

Is He the Son of God?  
A Roman Soldier's Easter Story

By

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Theme:

This play tells the story of a Roman Soldier who struggles over the part he played in the crucifixion of Christ. He decides to speak with those who knew Him best in an effort to come to a personal conclusion regarding the claims that Christ made while He was here on earth.

Biblical Reference:

The Crucifixion and Resurrection Story as found in:

Matthew 26-28  
Mark 14-16  
Luke 22-24  
John 17-20

Approximate Running Time:

40 minutes

Props:

Joses and Martha are carrying baskets with various fruits and vegetables in them as they move around the marketplace.

Cast of Characters:

Narrator

Jezeree: A roman soldier who is trying to determine if Jesus Christ really is the Messiah.  
John: The disciple of Jesus Christ. He provides eye witness evidence regarding all of the miracles that Jesus performed and confirms that he was the Messiah.  
Joses: [Pronounced Joe-CEASE] - a girl who was present at the death of Jesus  
Martha: Another woman who was there at the death of Jesus.  
Peter: The disciple of Jesus Christ. He gives the perspective of what it would have been like to wonder what was next.  
Mary: The mother of Christ.  
Mary Magdalene - These women confirm that he was raised from the dead. They challenge Jezeree to make a decision and they lead him to a relationship with God.

Narrator: It was Saturday morning. Many people were still shocked at the events of the previous day - the day that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was crucified. The crowds had dispersed, but they were still there in Jerusalem, wondering what could happen next and waiting to see what it would be. Crowds were an everyday part of Jesus' life. People gathered at the mention of His name in the hopes of hearing Him teach, seeing Him perform a miracle, or just hoping to be around the most incredible man who ever lived. Crowds also gathered to see the crucifixion, watching to see what would happen, wondering if He was going to perform another miracle, waiting to see if He was going to save himself. Finally, He gave up His spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. When a Roman Soldier saw the earthquake and all that happened afterwards he was terrified and exclaimed, "Surely this was the Son of God." Another Roman Soldier named Jezeree was standing at his side. He began to wonder in his own mind if his compatriot was right - if this man was the Son of God. The question remained in the back of his mind all night. It nagged him as he lay down to try to sleep that night. It greeted him as soon as he awoke. It drove him on a personal quest to find out just who this Jesus was and what His life could mean to him. He knew that many of Jesus followers were still in the city. Jezeree decided to find them. He thought that they might be able to answer the questions that continued to draw his attention. If only he could find them.

Scene 1: *[John is seeking shelter in Jerusalem after the crucifixion of Christ. He is wearing a robe with a hood and he is trying to be incognito as he moves about the city. Jezeree, dressed as a roman soldier, is looking for John. He enters from the rear of the auditorium, going from person to person, looking for someone who knew the Christ so they could tell him where John may be. He can even ask those in attendance if they were one of the twelve who were seen with the King of the Jews in a confrontational manner.]*

Jezeree: *[Entering stage, noticing John, approaching him.]* Are you one of the twelve?

John: *[Keeping his hood on and avoiding eye contact.]* I'm not sure what you're talking about.

Jezeree: Are you one of the twelve who are known as the disciples of the one who is called the King of the Jews?

John: Why do you know want to know? Are you seeking to kill all of those who were with him?

Jezeree: What does it matter to you what we do with them?

John: Why would I tell you where they are if you were only going to arrest them and kill them like you did to Jesus?

Jezeree: What if I told you that no harm would come to them?

John: What guarantee do I have that you're telling the truth.

Jezerec: [*Holding him by the shoulders and turning him so they're eye to eye. His hands remain on his shoulders as he speaks.*] You can trust me. I give you my word. No harm will come to them. I haven't come to arrest them or crucify them; I only want to speak to them so that they can answer some questions that I have. [*Pause as his words sink in.*] You can trust me. No harm will come to them.

John: [*He lifts his hands to remove his hood. As he does this, Jezerec's hands drop to his sides.*] I am John. I am one of the twelve. Why is it that you seek me?

