want to die! Is that weakness?!

MARY

You were born to die. That sacrifice is what will give your existence meaning.

JESUS CHRIST

Don't I have the right to find my own meaning?

MARY

There is no 'right,' nothing is yours to decide. There is only obedience. You must be crucified or... nothing I've done...

Mary pauses and becomes emotional.

Jesus stands and wipes the tears away from his eyes.

JESUS CHRIST

Mother... who am I?

Mary is shocked and angered by this.

MARY

(defensively)

Exactly who I've said you are!

JESUS CHRIST

Mother... It was not as you say... What happened to you?

Suddenly a YOUNG BOY runs into Jesus and embraces him. Jesus is surprised.

Jesus bends on one knee and faces the Boy.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

(to Boy)

Where did you come from?

Mary Magdalene appears.

MARY MAGDALENE

He is our future son.

Jesus turns toward Mary Magdalene.

MARY MAGDALENE (CONT'D)

...If you decide you want to live. He is the future you could choose for yourself.

Jesus directs his attention back at the Boy. He pauses a moment, but then tightly embraces him.

MARY MAGDALENE (CONT'D)

Be there for him as your father
never was for you.

As Jesus squeezes the Boy tightly. His eyes closed, the blood-red fabric is placed over his eyes from behind.

The Temptress stands behind him, nude and seductive.

TEMPTRESS

No Jesus...come with me. It's what
you really want. No death, no pain,
no sadness, no sacrifice. It will
be just the two of us.

JESUS CHRIST

What about the people who need me?

TEMPTRESS

Forget them, Jesus. God has given
them their chance. Why should you
die for their misdeeds? They'll be
happier in Hell.

Jesus covers his eyes with his hands.

JESUS CHRIST

No! I can not abandon them.

MARY

Trust in God! Die for the world's
sins.

MARY MAGDALENE

Come with me! Start your family.
Put good into this world by taking
part in it.

TEMPTRESS

Give up everything! Give in to
pleasure!

Jesus hesitates, not knowing whom to run to.

All three women pull him separate directions. They run their hands over him.

Jesus tries to break free and cling to his mother but the other two women block him from doing so.

This goes on until Jesus forcefully pushes Mary Magdalene and the Temptress off of him, causing them to vanish.

Mary now stands alone in the desert.

Jesus approaches and embraces her, beginning to weep again.

Eventually his face of sadness turns to one of anger and he roughly pushes her backwards.

She vanishes, turning into a wisp of sand blown away by the breeze.

Jesus falls to his backside, distraught, crying while grabbing handfuls of sand in his fists.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE TEXT: DAY THIRTY-NINE.

Jesus sits in a shady spot, rambling incoherently, completely broken from reality. His body is contorted and stiff, his mouth is agape and bone dry, his eyes are rolled into the back of his head and his lids are nearly shut.

In the distance a woman is praying on her knees, her back to Jesus.

The sight of her rouses Jesus awake. He rubs his eyes, struggling to focus, moving slowly.

JESUS CHRIST
 (to himself, voice weak)
 Mother? (then louder, calling out
 her) Mother!

Jesus begins to move toward her, stumbling, falling.

He approaches her. Her back still turned to him. He puts his hand on her shoulder.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)
 (in a tender, relieved
 voice)
 Mother...

Tears fill Jesus' eyes.

Jesus tries to turn her gently with his hand, but she quickly twists around, revealing the Temptress from before who taunted Jesus with the snake.

Jesus backs away in horror.

The Temptress gets to her feet, moving toward Jesus in a seductive way, the personification of human sexual desire.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)
Get away from me! Stay away!

TEMPTRESS
Come, come, Jesus. I know you've been dreaming about me.

JESUS CHRIST
No! I've done no such thing.

TEMPTRESS
What's the matter, baby? Do you want your mother? I can be your mother.

The Temptress' clothing magically turns into something reminiscent of what the Virgin Mary would wear.

TEMPTRESS (CONT'D)
Come to me, my son...

JESUS CHRIST
(through gritted teeth)
Stop this!

TEMPTRESS
(sincerely)
It's all right. You don't have to be afraid of what you desire. It's in your nature. Take my hand. I only wish to give you what you want...

The Temptress innocently reaches out her hand.

Jesus pauses for a moment and then reaches out, accepting the Temptress' hand.

TEMPTRESS (CONT'D)
Come, let me hold you the way a mother would.

The Temptress kneels and Jesus lies in her lap. They resemble Michelangelo's sculpture "Pieta."

