

**Title: They Called Him Yeshua**  
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**Treatment By: Josh Berman**

### **Mission Statement:**

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*They Called Him Yeshua* is a dedicated retelling of the Biblical story of Christ as a child, tracking the boy born in a manger from birth through his seminal baptism in the Jordan River, upon which he takes up his spiritual mantle as the Messiah. Epic in scale yet intimate in nature, this story offers a cinematic event for the Christian audience without the graphic violence of similar offerings such as *Passion Of The Christ*. As Christ's childhood is the lesser-known portion of the Bible, *They Called Him Yeshua* may offer appeal to the uninitiated as well.

Because the story is epic in nature and spans multiple decades, some paring down was necessary to fit *They Called Him Yeshua* into the cinematic mold. Certain scenes and characters have been either cut or combined in this treatment in the interest of time. As a primary example, a large portion of Act I in the book has been combined into a brief prologue in this treatment that will transition immediately to the birth of Yeshua. As the star of the intended film, Yeshua needs to make his entrance early.

### **Logline:**

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The epic tale of the birth of Christ, his boyhood struggles and questions of faith, ultimately culminating in his seminal baptism in the Jordan River.

### **Treatment:**

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#### ***PROLOGUE (COLD OPEN, PRIOR TO MAIN TITLES)***

We open in the middle of a tense conversation in Nazareth two millennia ago. JOSEPH (20's, firm) speaks in hushed tones with his bride-to-be MARY (16, still a girl in the eyes of many) in her family's olive grove about an impossible occurrence she has experienced --- she's pregnant. The only catch is, she's never laid with any man. She is a virgin. Joseph finds this hard to believe. Mary had just come back from a trip to Ein Karem; she must have slept with one of the caravaners on the way. Was she raped? People around town are already gossiping and think she must be a prostitute. Joseph frets, terrified of the possibility himself.

But Mary clarifies: She traveled to Ein Karem to meet with her aunt, ELIZABETH, and uncle, ZECAHRIAH. The two serve in a temple and communicate with God regularly. She sought out Elizabeth because she needed to explain what happened to her. Mary tells the story of a night not long ago when an angel, GABRIEL, came down to visit her in her sleep. He told her that she would be the vessel for God's son, who would grow up to be the King of the Jews and lead their people to salvation from Roman oppression. Mary assumed it was just a dream at first, but Elizabeth had a similar occurrence many months ago...and indeed, while Mary was in Ein Karem, Elizabeth gave birth to a boy named JOHN. For Mary, this is proof.

Joseph doesn't know whether she's lying or she's insane. He complains about the judgment they'll receive from his father, Jacob --- whose farming work Joseph recently walked away from to wed Mary and pursue a career in carpentry. Joseph leaves Mary alone and returns home to think, a wreck. That night, a BOOMING VOICE calls to him from the roof. The Voice tells Joseph to believe Mary; that his soon to be wife has been impregnated with the Holy Spirit who will redeem humanity, and that Joseph should not be afraid of her. It is the voice of God.

We cut to several months later in the middle of a torrential downpour outside of the small town of Bethlehem. Joseph and a visibly very pregnant Mary pull over in the midst of several days of travel to a tiny cottage. ELIAKEM and DEBORAH greet them. Mary, drenched in sweat, seems to be minutes from labor and Deborah is obviously taken by her. Joseph frantically tells Deborah that they were on their way to Jerusalem to register for taxes and were hoping they'd make it there before she would deliver the child. But, no matter, it's coming now. Deborah cannot offer them the guest room because several refugees from the storm have already filled it, but she offers the couple shelter in the stable with the horses. Mary is fine with this arrangement. Joseph settles her in and is then immediately escorted out by Deborah. This is a task for a woman. The delivery commences, and we can hear Mary's screams as Joseph leaves the room...