Jezerec: You are one of the twelve?

John: Yes, I was one of his disciples.

Jezerec: [*In awe.*] Tell me, what was it like to be one of the twelve? Was it incredible?

John: It depends on when you ask me. At times it was incredibly painful, at times it was incredibly embarrassing, at times it was incredibly inconvenient, and right now it's incredibly dangerous.

Jezerec: Yes, that I understand, but there were times when it was awe inspiring to be with Him, was it not?

John: [*With a glimmer in his eye.*] Oh, at times it was more than just awe inspiring. To see Him perform those miracles; to feed thousands of people on a simple lunch - and have plenty left over; to see the lame walk; the blind to see; the crippled healed just like that; to see Him send demons out of the possessed - and that one time when they were told to enter a herd of swine and the swine ran off a cliff. I wasn't sure what was going to happen next. I remember the time when he turned water into wine - it was the best tasting wine I had ever had! To be a disciple of Jesus Christ was something I treasured.

Jezerec: And I've heard there were crowds everywhere you went.

John: It was incredible. The crowds would gather no matter where we were. If we were walking through a town they were all around us. They were even standing in open doors, hanging out of open windows, standing on the rooftops, in trees even. In the countryside they flocked all around, going before us, around us, and behind us. Sometimes it was hard for us to take our next steps because the crowd was pressed in so tightly. When we traveled by boat we left thousands on the shore. Some came out with us, swimming as far as they could, some paddling any boat they could find until the wind carried us faster. Then, when we got to the other side, they were there already, waiting for us to arrive so they could see Him, touch Him, be healed by Him, hear Him speak, anything.

Jezeree: That must have been something to see. It sounds like the crowd that gathers for a crucifixion.

John: But these people were gathering because they knew that something good was going to happen, not because they were looking to see someone die.

Jezeree: What about His teaching?

John: You can't even imagine how the people settled right down to hear Him teach. Even if there were thousands of people, he would only have to open his mouth and it was silent. Then He began to speak in simple terms, telling stories mostly, parables He called them. They were stories about men that had far more meaning than just to tell a tale. He had insight into men and wisdom beyond anyone I've ever met.

Jezeree: And what about His claims to be more than just a man?

John: He claimed that He was the Messiah - God's own son. He said that He and the Father are one and that since we've seen Him we can know the Father. He said that He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that nobody can come to the Father except through Him. He also told us that He was going to prepare a place for us and that He would return and take us there with Him.

Jezeree: What does that mean?

John: I'm not sure. There were a lot of things that He said that we didn't quite get. It was like He was hinting towards things at times and then sometimes He would come right out and say things so clearly that you knew what He was talking about.

Jezeree: Like with the parables?

John: No, He explained the parables to us when we were alone with Him. I mean His prophecies about the future. He said that He was going to be taken away from us for a time and that He would return to us again.

Jezeree: Did He tell you what He meant by that?

John: No. At first I thought it was in reference to His arrest. When Pilate offered to release Jesus or Barabbas I knew that Jesus was going to be returned to us - because He predicted it. He said that He was going to be taken from us and then He was going to be returned to us. But He wasn't.

Jezeree: So, are you thinking that He was wrong about that?

John: No, I'm thinking that I don't understand what He was talking about. Something inside me tells me that we haven't seen the last of Jesus, but it doesn't make sense to me.

Jezeree: How can we see Him again if He's dead?

John: I'm not sure. All I know is that He said it and if He was just a man there would be no hope left. But He was the Living God born here on earth as a man and there is nothing He can't do.

Jezeree: So, you believe that He was the Messiah?

John: I do.

Jezeree: And you believe that He was the Son of God.

John: I do.

Jezeree: And you believe that His story isn't over yet?

