



A 1st Century saviour finds himself in 21st Century Hackney... Literally. Figuratively as well. And he's not just taking the piss.

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# THE GOSPEL OF JOSH

One-hour comedy/drama created by Samuel Garza Bernstein

On Christmas Eve, a naked, well-muscled, dark-skinned man appears in a Hackney alleyway. He is unconscious and someone has thrashed him within an inch of his life—dried blood is everywhere. His name is Yeshua, which is Hebrew for Jesus. An aura of mystery prevails, but in truth, he has arrived here straight off the cross, catapulted forward through time.

However unprepared he is for the horrible wonders of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, he is preternaturally clever, and by the end of the pilot episode he can speak English, he's an object of affection for both sexes, and he has a false identity: Joshua Cohen from Leicester. Or just Josh.

The timing isn't random. Climate and political tensions have prompted global scientists to set the famed Doomsday Clock at 10 seconds to midnight. And the song 'All I Want for Christmas is the End of the Fuckin' World' is the UK's new Christmas Number-One, from a rave-punk band calling itself Doomsday Clock—a cheeky response to the crisis.

Josh's mission is revealed in oblique references and unexpected plot twists. A reboot of Christianity is being contemplated. Not a fiery Apocalypse mind you—God doesn't need that kind of drama—rather, a simple do-over. It's up to Josh to decide whether to pull the trigger, so he decides he needs to learn what it is to be human in our time.

His adventures are varied, surprising, dangerous, funny, and sexually charged. He connects with people in deep and unusual ways. And along the way, if there are times when he lies, cheats, steals, and even kills, well, he'll have his reasons...

Plus, there's a huge surprise waiting for him (and for us)—*Josh has a sister*. Luci is the older sibling he never knew he had and has never met. She has been waiting for him in London, ostensibly to help, but she is unpredictable and volatile, if not clinically bipolar. And she may or may not be the Devil.

Josh falls in love with Mila, a sexy former heroin addict. When he must reveal his identity in the middle of the first series, she imagines he's either psychotic or a sociopath. In the first series finale, she gets incontrovertible proof of his identity. Her second series dilemma: Does she really want to be God's daughter-in-law one day?

Story arcs progress over each series, yet episodes are self-contained, exploring three areas: *Relationships*—Josh and the people he comes to love; *Work*—a job path that he changes up constantly so he can experience new things; and *Spirituality*—His connection to his own faith changes as people change him. Romantic love provides the first series arc, sibling rivalry is the second series arc, and, in the third series, father issues rise to the surface.

The show strives to be audacious and unflinching in the mode of *Catastrophe*, *Flowers*, and *Fleabag* (which happens to be exploring God and hope in its second series). Yet Josh also unabashedly explores spirituality, giving the project a secondary *Call the Midwife* vibe.

It's low on snark, has a touch of the supernatural, and looks at divisive issues through new eyes. The Bible makes no mention of how Jesus might respond to a teen chick-with-a-dick sex worker, for instance. Reasonable people may disagree about his level of acceptance or just how far his personal involvement might go.

Josh is surprised by how much he loves this century and its irreverent eccentricities. And when you come right down to it, honestly, does the world even WANT to be saved? c. 2019

*Available: pilot script, first series episode outlines, second/third series plans, character descriptions*