

CHRIST THE LORD

Screenplay by

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Based on the novel

CHRIST THE LORD: OUT OF EGYPT

by

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. STREET OF CARPENTERS, ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT, 7 A.D. - DAY 1

CLOSE on a boy's face as he stares hard at the ground. This is JESUS. Seven years old, dark-eyed, tousled hair, with a wiry energy. At his feet we see his cousin, SALOME, a small girl his age, who is drawing in the dirt.

SALOME

For a camel you make a triangle like
this. Then some lines for legs here...

The street is half empty. Some light hammering, the rasp of a saw, wood being carried. A donkey shifts to the shade, swishing at flies. A man shakes pebbles from his sandals.

Jesus glances at a knot of slightly OLDER BOYS who stand nearby. A bully, ELEAZER, glares back at Jesus.

Leaning against a wall, A HANDSOME MAN CHOMPS INTO AN APPLE. We'll come to recognize his face in different roles. He's our DEMON.

Jesus turns back to Salome who wants his attention.

SALOME (CONT'D)

...You're not watching -- then a neck,
and another triangle for a head, see...

THE SOUND OF POUNDING FEET CHARGES TOWARD THEM. Jesus whips around as he's SLAMMED TO THE GROUND.

Dirt swirls in a tornado of arms and legs. The bully, ELEAZER, much bigger and older, pins Jesus, pummelling him. Salome shrieks. Everyone turns to watch.

The Demon DROPS HIS APPLE, WHICH ROLLS INTO THE STREET, approaches to see better.

ELEAZER

(at Jesus)

Little baby! Playing with *girls*.

Squatting on Jesus, Eleazer slugs him in the jaw. Jesus squirms and wriggles, swatting back ineffectively. Eleazer rubs dirt in Jesus's face. Spits on him.

Hysterical, Salome grabs a stick and hits Eleazer.

SALOME

Get off! Get off him!

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

Eleazer turns on her. Eyes wide, Salome knows she's in for it. She shrieks and runs. Eleazer takes off after her.

Jesus, trembling, scrambles to his feet. Just as Eleazer is upon Salome...

JESUS

Stop! Don't touch her! EVER!

ELEAZER pauses, throws a look back at Jesus, then LOCKS EYES WITH THE DEMON who hisses at him:

DEMON

Go. Get her!

Eleazer takes off again after Salome. Unseen by anyone, he slips on the apple, lurching forward, FALLING HARD LIKE A BOULDER, exploding dust. His skull hits the cobblestone with a crack. He's unmoving. Unnatural. Dead.

Everything SLIDES INTO SLOW MOTION. We hear only the muted CLINK of a slow hammer like a metronome in the background, muffled sounds of a warm and sleepy afternoon.

QUICK CUTS IN SLO MO FROM JESUS'S POV:

-- Salome pivots, hair fanning, to see Eleazer hit the ground --

-- ELEAZER'S MOTHER, parcel on her head, freezes witnessing her son's collapse --

-- JAMES, 13 and Jesus's adopted brother, sweeps aside an onlooker to get a better look at the impossible, then turns and runs --

-- Our DEMON stares hard at Jesus --

BACK TO REAL TIME:

Jesus "comes to." He heaves and pants, lip-quivering, terrified and disbelieving of what he's just witnessed. Dirt streaks his face, one cheek already swelling. He and Salome lock eyes.

CLOSE ON ELEAZER. Cheek pressed in the dirt, eyes open, mouth sagging, tongue half out.

One of Eleazer's cousins, a TEENAGE BOY, walks to the fallen body, bends to look closer.

TEENAGE BOY

He's dead...HE'S DEAD!

Others approach, scared, confused. They all saw it, but it makes no sense.

TEENAGE BOY (CONT'D)

Eleazer's dead!

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (2)

THE HANDSOME DEMON WHISPERS in the Teenage Boy's ear. The boy turns, as if on cue, points to Jesus, says loudly:

TEENAGE BOY (CONT'D)
You killed him!