John: I do. I know how foolish it sounds, but if you would have been with Him to see all of those miracles He performed. If you would have heard His teachings first-hand like I did. If you would have been there when miraculous things took place right in front of my eyes, then you wouldn't think me a fool. I heard a voice come from the heavens. Peter, James, and I went with Him up to a high mountain where He revealed Himself to us. We saw Moses and Elijah there with Him. His clothing became so bright it was as if He was the sun lighting the day. Then a booming voice came from the heavens saying, "This is my son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" We were so terrified we hit the ground on our faces. He told us to get up and it was just Him standing there.

Jezeree: Was it a dream then?

John: That was no dream. It was real. Just like the other miracles we saw weren't dreams. The walking on water, the storm that was quieted when He told it to, those who He healed were really healed; those he raised from the dead were really alive again. Jesus was the real thing. I know that He was the Messiah. I know that He was God's only begotten Son. And even if this is the end of His story, I do believe that He is the Way, that He is the Truth, that He is the Life, and that He truly is the way for us to have a relationship with the God in Heaven.

Jezeree: Wow, I can see how passionate you are about Him.

John: He changed my life. In fact, I don't think my life would be worth much if it wasn't for the fact that He was a part of it.

Jezeree: Thank you for sharing your story with me.

John: Are you going to arrest me now?

Jezeree: No, I gave you my word and I shall keep it.

John: Are you going to send your friends to take me away?

Jezeree: No, but you are right to fear for your life. There are many who would like to see the twelve die along with the King of the Jews. I would leave the city as soon as possible if I were you.

John: I can't leave yet. I have this feeling that something else is going to happen and I want to be a part of it.


Jezeree: Then keep a low profile. Roman eyes and ears are everywhere. Thank you for speaking with me.

John: May God be with you.

Jezeree: I must go now. I too am at risk in speaking with you.

*[Jezeree quickly exits. John puts on his hood, looks around, and exits in the opposite direction of Jezeree.]*

- CURTAIN -



Narrator: Jezeree thought about the events of the previous day. He remembered how two other men, both criminals, were also let out with him to be executed. How they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified Him, along with the criminals - one on His right and one on His left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." How they divided up his clothes by casting lots. How the people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at Him. They said, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. He remembered how they offered Him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him, "Don't you fear God," he said, "Since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly for we are getting what our deeds deserve, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Paradise... Jezeree wondered about the great things Jesus Christ had accomplished during His short life, what he himself had witnessed yesterday, what the criminals on the cross said to Jesus, seeking answers to his questions. But he still wasn't sure what it all meant to him. He decided to find yet others who could rid him of the nagging questions that wouldn't go away.

Scene 2: *[Josés and Martha are at the market place to get some food for their families and the disciples that are seeking refuge with them. They too are keeping a low profile and are dressed with scarves around their head and faces, only allowing their eyes to be seen. They are carrying baskets with various fruits and vegetables in them as they move around the marketplace. Jezeree enters from the place he exited and seeks them out.]*

Jezeree: Hey, you two, stop. Did you two not know the one who is called the King of the Jews?

Josés: Are you talking to us?

Jezeree: Yes, I'm talking to you. Did you not know the one who is called the King of the Jews?

Martha: We are not afraid of you.

Josés: We will not lie to you.

Martha: We are not ashamed of Him.

Josés: We knew Him and we loved Him.

Martha: And we are very bitter about what you did to Him.

Josés: He did not deserve to die and yet you took His life without any remorse or regret.

Jezeree: You are so bold to talk to a Roman Guard that way! Do you not fear for your lives?

Martha: You have taken the life of the one thing that is dear to us.

Joses: You could not injure us any more if you took our own lives.

Jezeree: That is a bold statement. I can make that happen so fast you will not know the cause of it.

Martha: As you wish. It will be as the Lord has appointed it to be.

Joses: Jesus meant everything to us. He is our Lord and our King. He is more important to us than our own lives are.

Jezeree: How can you say that He is more important than your own life? He is dead. Did you not know that?

Joses: You may have killed his body, but you did not kill Him. He is still alive and well and our King in Heaven.

Jezeree: You are so confident of your claims.

Martha: They are not our claims. He made many claims while He was with us. He did many incredible miracles and He made many promises.