TEMPTRESS (CONT'D)
(whispering sweetly to Jesus, motherly)
You can not deny nature, Jesus. It will always best in you in the end...

(MORE)

TEMPTRESS (CONT'D)
 There is nothing shameful in
 understanding your body. Pleasing
 it.

JESUS CHRIST
 (distraught)
 I don't know what is right anymore.

TEMPTRESS
 Right? Wrong? They're illusions,
 Jesus, designed to imprison you
 inside your own flesh. The same
 flesh that will one day be feasted
 upon by your followers -- Corrupt
 men who would sooner kill than
 resist indulging in me. There is no
 right, Jesus, just what you feel.

The Temptress takes Jesus' hand and gently places it over her
 breast.

TEMPTRESS (CONT'D)
 Do you feel me?

Jesus nods.

The Temptress makes a face of extreme satisfaction.

TEMPTRESS (CONT'D)
 Now feel where all men come from
 and long to return...

The Temptress begins moving Jesus' hand toward her lower
 half.

Jesus quickly pulls his hand away, the comforting moment
 fractured as he scrambles away from her and gets to his feet.

The Temptress becomes sinister again, devilish. She leaps to
 her feet, removes her garment and reveals her bust.

TEMPTRESS (CONT'D)
 Do you want me to dance for you?

She begins to seductively dance as she moves toward him.

JESUS CHRIST
 No! I want you to get away! Vanish!

Jesus closes his eyes and continues to stumble away from her.

TEMPTRESS
 Come to me!

JESUS CHRIST

You must go, now! Please, please go!

TEMPTRESS

Luxuriate in me, Jesus. I'm what you truly desire!

JESUS CHRIST

I am a pious man! I do not let lust engulf my heart!

TEMPTRESS

The most pious man, dear Jesus, is still a man.

JESUS CHRIST

Stop saying my name!

TEMPTRESS

Why, Jesus? What should I call you?

JESUS CHRIST

Nothing! Go back to where you came from!

The Temptress falls to her knees and wraps her arms around Jesus.

TEMPTRESS

Let's just have a little fun! Don't you have urges?! Feelings! Passions!

JESUS CHRIST

I do, but--

TEMPTRESS

So give in! You'll never be able to stay out here by your lonesome! No food or drink, at least let there be love.

JESUS CHRIST

This is not love! This is carnal indulgence!

TEMPTRESS

Yes!

JESUS CHRIST

Despicable lust!

TEMPTRESS

Yes!

JESUS CHRIST

Sinister desires of the flesh!

TEMPTRESS

Yes!

The Temptress begins to claw at Jesus, pressing her lips to his stomach. Jesus becomes almost paralyzed and the Temptress slows her movements, giving her seduction a sense of tenderness.

Their interaction becomes strangely delicate as both of them seem overcome with emotion.

Jesus grips the Temptress' face in his hands. Their lips almost touch. Then at the last moment, Jesus regains control and he kisses her on the forehead.

The Temptress looks up at Jesus with genuinely emotional, sympathetic, tearful eyes.

TEMPTRESS (CONT'D)

Don't leave me out here all alone.

Jesus groans in emotional pain.

He grips her face again and smiles at her through tears.

He leans in to give her a measured, thoughtful, "goodbye" kiss on the lips. As he does so, the Temptress flips back into her snake-like demeanor and slides her tongue into Jesus' mouth.

Jesus pulls away and lets out a powerful yell, abruptly slapping the Temptress across the face with his hand.

The Temptress falls to the ground and is suddenly transformed into THE DEVIL, a tall, darkly dressed man.

JESUS CHRIST

(wide-eyed and trembling
with madness)

It's you...

The Devil wipes a small droplet of blood from the corner of his mouth with the back of his hand and slowly gets to his feet.

DEVIL

(Sweetly, softly)

Yes.

JESUS CHRIST

I've been waiting for you for
thirty nine days. Tomorrow I may
leave this desert forever.

DEVIL

I've been with you since the
beginning. In fact, I'm always with
you.

JESUS CHRIST

I cast you out!

DEVIL

Enough.

The Devil gets an eerie, serious look on his face.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

You can barely stand.

JESUS CHRIST

But I will stand...against you for
all time.

A crude CUP appears in the Devil's hand full of cold, clean
water.

DEVIL

I'm not here to harm you, Jesus.
I'm here to help you. Would you
like some?

He shows the cup to Jesus.