...We cut to the next morning. Joseph and Mary sleep together, cradling their beautiful new baby boy, YESHUA. They wake up to the sounds of chatter --- and find themselves faced with SEVERAL DOZEN SHEPHERDS. Neither Mary nor Joseph knows any of these people, and the whole event is rather overwhelming. The Shepherds tell the couple that a bright white light had come down to them from the heavens to let them know that the Messiah had been born in Bethlehem. The light mentioned a Jewish woman, a carpenter, and several shepherds. This is God's plan...

#### **TITLE UP: THEY CALLED HIM YESHUA**

Months later. Yeshua, often referred to by Mary as Yeshi, has developed quickly and it's already apparent that he will excel within spiritual education. Mary discusses Yeshua's potential schooling with Joseph over dinner in the stable --- which he has



now converted into his own carpentry shop, along with a recently completed bed --- and suggests that he be schooled in Jerusalem. Joseph agrees, but notes that they must stay residing here in Bethlehem. Joseph's carpentry business is slow, only consisting of a few small contracts at this point, and they won't be able to afford lavish city life. Indeed, they can hardly afford this dinner before them. Mary agrees and smiles coyly. Speaking of dinner, she mentions, they'll have some time alone after this meal. If Joseph wants to take the dishes back to the kitchen while Mary tidies up, maybe they can finally consummate their marriage as God intended...

That night, three mysterious visitors awake the couple with a start. They announce themselves as MELCHIOR, BALTHAZAAR, and CASPAR. They are the *magi*, or the THREE WISE MEN. Joseph and Mary are frightened, but the men assure the couple that they are here with good intentions. A star had in fact guided them here, telling them that the King of Jews was born. Mary looks to her sleeping Yeshua, worried. Melchior tells Mary that he's here to deliver a warning. King Herod --- the diseased, violent, paranoid Roman currently ruling over Jerusalem --- has heard of the birth of this young King of Jews, and has grown anxious about a potential Jewish uprising. Herod had tasked these three men to find the whereabouts of this young King and return to Jerusalem with the requisite information. But in any case, the Roman army will be descending up Bethlehem soon to raise it to the ground. The three wise men urge our couple to flee, and offer three parting gifts: Gold, myrrh, and frankincense. As the mysterious magi leave, Joseph and Mary wrestle with whether or not to believe them. But when Joseph rests for the night, an angel visits to tell him the same thing. Joseph and Mary take Yeshi, fleeing to Egypt before dawn.

Indeed, the magi were right. In a horrifying sequence, we watch as the Roman army lays waste to the small, peaceful village of Bethlehem. Jews are tortured, maimed, and crucified. Women are raped and killed. Children are burned. Back in Jerusalem, ANTIPAS (20's, brooding), one of Herod's three sons and his heir, reports on the destruction. Herod is pleased...but also very sick. Antipas's time will come soon.

Halfway through the long journey to Egypt, Mary wonders aloud what will become of their generous hosts. Joseph tells her not to think of such things. She turns to another topic. She's pregnant again. This time, the child is of their own making. Joseph embraces his wife...and suddenly, Egypt seems to be a lifetime away. He suggests they return to Nazareth. They can use the myrrh and frankincense to purchase a new home in a small compound. Mary agrees with the decision. Days later, as they reach the outskirts of Nazareth, Yeshua looks up at Joseph and mutters his first word. "Abba." It means "father" in Hebrew. Mary's eyes tear up.

Just beyond the horizon behind our blessed couple, we settle on and follow a ROAD OF CRUCIFED JEWS, leading all the way back to Jerusalem, which has now

descended into chaos. Jewish rebels have revolted and sacked Herod's temple. Fighting and fires litter the streets. Herod is dead, and Antipas now takes the throne.

Year later, Yeshua is now a young boy undergoing his schooling. He wants to act like the other boys around him, but at the same time, he's already been told that he's "special," and other boys have heard the rumors, too. They've heard that his conception was "irregular," and that his father didn't actually make him. On this day, the boys in his class nag him to perform a "miracle" by turning a pile of dust into a full-grown soldier. Desperate to fit in, he naturally tries...and fails. RABBI HAKIM (rich in years and rich in wisdom) has to separate Yeshua from the rest of the boys to cease the taunting. When Joseph retrieves him later in the afternoon, Hakim suggests that it would be best for Yeshua to take lessons with him privately.