Jesus shakes his head -- he's innocent. He points at the Demon, knowing somehow this man is influencing events.

JESUS
The man told you to say that.

The Teenage Boy and others look to where he's pointing. They see no one -- no sign of the Demon. Only Jesus sees him.

TEENAGE BOY
(to Jesus)
You killed Eleazer!

ELEAZER'S MOTHER, parcel and veil flying off her head, streaks to her son. HER WAIL RISES, alerting everyone on the street.

TEENAGE BOY (CONT'D)
We all saw it! He did it. He killed him.

THE STREET ERUPTS. Shouting. Chaos.

JESUS STAGGERS BACKWARD, shaking his head, scared, his eyes dart from one accuser to the next. His adopted brother, James, gives him a look to kill.

A pretty young woman in her early twenties moves through the crowd to Jesus. This is MARY, his mother.

JESUS
Mama--

MARY
--Come...come.

Shielding him with her veil, she hustles her son from the scene, pushing aside some of Eleazer's cousins who crowd them.

CUT TO:

2 INT. MARY AND JOSEPH'S HOME - DAY

2

Mary and Jesus sweep into the room as Mary mutters comforting words to Jesus.

JOSEPH, Mary's husband, emerges from the shadows, stirred from his afternoon rest by the commotion. He's older than Mary, tall, with a quiet strength -- the undisputed head of the family.

Joseph reacts to Jesus' battered face.

(CONTINUED)

JOSEPH
What's happened?

JAMES CRASHES INTO THE ROOM. With him comes all the rage, envy, and conflict of an adopted child eclipsed by a younger, beloved sibling.

JAMES
He killed him! Jesus killed Eleazer!

This is the first time we hear his name and all that implies.

MARY
Don't say that! He couldn't. There's no evil in him...

JAMES
But he did. I saw it.
(now looking to his father)
He cursed him, and Eleazer fell dead.
(now to Jesus)
Tell them!

The small family, including little Salome, crowds into the room.

MARY
He couldn't have done that.

JAMES
-- You always take his side.

JOSEPH
(rebuking)
-- James --

CLEOPAS, Mary's older brother and Salome's father, asserts himself, like usual. Despite a bad cough, he's quick to think, to act, to laugh, and especially to make his opinion known.

CLEOPAS
(pointing to the door)
Joseph, they're all out there. Jonathan bar Zakkai and his brothers -- they're saying he killed their boy...

Joseph checks the street, alarmed, CLOSES the door.

CLEOPAS (CONT'D)
...How could that be? Eleazer's twice as big, and a bully to boot. It's envy, that's what it is, we got the job they wanted...

JOSEPH
Enough! Is the boy dead?

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (2)

MARY

He can't be. Our son is not a murderer.

Joseph struggles for composure, as husband and wife share the tension of the moment, and a powerful knowledge about their son.

JOSEPH

(to Mary)

Is he dead?

(now to the family)

Is he dead or does he live? Can any of you tell me?

Cleopas, his wife, MIRIAM, James and Mary erupt into chatter "*Did you see it? I saw the boy's mother crying. Rumors as usual...*"

Salome crawls to Jesus's side, WHISPERS in his ear.

SALOME

You saved me.

JESUS

I didn't hurt him.

SALOME

Just do what you did before...

FLASHBACK TO:

3 EXT. SEASHORE - DAY

3

Jesus and Salome play together. James sits nearby reading. Salome and Jesus are scooping out "nests" in the sand, putting small clay pigeons in each. As Jesus scoops, he uncovers a dead bird.

Salome sees, looks at him with sad eyes.

SALOME (V.O.)

...like the bird. Remember?

Gently, Jesus picks up the small dead bird.

We hear A PEEP. ON THE SOUND OF FLAPPING WINGS, THE BIRD FLIES OFF, leaving his hands empty.

James glances over just in time to see it, darkness clouds his face. Salome squeals. Jesus is stunned; questions and fear flood his eyes.