Jesus immediately becomes overwhelmed with desire and falls
to his knees, taking the cup in his hand. Tears roll down his
face.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

Take a single drink and this will
all come to an end.

Jesus looks at the Devil and then defiantly throws the cup to
the ground, spilling the water.

JESUS CHRIST

I was afraid I would submit to your
temptations. At one time during my
visit to this desert, I was
prepared to accept anything from
you, if only you'd offer...

(MORE)

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

but seeing you before me, smelling the sulfur on your breath, I know no good can come of your empty promises. Drink now, know satisfaction for a moment and then burn eternally in your misery.

The Devil is emotionally unaffected by Jesus' harsh words.

DEVIL

Pity. I had prepared something for you.

The Devil looks toward a large TABLE full of freshly prepared FOOD.

Jesus stumbles toward it. He stands at the head of the table and smells the food's aroma, exhaling nosily in desire.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Indulge. Feed yourself. You've suffered for long enough. Don't give Him the satisfaction. He has abandoned you. I only want to help, Jesus. I want to give you what you desire, but more than that, what you need.

Jesus looks at the Devil with glassy eyes.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

I've been treated unfairly, too. God too turned his back on me. Just like you. He claims to love us, but where is he when we're starving? Where is he when we call out to him and lay ourselves bare before him? What does he do? Abandons us.

JESUS CHRIST

I know of your tricks. You aim to turn me around, to fool me.

DEVIL

How shall I ever live this reputation down? Is it God who put this food here? Is it God who will give you water and shelter and woman? No! It is me! And I am called the Evil One! Don't you see? I was a creation of God's love. I too was made by him. You and I are the same, Jesus. He made us both and then he turned his back on us.

(MORE)

DEVIL (CONT'D)

If he could do it to one of his angels, why couldn't he do it to his son?

JESUS CHRIST

You're twisting...

DEVIL

(interrupting Jesus)

I saw your dreams, Jesus. I looked inside of you. I saw that woman... doing *things* to you. So I gave her to you. I can hear your stomach shrinking, and so I lay this feast before you. What must I do to prove that I'm here on your behalf?

Jesus looks at the Devil and then looks back at the food. He slowly, hesitantly picks up a large LEG OF TURKEY and bring it to his mouth.

It inexplicably turns to sand in his hand and rapidly blows away until Jesus' palm is left bare.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

But there is something I need from you.

Jesus looks at the Devil, utterly defeated.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

Your trust, Jesus. And your acceptance. Just accept me into your heart and everything I've promised you will be yours.

Jesus ponders this.

JESUS CHRIST

This... I can not do. I do not know the truth, but I know you are not the way.

DEVIL

It's the truth you seek? Well, the truth I can provide. Every good story should begin at the beginning...

EXT. GARDEN OF EDEN - INDISTINGUISHABLE TIME

The Devil and Jesus appear in the Garden of Eden. ADAM and EVE frolic in the garden nude and innocently blissful.

DEVIL

This is the way it was before everything! Even sin. The land was lush and bountiful. The first man and the first woman had nothing to fear.

JESUS CHRIST

Until you came along. I know this story.

DEVIL

Until your father came along. He was the one who put me here, just like Adam and Eve. He created the tree of which my apple grew. He created the test for all humanity to fail!

JESUS CHRIST

I will admit to not always understanding my father, but he is not a monster!

DEVIL

No, not a monster... just an insecure, mad Emperor. He wants his slaves to love him.

JESUS CHRIST

Slaves? He gave Man a choice!

Satan scoffs at Jesus' naivety.

DEVIL

What choice!? ...He made Man innocent and capable of love, yes... but He needed to test that love, make sure his creations adored him even in the face of temptation... and that's where I came in. An important part of God's plan. After all, how can you appreciate the light if you haven't seen darkness?

The Devil leans close to Jesus and sinisterly says:

DEVIL (CONT'D)

He let me lure Eve to that tree...

Eve follows a snake to the base of a beautiful tree. This is THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

And when she ate from it, he not only punished her... He condemned all of humanity.

JESUS CHRIST

(rhetorically aloud)
Original sin...

DEVIL

He created the very sin that he's willing to let you pay for with your life... God tells us that we have free will, a choice, but when it's a choice between the pearly gates and eternal hellfire... it's not much of a decision now is it? How is Man to truly and freely choose if he can be damned for his answer?

Jesus listens.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

Adam and Eve had the innocence of children and her one simple mistake has cost you your life, your freedom, your choice!