On the way home through the town square, Joseph tries to comfort his son. He explains that Yeshua cannot just conjure magic at will. When the time is right, Yahweh will make Yeshua's mission as the Messiah clear and he will know what to do. For now, he just needs to study and to enjoy being a boy. As they pass by a DEFORMED BEGGAR in the street, Yeshua stops. Most other citizens simply pass by the man without looking at him, but Yeshua seems transfixed. He asks Joseph why this man has to beg while others thrive? Joseph is struck by his son's empathy. It's the first of many deeply compelling, impossible questions Yeshua will ask his father.

Reaching home, we find Mary cradling her newborn daughter, RACHEL. Mary asks Yeshua say hello to his baby sister. The entire family tumbles into the room, and we can see that Yeshua actually has many siblings now. Three brothers, to be exact. JAMES, JOSE, and SIMON (oldest to youngest, respectively) set to work making dinner. This family is very happy. But as they enjoy their dinner for the evening, the sounds of screaming and fighting pierce the room. Yeshua knows it's the Roman soldiers. Joseph insists that they're just here to guard the city and won't attack citizens, but everyone around the table seems to know this is a hopeless lie.

One day, Joseph and Mary receive a knock at their door. It's several ROMAN SOLDIERS, holding Yeshua by the neck. The soldiers claim that Yeshua had been throwing rocks at them with other boys. The family receives a warning --- if it happens again, the consequences will be more severe. The soldiers shut the door and Yeshua eyes the ground in shame. He tells his parents that the other boys threw rocks and ran away, but he never touched a stone. Mary and Joseph know their son never lies and thus believe him. But he still appears sullen and somewhat unwilling to accept their forgiveness. He mentions wanting to join the Zealots (Jewish rebels, plotting an overthrow of the Romans) when he gets older. Joseph tells Yeshua that his own brother Matthan chose that life, and it is not one to be proud of. It's a lonely, cold, dangerous life. Yeshua asks why Yahweh would allow the universe to contain such horrors, pain, and oppression. Again, Joseph doesn't answer.

Desperate for answers, Joseph dives into scripture and fully reads the prophecies of Isaiah. For the first time, he reads the true extent of what his son's purpose is to be. Yeshua is the Messiah, meant to save the Jewish population --- but through his own suffering and untimely death. Joseph's precious boy is a sacrificial lamb. Devastated, he returns home and cries. Mary asks him what he learned. He dare not tell her.

We catch up with Yeshua a couple years later, playing with two close friends from the neighborhood, JOSIAH and his younger brother ELIAS. Their father owns a shepherd flock at the edge of town and the open fields make a great space for a game of mock battle. The boys joust back and forth with sticks, pretending to be Roman soldiers. After a while, the boys are exhausted. Josiah asks Yeshua if he's truly the Son of God. Yeshua nods, yes. Josiah asks Yeshua to if he could perform a miracle. He pleads, "I'm your best friend!" But at this age, Yeshua knows better. He simply tells Josiah that he's tried and he's failed. Miracles are for adults.

At that moment, a THIEF breaks into the flock and grabs a lamb. The three boys all chase after him. Yeshua is the fastest and catches the thief at the edge of the cliff. Cornered, the thief wickedly drops the lamb and bolts. Yeshua's focus immediately switches to the poor injured animal, whimpering on a ledge ten feet below. Somehow, summoning a strength beyond his age, Yeshua lowers Elias over the edge to retrieve the lamb. The look on Josiah's face tells us that whether or not Yeshua believes it himself, something truly special has just happened.

Days later, Joseph asks his boys to help him with a carpentry project. He's been commissioned to craft a wheel spoke and tells his boys to cut wood for him. Yeshua and James take on the task. Even at this age, we can see that there is some tension between the two, and some jealousy or resentment on James' part. But their quibbling is interrupted when James removes a large piece of wood from the pile and a jet black VIPER lunges out to bite him. Yeshua drops his task and attempts to push out the poison manually. James furiously asks Yeshua to just talk to God to cure him. Yeshua tells James that he can't, that it doesn't work like that. But James doesn't believe him. He accuses Yeshua of not caring enough to help his own brother. James is sick for several days, and Yeshua spends most of the time praying, feeling like a failure. When James finally heals, Joseph thanks Yahweh for answering Yeshua's prayers. Jealous, James stew. In his mind, Yeshua gets all the credit all the time without deserving it.

