***The Death and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth***

Then the entire council took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. They began to state their case: “This man has been leading our people astray by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and by claiming he is the Messiah, a king.” So Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “You have said it.” Pilate turned to the leading priests and to the crowd and said, “I find nothing wrong with this man! Then they became insistent. “But he is causing riots by his teaching wherever he goes—all over Judea, from Galilee to Jerusalem!”…. Then Pilate called together the leading priests and other religious leaders, along with the people, and he announced his verdict. “You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent.  Herod came to the same conclusion and sent him back to us. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty. So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him… Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, “Kill him, and release Barabbas to us!” (Barabbas was in prison for taking part in an insurrection in Jerusalem against the government, and for murder.) Pilate argued with them, because he wanted to release Jesus. But they kept shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” For the third time he demanded, “Why? What crime has he committed? I have found no reason to sentence him to death. So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.” But the mob shouted louder and louder, demanding that Jesus be crucified, and their voices prevailed…

The soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece. It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him. A sign announced the charge against him. It read, “The King of the Jews.” Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left…The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. “Ha! Look at you now!” they yelled at him. “You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!”The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. “He saved others,” they scoffed, “but he can’t save himself! Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!” Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him. At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. Then at three o’clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, *“Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?”* which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. “Wait!” he said. “Let’s see whether Elijah comes to take him down!”Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, “This man truly was the Son of God!”Some women were there, watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James the younger and of Joseph), and Salome. They had been followers of Jesus and had cared for him while he was in Galilee. Many other women who had come with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus’ body. Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. On the way they were asking each other, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, but the angel said, “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He is raised from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died.”The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened.

*\*\*Excerpts are from the Gospel according to Luke chapter 23 and 24.*