Eve approaches the Tree of Knowledge. She reaches for the apple.

Jesus lunges toward her and begins to shout, but she can not see or hear him.

JESUS CHRIST

No, don't! You're condemning me!
You're condemning me!

Eve takes a hearty bite into the apple.

Jesus falls to his knees.

DEVIL

Do you blame a child for their foolish mistakes or do you blame to parent who never bothered to teach them?

Jesus looks at Satan with heartbroken eyes.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

And what do you think happened next?

A terrible EARTHQUAKE begins and LIGHTNING strikes the Tree of Knowledge, splitting it down the middle.

Adam and Eve cling to each other in terror, covering their privates in shame.

DEVIL (CONT'D)
 (raising his voice over
 the earthquake's rumble)
 He gave them enough knowledge to
 fear him!

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The Devil and Jesus reappear in the desert.

DEVIL
 And they were right to fear him.

JESUS CHRIST
 No! It can't be as you say! God
 would never forsake me like this!

Suddenly the Devil becomes extremely angry.

DEVIL
 Fine! Then prove to me your God
 loves you!

The Devil grabs Jesus and hardly drags him across the jagged, rocky sand. The sharp stones cut into his flesh, covering his body in bloody wounds.

They reach the top of a small MOUNTAIN.

DEVIL (CONT'D)
 Now jump!

Jesus looks disoriented and confused.

DEVIL (CONT'D)
 You heard me!

The Devil then pushes Jesus to the edge of the mountain, a long drop beneath him.

DEVIL (CONT'D)
 If you are the true Messiah then
 God will break your fall.

JESUS CHRIST
 (weakly, in a whisper)
 Push me over.

DEVIL
 What did you say?

JESUS CHRIST
 I said push me over. I no longer
 care if I live or if I die. If you
 want to push me over this mountain,
 I believe God will save my life,
 but I will not jump on my own. You
 will have to push me if you want
 proof God is indifferent. I will
 not help you.

The Devil stares deeply into Jesus' eyes and then pulls him
 away from the mountain's edge, tossing him to the ground.

DEVIL
 Look! Look where we are!

He begins to spin around slowly, admiring the view
 surrounding the mountain.

DEVIL (CONT'D)
 It's just you and I. A whole world
 with no one to run it.

Jesus lies on the ground, gasping for breath.

The Devil crouches down beside him.

DEVIL (CONT'D)
 You know what He has in store for
 you, don't you?

JESUS CHRIST
 (struggling to speak)
 I will die for the world's sins...

DEVIL
 You'll be crucified. There will be
 a choice to either free a murderer
 and a rapist or free you, and the
 people will free the criminal.

JESUS CHRIST
 It does not matter.

DEVIL

You will be made to drag a cross to a peak, not much different than this. And they will hammer nails into your wrists and feet. Here...

The Devil taps Jesus' wrists.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

And here...

The Devil taps Jesus' feet.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

They'll stretch you with rope, breaking bones and tearing flesh. And then they will put you on display. The weight of your body will pull on the nails, causing the excruciating pain to become even more unbearable.

JESUS CHRIST

Nothing you can say will deter me.

DEVIL

How about I stop saying it? Why don't I show you?

INSERT:

EXT. - DAY

Jesus' hands are brutally attached to the cross.

A ROMAN SOLDIER squeezes his wrists and forcefully pushes them down onto the wood of the cross.

INSERT:

EXT. - NIGHT

A ROMAN SOLDIER holds down an unidentified WOMAN'S wrists, pushing them forcefully into the dirt.

INSERT:

EXT. - DAY

Jesus' legs are forced together, a NAIL is placed against them.

INSERT:

EXT. - NIGHT

The Unidentified Woman's legs are forced apart as the Roman Solider holds her down.

INSERT:

EXT. - DAY

Jesus is nude on the cross, the image for the first time, being fully right-side up.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The Devil stands beside Jesus atop the mountain and watches as Jesus pantomimes his crucifixion, feeling the pain in his body and screaming in unimaginable agony.

DEVIL

(over Jesus' screams)

I can end this all now. Just pray to me the way you'd pray to your father and this pain will stop. All this, all this earth you can see, will be yours to rule. Just accept me as your savior, your God.

Through his agony Jesus shouts:

JESUS CHRIST

Mother! Mother!

Jesus almost faints from pain, his body goes limp and he stops screaming.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

(almost inaudibly)

...I forgive you...

DEVIL

The truth is what you wanted... Now pray to me and I will take all of your misery away.