The tension between Yeshua and his first brother only grows worse. JACOB (very much a senior citizen at this point), Joseph's father, teaches the boys how to farm one afternoon. He mentions that they come from a long line of farmers, and that indeed their own father was to be a farmer before he fell in love with carpentry. Across the way, on another farm, Yeshua witnesses an argument between an angry



LANDOWNER and his WORKER. The display seems to deeply affect Yeshua. Jacob begins to try to explain the difference between the rich and the poor as simply the way of the world when suddenly, he grows short of breath. A few coughs become heavy wheezing, and within seconds, Jacob is doubled over on the ground. A minute later, he is dead. The boys are hysterical. James begs Yeshua to “bring him back!” All Yeshua can offer in response is a weak, “It’s not my time yet.” It’s not good enough for James. James spits at his brother, “If you can’t help people like you said, then you’re not special at all.” He runs home in tears, leaving Yeshua to his thoughts.

Following Jacob’s burial, Joseph notes that Passover is just a few weeks away. Traditionally, men of the Jewish faith travel to Jerusalem for the holiday. The boys have been too young for some time, but Joseph tells Yeshua that it’s time for him to see the Holy City for himself. James insists he wants to go, too, but Joseph remains firm. He’s too young. James accuses his father of loving Yeshua more than his own flesh and blood. Joseph sighs and tells Yeshua to get ready.

The journey to Jerusalem is long and gorgeous. A caravan of Jewish men, including Josiah and his father, make the trek along with Yeshua/Joseph. On the way, a pack of thieves attacks the caravan as they stop outside the town of Jericho. The local Jericho soldiers defend the Jews. Yeshua is taken by their kindness.

As the caravan approaches the city, Yeshua continues to bury his father with questions. Joseph recants the history of their people as far as he knows it, but the stories all seem elementary to Yeshua. Yeshua wants to know about the future, about the meaning of things. He wants to know when he will take the Kingdom. Will it be after his bar mitzvah? Joseph doesn’t have an adequate answer for his son. Luckily, they reach the crest of a ridge and gaze upon their destination. Jerusalem is gorgeous from afar, and even Yeshua seems to tremble at the sight of it. The members of the caravan all split off to find lodging. A young boy named LAZARUS offers his family’s home to Yeshua and Joseph for their stay.

The next day, Josiah finds Yeshua and eagerly asks if he’d like to come into the city to explore together. Yeshua is reluctant, in the middle of his own prayers and meditation. To lure him out, Josiah mentions the Hall of Hewn, where several of the region’s leading Rabbis, including the great HILLEL (known to be the wisest, the leader of the gathering) gather to discuss their interpretations of scripture. Yeshua can’t resist of course...the boys chase each other through the busy streets taking in the sights and laughing along the way. But once they reach the Hall, Yeshua freezes. He’s immediately enraptured by the discussion. Josiah can’t wrest his attention back. This is the only thing Yeshua wants to do.

For the next several days, Yeshua returns to this Hall over and over to listen to the Rabbis, welcomed by Hillel’s son GAMILEIL (Yeshua’s age). The others notice him

but he never speaks up much...until one day, the discussion turns to a simple question. "What is the greatest commandment?" The different Rabbis all have their own opinion. Some are certain "Thou shall not murder" is obviously the most grave. Others are latched upon "Honor thy mother and father." Suddenly, Yeshua speaks up. He confidently tells the seasoned Rabbis in the room that they are wrong. "Love the Lord Your God" is clearly the most important, he tells them. He then mentions the prophecy about the Messiah. Hillel, not ready to be challenged by a young child, brushes Yeshua off. He says the verse is not meant to be taken literally. Now angered a bit more, Yeshua tees off on the wealthy Rabbis in the room. He calls out their hypocrisy; they're rich, they eat the meat of sacrificial animals while the poor eat nothing, they levy enormous taxes on foreign currency --- and then they say that they are channeling God's will? One could hear a pin drop in the room.