Joses: And we believe that they will all come true.

Jezeree: He is dead. Aren't you aware of that?

Martha: Yes, we know that. We saw what you did to Him. Do you not know how you pained us to terrorize Him and torture Him as you did?

Joses: Do you not recognize that the guilt for His spilled blood is on your hands?

Jezeree: You blame me for killing your king?

*[Martha and Joses act as the aggressors from this point on while Jezeree is trying to defend his actions to these two women.]*

Martha: Weren't you part of guard that killed Him?

Jezeree: Yes, I was, but I was only following orders. Should not the guilt for His death be on the hands of the one who made the decision?

Joses: You can be sure that God will hold those who accomplished this horrible act accountable for their actions when they stand before Him upon the Day of Judgment.

Martha: Do you not admit your part in killing Him?

Jezeree: No, I admit it. I took part in it. I even enjoyed it - as I enjoy doing my job punishing each and every prisoner of the Roman Guard. Someone must keep law and order in our land.

Joses: Law and order. Is that what you call it?



Jezeree: What?

Joses: What you did to an innocent man. Is that law and order?

Jezeree: He wasn't an innocent man. He was accused of a crime, he was tried in a court of law, and he was convicted of that crime just as any other criminal.

Martha: And you did not find the punishment too severe for the crime?

Jezeree: He was sentenced to be scourged and then to die on a cross - just as the two who died with Him. I was merely enforcing the judge's decision. I don't have an opinion as to whether or not it was too severe.

Joses: So, the scourging wasn't enough to pay the price of His crime? You ripped His clothes off of His back. You tied Him to a pole. You beat Him with a cat and nine tails until there was no flesh left on His back and sides and that wasn't enough to pay the price of the crime you claim He committed?

Jezeree: It wasn't up to me.

Martha: Then you dragged Him off to the palace grounds and ridiculed Him, punching His face and body, hitting Him with a staff, placing a crown of thorns on his Head and pressing it in until it pierced His skull, you spit on Him, you even pulled His beard out in fistfuls, and you beat Him until He was close to death and that wasn't enough?

Jezeree: It wasn't up to me.

Joses: Yet you chose to participate. Nobody made you take part in the horrible things that were done to Him.

Jezeree: I was just doing my job.

Martha: Then you forced Him to carry the crossbeam of His cross out through the town in the hot sun.

Jezeree: Every prisoner who is to be crucified carries the crossbeam of his cross. It's standard procedure.

Joses: You stood behind Him, ridiculing Him, forcing Him to walk when it was obvious that He didn't have enough strength left to walk another step. Then, when He fell before you, you struck Him with your whip and forced Him to go on.

Jezeree: Standard procedure.

Martha: Then you stripped Him of His clothes, laid Him out on the cross and nailed each of His hands to the wood - ignoring His cries of pain. You nailed His feet with one nail and you dropped the cross into a hole in the ground.

Jezeree: Yes, that is how we killed Him. That is how we killed hundreds of others who were sentenced to die by crucifixion.

Martha: Was it standard procedure to gamble for His clothes or post the sign above His head that said The King of the Jews? Was it standard procedure to hurl insults at Him as he hung on the cross? Was it standard procedure to give Him nothing but wine mixed with gall to drink?

Joses: You say that His death was standard procedure but you are not willing to grasp what you did to Him.

Jezeree: I carried out my orders.

Martha: No, you crucified the living Son of God. You ended the life of the most gentle, loving, giving, caring, incredible man who ever walked the face of the earth.

Joses: Do you know of the miracles that He performed? Have you heard any of His teachings? Did He work a great work in your life?

Jezeree: I've spoken to John. I've heard about the great things He did while He was alive - the miracles, the teachings, the way He worked in John's life. But that was after I followed my orders and put another criminal to death.

Martha: I don't know what you Romans consider a criminal to be.

Joses: But remember, God will hold you accountable for what you did to His one and only Son. He will not forget the words you spoke in vain. He will not forget the punches you threw, the times you hit Him with a staff, the hairs you ripped from His face, or even the very thoughts that went through your head as you enjoyed taking part in your "standard procedure."