JESUS CHRIST

No...

The Devil becomes furious.

DEVIL

You're pathetic, do you know that?
Why do you believe in Him so
strongly?

JESUS CHRIST

(struggling for the words,
gasping in pained
breaths)

I believe in the people of this
earth. The ones I'm here to
sacrifice my life for. They deserve
a chance to know love.

DEVIL

They deserve nothing. They are rats
and like rats they spread disease.
You think they love you? You think
your sacrifice will matter to them?
Well, let's see...

EXT. MODERN CITY STREET - DAY

The Devil and Jesus *appear* in the middle of a busy modern
street, people bustling by on cell phones, carrying
briefcases, etc.

DEVIL

Here we are. Two thousand years
after your death. You're a
footnote, a bedtime story. They
care no more about you than they do
each other... They wouldn't even
recognize you without your cross.

A CROSS appears on Jesus' back. The sudden appearance causes
Jesus to fall to the ground. He picks up his cross and slowly
start trudging through the crowd of modern people.

The people completely ignore him, walking past him, bumping
into him.

JESUS CHRIST

(lamenting)

I die for them and do they not
remember my words?

DEVIL

Oh, they remember, and they use your words to kill each other. Your legacy of love has brought about more bloodshed, death and war than anything this planet has ever known.

A PASSERBY tosses TRASH at the feet of Jesus.

DEVIL (CONT'D)

Look. Look at the people you will die for, who you are starving for, depriving yourself of women for. They do not care about your sacrifice. They have forgotten about you. Their poetry and prayer falls on the deaf ears of your father. He might as well be dead. He is worse, he is silent.

Jesus falls, drops his cross and begins to sob uncontrollably. He puts his face in his hands.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jesus continues to weep. When he removes his hands from his face, he is back in the desert, the Devil beside him.

DEVIL

So now you see. You are worthless, your sacrifice is meaningless. In fact, it's only brought about pain and suffering. Spare yourself. Give up... Give in to me. We can change this world together, for the better. We can once and for all destroy God and put an end to his bloodthirsty reign.

JESUS CHRIST

(shouting)

ENOUGH!

The power in Jesus' voice catches the Devil off guard.

Jesus gets to his feet.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

I do not care about you! I do not care about God! It is no longer relevant if he is there or is listening or despises me!

(MORE)

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

I am an instrument of love! ...You do not condemn an artist who creates a painting that inspires violence! You do not condemn a musician who writes a melody that a corrupt government uses as its anthem! I can not control what happens today, tomorrow or two-thousand years from now! I am an artist! But my art is love! ...I no longer believe in myself, I do not care if I am king of this world or the next! I only know I am a man! And I CHOOSE to bring forgiveness and compassion into this world. I do not care what comes of it, if the world kills itself, because it is the right thing to do despite the consequence! I will continue to bring light to this life and defend against your darkness! And if there's nothing beyond this life, I welcome it, because I will die knowing I was part of a fully realized creation, the creation of man, who has more empathy than it knows! My flesh and my blood and my bones are good enough! LISTEN TO ME NOW BEELZEBUB! YOUR TIME IS FINISHED!

It is abruptly revealed that Jesus speaking to himself and the Devil has vanished.

The two men, the followers of Christ, rush to Jesus' side and take him in their arms.

Jesus is startled to see them.

JESUS CHRIST (CONT'D)

What are you doing here--

DISCIPLE 1

Jesus! Are you all right? We've been looking for you!

JESUS CHRIST

Yes, I've been in the desert, fasting.

DISCIPLE 2

You've been missing for--

JESUS CHRIST
Forty days...

The Men make subtle eye contact, concerned for Jesus' state of mind.

DISCIPLE 1
A week, Jesus.

There is an awkward, silent pause.

DISCIPLE 2
After our last meeting, one week ago, you disappeared. Someone said they saw you walking into the desert by your lonesome.

DISCIPLE 1
We've been looking for you ever since.

DISCIPLE 2
We've brought water and food.

JESUS CHRIST
I don't understand...I've been--

DISCIPLE 1
Don't speak. Rest. We'll take you home.

Jesus takes a drink of water. He looks passed the two men and into the desert. His vision of extremely blurred and the dark outline of the Devil is faintly visible.

When Jesus focuses his eyes, the Devil is completely gone once again.

Jesus looks up toward an empty sky, searching with his eyes. He then lowers his head and looks deeply and directly into the camera.

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE TEXT: DAY SIX

THE END