Three days later, Passover has ended and the caravan begins to leave. But Joseph notices that Yeshua is nowhere to be seen. He and Josiah rush back into Jerusalem to find him...and of course, they find him at the Temple Mount with the Elder Rabbis from the Hall of Hewn. But they find a very different sight than the one we last left Yeshua on. Yeshua is now *leading* the discussion of scripture. Hillel tells Joseph that Yeshua is the most advanced boy he has ever seen. He offers to keep Yeshua in Jerusalem under his watch to continue his studies. But Joseph insists Yeshua must return home to Nazareth. As they leave, a glum Yeshua asks Joseph, "Don't you know I have to be with my Father?" By Father, of course, he means God.

We find Yeshua and Joseph a couple years later, still in Nazareth. Yeshua and Simon help Joseph finish the thatching on their roof. James, however, is absent. Simon complains about this and Joseph reminds him that James has been working in Tiberias to pursue his desired career as a fisherman. Simon cracks a joke about James only wanting to live in Tiberias to bulk up and sleep with women. Joseph dismisses this, but we can tell by his expression that on some level he believes it is most likely true. Yeshua reassures his father, telling Joseph that the pleasure won't satisfy James in the end. The discussion then switches to the topic of Yeshua's conception. It's clearly a topic the family has had several times before, and clearly Yeshua has not ever received what he would consider to be a satisfactory answer. He feels he's old enough to know the truth; he's already been bar mitzvahed, after all. Furthermore, he knows his siblings have heard the rumors and hate him for it. Simon insists that he doesn't hate Yeshua, but the reassurance isn't successful. Months later, Joseph and the boys (sans James) have once again traveled to Jerusalem for a holiday --- Yom Kippur. It's a much more solemn day and the entire city has the air of reverence rather than revelry. The family witnesses an elaborate ceremony at the Temple Mount involving two goats. One is for God, and the other is a "scapegoat" for the wilderness. Yeshua explains the lavish proceedings to Simon and Jose. He speaks like a seasoned priest now, although he is only a teenager.

Later, the family breaks the fast with Joseph's local friend, ELEAZAR. We might remember him from the Passover journey as Lazarus's father. As the kids finish their meal, Eleazar asks Joseph outside for a chat. They make small talk for a bit about their home lives. Joseph reveals his worries about James. Suddenly, Eleazar cuts to the chase and pops a question, seemingly out of nowhere. How would Joseph feel about Yeshua marrying Eleazar's daughter, MIRIAM (a teenager)? Joseph nearly chokes on his wine and hesitates before he can respond. It's all the answer Elzeazar needs. He withdraws his request. No harm, no foul. Still, Joseph feels bad. On the way home, Joseph asks Yeshua about marriage --- did he make a mistake not accepting the offer? Yeshua assures Joseph that while he does enjoy women as any man does, marriage has always seemed out of the question for him. His ministry must come first. And what would become of the children?

We jump forward again several years. Yeshua is now an older teen and looks much more like a fully-grown man. He's in the midst of leading a sermon at a synagogue in a small village just outside of Nazareth. By this point, Jews from miles away have heard of the power of Yeshua's teaching and trekked out here to listen to him. But a familiar face is also in the crowd: Joseph. Age has started to set upon him, but he couldn't be prouder of his son. This is the first time Joseph has seen one of Yeshua's sermons in person, and he's blown away by the wisdom it contains. Yeshua's lecture focuses more on intent than on action --- i.e., love thy neighbor in thy heart, don't just do good deeds for him/her --- and he's able to illustrate his points with anecdotal stories. He has the entire crowd in his command.

