**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JESUS AND JUDAS IN THE MUSICAL FILM**

**INTRODUCTION**

Norman Jewison’s musical film Jesus Christ Superstar (1973) and co-written by Melvyn Bragg and Jewison, is a story of the last week of Jesus’ life based on the various gospel accounts. The story begins with the preparation of Jesus’ entry in Jerusalem with his disciples and culminates with his crucifixion at Golgotha. The film highlights interpersonal and political struggles between Jesus and Judas Iscariot.

THE BODY

The name ‘Judas’ is often related to ideas of disloyalty, betrayal and treachery. In Jesus Christ Superstar (1973) musical film, Judas is depicted as a tragic and complex character that plays an important role in the life of Jesus Christ. The Bible presents him as a two dimensional person, at one point he is a disciple of Jesus who is entrusted with all finances but in the end he betrays Jesus in exchange for money. That one moment seals his fate as ‘Judas’ and he is forever remembered as a traitor. Comparing the Judas described in the Bible and that in Jewison’s musical film, we can clearly relate the name to a character of treachery and also the portrayal of the person who contributed largely in bringing Jesus Christ down.

In the Bible Judas is clearly depicted as a villain because of betraying Jesus, but in Jesus Christ Superstar (1973) he is presented as more human and only a victim of circumstances. This is evident by the fact that in the Bible he only need to be promoted so as to betray Jesus as stated in the Gospel of John ‘The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot ,son of Simon, to betray Jesus’(John 13:2) .Secondly in the Bible, his death is described as short and with no remorse shown towards him, implying that he indeed deserved that tragic ending for what he did. This is written in the Gospel of Matthew,’ So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself’(Matthew 27:5).In Jewison’s film , this is not the case as sympathy is depicted through the death song ‘So long Judas, poor old Judas…’, that is sang repeatedly showing that Judas did not deserve the cruel outcome and was just a victim of the story.

The Biblical Judas is one whose fate and destiny are all towards betraying Jesus. Jesus himself predicts that Judas will betray him as written in the Gospel of John,’ After he had said this,Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me’(John 13: 21) .Elsewhere the Bible says ‘ Jesus answered , it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish. Then, dipping the piece of bread , he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon’ (John 13 :26).His main motivation that leads him to that destiny is money to a point where he critics Jesus when an expensive perfume is poured on him ‘ Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wage. He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself’ (John 12: 5-6). Surely in the end he betrays Jesus in exchange of money.However, the Judas described in Jewison’s film is a stark contrast to the Biblical one, in the film he is presented as a tragic figure of which the audience should at least sympathize with. Jewison uses the entire first musical number to illustrate that Judas only has the best interests of Jesus. The first music line is a soliloquy with Judas expressing his feelings of how Jesus is going to doom his friends and followers by refusing to exercise his authority over the Roman government. Also, his motivation in this case is not money but rather a genuine concern of his friends and the danger they themselves .He is thus determined to be of help by reducing the publicity of Jesus which he believes will be the root cause of the conflict between the followers of Jesus and the Roman authorities.

In both Norman Jewison’s musical film and the Biblical account, Judas hangs himself after betraying Jesus. In both accounts he is remorseful of his action leaving the audience with the question of whether he really knew that his act of betrayal would lead to Jesus’ crucifixation and eventual death. In the Gospel of Matthew the Bible records this remorsefulness with accurate exactness,’ When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus condemned , he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and elders .”I have sinned, for I betrayed innocent blood,” he said’ (Matthew 27:3). In Jewison’s film, before his death, Judas sings that he did not really know that he was handing Jesus over to the Chief Priests to die. The film interpretation of this song is that Judas ‘only interest in betraying Jesus was to counter the fate of all his followers. This is an extremely tragic nature of his part in the story as he unknowingly plays a greater role in the inevitable arrest and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

In the Bible Jesus is a hero as though hundred percent human ‘The son of man came eating and drinking… ’(Matthew 11:19),depicted in his getting angry and flipping tables in the temple, he is also hundred percent God ‘Simon Peter answered, you are the Christ the son of the Living God’(Matthew 18: 16) and thus means good for all mankind ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened ,and I will give you rest’(Matthew 11:28).While Judas in the Biblical context appears only when complaining of the expensive perfume used on Jesus and also during his arrest when he betrays him ‘While he was still speaking a crowd came up ,and the man who was called Judas, one of the twelve ,was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him,’(Luke 22:47).On the contrary in Norman’s musical film Judas is seen as the central character, due to the fact that Judas is the one who resurrects other than Jesus. In the film’s last song Judas interrogates Jesus as well apologizing to him for betraying him .The biblical Judas does not get to apologize, in fact he goes and hangs himself. According to the film Judas is not clearly depicted as the hero but more emphasis is put on his story line other than that of Jesus which is the case in the Bible.