CUT BACK TO:

4 INT. MARY AND JOSEPH'S HOME - DAY

4

Jesus looks closely into Salome's eyes, the only person who understands the moment. She nods, urging him.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

SALOME
Go on. I won't tell.

He wipes away his tears and looks at the room throbbing with distressed adults -- and all because of him. With one last look of encouragement from Salome, Jesus slips out of the room.

5 EXT. ALLEY - DAY

5

Jesus drops out of a low window opening into the alley, sneaks his way to...

6 EXT. STREET OF CARPENTERS - DAY

6

The street's in an uproar. Jewish men from Eleazer's family SHAKE THEIR TOOLS AND FISTS. Others THROW ROCKS at the front of the house. Egyptians and Romans come for a look, aware this could become an angry and dangerous MOB.

Through this Jesus slides like a fish in a river, moving through people and straight into...

7 INT. ELEAZER'S HOUSE - DAY

7

A dim front room, lit only by a sliver of light from the doorway. In a side room we glimpse TWO WOMEN murmuring together with the PHYSICIAN, a Jew dressed in Greek style. Loud weeping is heard off-screen.

Jesus slips along the wall, unseen, into a back room...

8 INT. ELEAZER'S BEDROOM - DAY

8

The room is tiny, cave-like. One small candle flickers by Eleazer's side, illuminating Jesus as he approaches.

Eleazer lies on a mat, still, pale, dead. The soles of his feet are black, his tunic soiled. His mouth hangs open.

Nervous, Jesus approaches Eleazer. He looks him up and down, then tentatively pokes him in the arm. No response.

Once more Jesus wipes the last of his tears away, bites his lip, and with a big breath -- fighting his fear, doubt, and trepidation -- gently reaches toward Eleazer's face.

Just before touching him, Jesus pulls back, unsure. With a quick peek toward the other room, once again, hands shaking, pressed together in prayer, Jesus reaches...

THE ROOM GOES SILENT, as if underwater. We're in Jesus's head now.

JESUS (V.O.)
Wake up. Wake up now!

QUICK CUTS IN SLOW MOTION:

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

-- Jesus's small, dirty hands come to rest on Eleazer's forehead --

-- Resting on Eleazer's forehead, the tips of his fingers cross as if in prayer --

-- We see a reflection of Eleazer in Jesus's eyes as Jesus slowly closes his eyes, drops his chin --

--ALL GOES TO BLACK --

-- WE HEAR A BREATH CATCH, THEN INFLATE --

PHYSICIAN (V.O.)

You! How dare you come here!

BACK TO REAL TIME:

Jesus's eyes snap open. Eleazer's Mother screams. Adults surround him and Eleazer. He removes his hands from Eleazer's forehead. The Physician approaches Jesus, who turns toward him, terrified.

PHYSICIAN

Out. Out! You vile little...

THEN: WITH A YELL, ELEAZER POUNCES on Jesus, knocking him to the ground. PUNCHING. BEATING. He resumes the attack of earlier, but with more fury.

The boys roll on the floor, Eleazer again on top.

ELEAZER

Son of David! Son of David! Go to...

Voices rise, drowning out Eleazer's curses.

Joseph and James rush into the room. James, shocked at seeing Eleazer alive, stops in his tracks. Joseph's strong arms encircle Eleazer, lifting him off Jesus while he continues to struggle and yell. We see Jesus's battered face, cut lip and eye.

9 INT. ELEAZER'S HOUSE - DAY

9

Father and son make it no farther than the front room now filled with members of both families, all agitated and confused. Cleopas, despite his cough, is embroiled in an argument.

CLEOPAS

Where'd you learn medicine? From cavemen in Britain?

PHYSICIAN

The boy was dead I tell you. On my word, dead!

Joseph, Cleopas and James stand together on one side. Men from Eleazer's family on the other. Mary enters, taking Jesus aside, alarmed at his battered face.

(CONTINUED)