Father and son walk back to Nazareth together. They catch up and we learn that Yeshua ultimately stayed in Nazareth to complete his education. This is the first time he has been away from home for more than a few days. Joseph tells Yeshua that he remains worried, especially as rumors have been circling claiming Antipas does not believe the King of Jews was killed in the Bethlehem raid all those years ago. Yeshua reminds Joseph that the elders from this village sought him out personally. He's helping people, and it feels great. And just then, Yeshua begins to complain of a headache. Minutes later, he collapses in Joseph's arms.

Joseph rushes Yeshua back to Nazareth in a panic. He was never sick as a boy. Mary calms her husband down and begins to nurse Yeshua with opium/herbs. She feels his head and finds a fever. REBECCA (his younger sister) asks if he's sick --- Rabbis have long told others that sickness is a result of sin --- and Mary confirms it. She urges Rebecca not to tell anyone and make him some broth. Together, mother and daughter nurse Yeshua back to health over a couple days. When he's strong enough to converse again, he thanks Mary. He overheard everything she and Rebecca discussed over the last two days. He explains that he's sick just like any other man due to human frailty, which is the result of the original sin (Adam and Eve), not his own. He also feels that it is time to explain the culmination of his prophesy to Mary.



He will die young, for God. This is the first time Mary has heard this. She's devastated. Yeshua stays a little longer.

That evening, as Yeshua continues to rest, Mary and Rebecca hear loud, terrifying THUDS from outside. Someone is violently banging on their door. A few seconds later, SIMON THE ZEALOT (tall, imposing, crazed) and two other Zealot soldiers barge into the home. They tell Mary they're looking for Yeshua. They demand she stop his teachings at once. Simon calls these teachings heresy. Yeshua speaks constantly of love and forgiveness for all. But as far as the Zealots are concerned, the Romans should not be loved. The Romans are enemies. If Yeshua doesn't cease his sermons, the Zealots may be forced to enforce their position violently. Mary cowers in a corner with Rebecca, terrified. Yeshua steps out from his room and addresses the men for the first time. He calmly tells them that they are trespassing and need to leave. Tensions rise, and it seems like violence may follow...but suddenly, a stout man in Zealot fatigues rushes in and chastises his bretherin. He ushers them out. Mary thanks the kind stranger. But this isn't a stranger. As the man reveals, he's family. This is the fabled MATTHAN. Joseph's long missing brother.

Matthan has been with the Zealots for quite a while. And as he explains to the family, the Zealots are not big fans of Yeshua or his message. They consider it blasphemy, and have sent out spies to watch his sermons. The Romans have done the same as well. The reality is, Yeshua's message has offended just about everyone possible to offend. And eventually, those people will take action. Yeshua takes the message in stride...but Rebecca looks terrified. That night, the two go on a walk together. Rebecca tells Yeshua that she fears for his safety. Yeshua tries to comfort her; to him, this is all a part of the plan. They then come across a beautiful unaccompanied woman collecting water from the river. Suddenly, a deep, menacing invisible voice speaks up, daring and goading Yeshua to touch the woman. Rebecca hears it too. She's frightened. Yeshua resists the voice and calls off the temptress. He apologizes to his little sister for having to witness this occurrence.

Days later, representatives from the GALILEANS and PHARISEES (the old guard Jewish Rabbis/priests like Yeshua encountered in Jerusalem) arrive at Yeshua's door to tell him that his services are no longer needed at the Hebrew school. He's effectively been fired in a rather blatant power grab. Rebecca watches as Yeshua just takes it, calmly, without protest. He simply tells them that they are blind, but he'll accept their wishes. As the following days pass, Yeshua spends the majority of his time in his room, meditating. Matthan leaves to rejoin the Zealots. He insists they have more work to do. The Romans are becoming more brutal by the week. Before he leaves, Matthan asks Joseph when he thinks Yeshua will reveal his Messianic purpose. Joseph doesn't know. Matthan warns Joseph, bloodshed is certain to follow.

A few years later, we find ourselves in Tiberias, a young-blue collar town on a large lake. This is where James has set up his career as a fisherman. The city is much less “holy” than what we’ve been used to in Nazareth or Jerusalem. James has bulked up and grown a beard. He sits on a dock and glumly skips a stone across the water when JOHN --- Elizabeth’s son from the opening, James/Yeshua’s cousin --- approaches. He’s passing through the city and wanted to make sure he had a chance to see James. The reunion is short but sweet, until it turns to the topic of Yeshua. John eagerly tells James a story about a remarkable experience he had recently with Yeshua. They had traveled to Gamla together, a dangerous town full of Zealots and Romans. Yeshua hurt his ankle halfway through but still limped the entire remainder of the journey to teach in hostile territory. While there, John witnessed Yeshua manage to turn a group of vicious Roman soldiers to his rapt students with just the power of his words. It was like nothing he had seen before. The whole town was moved. James is uninterested in the story. Clearly, some hard feelings still exist.

Afterwards, James wanders through the dirty streets of Tiberias as dusk. On his way, he bumps into SILAS (40’s, a snake-oil kind of guy) and MARY MAGDALENE (16, wears her broken heart in her eyes). Silas tells James that Mary Magdalene is his daughter and she’s helping the family stay afloat. Her offers her services to James for the night. Despite a pained expression on his face, James accepts...

Silas takes James back to his home and instructs him to wait while Mary Magdalene readies herself in her room. Once she’s done, James slowly enters. She wears a thin robe and tells him to sit on the bed. She starts untying her garments almost like she’s on autopilot until James finally stops her. He just wants to talk. She tells him that’s not what she does. He presses again. Finally, she breaks. She tells him everything. She hates herself. Silas isn’t her father; he’s actually her husband. He beats her regularly. She recounts numerous horror stories of abuse too gruesome to bear. James feels horrible. He tells her that he’s going to free her. She begs him not to do anything, but he’s already up and out of the room.

James strides back to the living room and swiftly punches Silas in the face. He demands Silas release Mary Magdalene by morning and leave her with enough money to start a new life. James has sway over the local fishermen and will cut off Silas’s customer supply if he doesn’t listen. The performance is believable enough. James leaves, convinced that he just saved this girl’s life...but before he even reaches home, several of Silas’s HENCHMEN assault James in an alleyway. James limps his way home, and collapses by his bed. Before he passes to sleep, he does something he’s never done before...he prays.

Back in Nazareth, Joseph returns from a long day at work. Mary throws herself into his arms, in tears. She has just heard that Matthan has been captured by the Romans. They’ve taken him to Tiberias to be tortured! Apparently, Matthan was one of the

Zealot leaders of an attack on Masada, a Roman military outpost in the desert mountains. Joseph vows to travel to Tiberias to seek his brother's release. Yeshua wants to make the journey instead, but Joseph refuses. Tiberias is unclean, unfit for a holy man like Yeshua. Ultimately, Matthan is Joseph's brother. This is his burden.

Joseph ultimately makes it safely to Tiberias and checks into a hostel. That afternoon, he navigates the various merchants and beggars in town until he finds the prison. He tells the MAGISTRATE that he is in fact Matthan's brother, but he knows nothing of his plans or activities. It's a tense scene, as it seems for a moment like Joseph might be jailed too, but the magistrate finally gives and shows Joseph back to his brother. He tells Joseph only that Matthan has been sentenced to death. But what Joseph finds is far more horrifying. His brother has been tortured, beaten to a bloody pulp so badly that he can barely even open one eye, let alone speak. Joseph offers him some food and water. Matthan takes it like he hasn't had sustenance in days. Joseph grieves his brother's fate and tells him that he'll find someone in the village to continue visiting him with food. There's nothing left to be said. Maybe, just maybe, Matthan can live out his remaining days in peace.

But when Joseph returns to Nazareth, word has already gotten back to town. All the prisoners in the Tiberias prison were killed.

Cutting to several months later, we find Jose and Simon helping their father out with one of his contracts, a large administrative building. They're working a couple dozen feet off the ground, constructing the roof. Jose and Simon seem to have followed in their older brother James' footsteps in terms of godliness. The boys are coarse, crude, and crack mean-spirited jokes with one another. Unfortunately, as Simon is in the midst of one of his bits, a support beam slips loose from above. He's not paying enough attention to notice before it swings down and knocks him off the rafter completely. He crashes into a heap of scrap wood on the floor. He's alive, but his leg is broken horribly; the edge of the bone sticks out of his shin. Joseph and Jose take Simon home, horrified. Mary is devastated and calls a surgeon. James, home for the time being, curses Yeshua for failing to perform a miracle to save Simon's leg. Jose joins in on the attack. Simon's life is saved, but he'll never be able to work again.

Before the family devolves into an endless argument, Joseph simply states that he will perform double the work to make up for Simon's loss. And indeed he does over the next few weeks. Joseph gets up before dawn and continues working well past nightfall. But the hours are clearly too much for his old age. Eventually he collapses on the job and falls into a deep sleep. He's brought home, but he doesn't seem to have much time. James once again blames Yeshua. Rebecca defends Yeshua and tells James to stop being jealous. James storms out of the room, cursing. Days later, Joseph finally wakes up in bed. Yeshua is by his side. With his last remaining breaths, Joseph asks if he has been a good Abba. Yeshua tells him he has. Joseph dies.

The funeral is a somber affair. Mary mainly stays in the manger while the community outside gathers to mourn for two days. When it's over, Yeshua tells Mary that it is time to begin his ministry. He will be preaching further and further away.

Far away in Qumran, a desert town in the Jordan River Valley, we find Cousin John -- or, as we'll soon come to know him, JOHN THE BAPTIST. He leads a sermon focusing on the coming Messiah, the spiritual value of baptism, and the importance of sin/repentance. Everyone gathered in the audience seems to admire him. Including someone in the back, who raises his voice to confirm John's wisdom...

...Yeshua. It's been years since the two cousins have met, and John pulls Yeshua in for a firm embrace. They walk and talk throughout the town, catching up. John's rigorous study of scripture over the last couple of years has expanded his understanding greatly. He feels that he has come to his own unique understanding of the religious philosophy. Yeshua ensures him that their philosophies are actually one in the same. The talk then shifts to that of the Messiah. John still does not know the identity of the Messiah, but believes that he must serve as a prophet or "forerunner." Yeshua contradicts this. He tells John that the Messiah will be his own prophet. John should instead focus on baptizing for repentance. This is his purpose. Suddenly, the truth seems to occur to John. Yeshua matches the description of the Messiah. John asks Yeshua point blank. Yeshua just says, "The Messiah will be revealed in due time." Yeshua embraces John once more and sets off again.

Back in Nazareth, several loud, aggressive knocks on the door wake Mary up in the middle of night again. But this time upon opening the door, she doesn't find enemies. Instead, she finds two nearly collapsed men: SIMON OF CANONEUS and...Matthan! He's alive, if barely so. Matthan explains that he and Simon broke out of the prison in Tiberias before the Romans slaughtered everyone. He and his army attacked the city of Sepphoris but failed. The Zealot movement is in shambles. He knows now that he followed the wrong leader. Only the Messiah can lead them to victory. He must find him. Mary smiles --- she knows where the Messiah is.

Mary, James, and Matthan journey out to the River Jordan to watch John speak. His sermon has gathered many visitors, eager to be baptized and hear about the Messiah. Many Romans and fans of the old guard have come to watch as well, eager to call John out for blasphemy. But John carries on, inspiring his onlookers. He tells the story of the Messiah, who sat down with the beggars, the downtrodden, and the deformed outside the gates of Jerusalem. The Messiah explained to these men that soon there would be no more disease or poverty. The crowd is rapt.

Finally, as the sermon ends, Yeshua descends from the desert and makes his way to the banks of the river. He asks John to baptize him. John consents, and when the



magical moment is finished, a white dove lands on Yeshua's shoulder. A BOOMING VOICE from the heavens exclaims, "This is my dearly loved son, who brings me great joy." It is the voice of God. Everyone bows in awe. John officially re-names Yeshua as Jesus. The Christ. The Messiah. Everyone cheers.

**The end.**