Jezeree: I must go.

Martha: What's the matter? Is the truth too much for you to take?

Jezeree: There are those who would like to do harm to His followers. I would be careful not to associate yourself with Him anymore if I were you.


Joses: What do we have to be afraid of?

Martha: Do you dare to punish us, innocent women, as you have punished our Lord's one and only Son, an innocent man?

Jezeree: I cannot take any more of these accusations. I must go. Consider yourself warned.

*[He exits visibly shaken. Martha and Joses exit after him in a confident manner.]*

- CURTAIN -



Narrator: It was Thursday evening. Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover Feast together as a group in an upper room prepared for them. When they had finished, a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Peter, Peter, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today you will deny three times that you know me."

Scene 3: [*Peter enters wearing a hood. He is obviously agitated. He is very nervous. He is looking over his shoulder in an effort to make sure that nobody is following him. He goes from one place to another and then back again, aimlessly moving around just making sure that he isn't being followed. Jezereee enters, watches Peter's movements for a few seconds, and then approaches him from behind.*]

Jezereee: You must be Peter.

Peter: What? Who said that?

Jezereee: I did. I said you must be Peter?

Peter: Who are you? How do you know my name?

Jezereee: My name is Jezereee. I spoke to others who know you and they told me I would find you here and how to pick you out of a crowd. To be honest, it wasn't that hard to pick you out.

Peter: What do you want with me? Are you here to arrest me?

Jezereee: No, I mean you no harm. I need to talk with you.

Peter: Talk with me? About what? Am I in some kind of trouble?

Jezereee: No, I will cause you no trouble. I mean you no harm. Are you willing to talk with me?

Peter: What do you want to talk about?

Jezereee: Jesus.

Peter: [*Visibly upset.*] Get away from me. Don't mention that name to me again.

Jezeree: I mean you no harm. I have questions about Him and I'm told you are someone who can answer them.

Peter: I can't. I just can't. I can't talk about Him.

Jezeree: Why not?

Peter: Do you know what He did to me? Do you know what I did to Him?

Jezeree: No. Actually, I don't. The people I've spoken to have only hinted about what happened between the two of you. I need to hear the story from you.

Peter: I can't. I just can't tell you what happened. [Pause.] Why do you want to hear my story?

Jezeree: [*Being transparent for the first time.*] I have to know if His claims are true. I spoke with John about the miracles He performed, the great things He did for others, and of His teachings. John told me about His claims to be the Messiah and the true Son of God. I have to know if His claims were true or not and I believe you can help me decide.

Peter: I'm the wrong person to talk to about that.

Jezeree: But you were there with Him.

Peter: Yeah, I was there with Him, but not at the end. I denied that I had anything to do with Him in the end.

Jezeree: Was it before or after He was arrested?

Peter: It was after, but what does that have to do with anything?

Jezeree: Look, I've been through this dozens of times. I know that people go through a lot of emotions when their loved ones are taken into custody. As soldiers we're taught not to let our emotions get to us and sometimes it's even hard for me to keep my emotions out of it. It's only natural for you to go through a variety of emotions. Come on, tell me your story. Maybe I can help you.

Peter: I doubt that.

Jezeree: Come on, tell me your story. Get it off your chest.

Peter: I don't know if I should.

Jezeree: It would help both of us and it would really help me make my decision.

Peter: Okay. I was one of His disciples. I saw everything that John saw. I saw the miracles, I heard the teaching, and I was there on the mountain when He revealed His glory to us. I even walked on water in the middle of the sea so that I could be with Him - if you can believe that. I was there in the Garden of Gethsemane when He was arrested. There had to be about a hundred men who came to get Him. [*Laughs.*] They were so afraid of Him. They looked like they were about to run at any minute. One of them said that Jesus was under arrest. When Jesus turned to him to tell them He was the one they were looking for they all took a step away from Him and some of them even fell to the ground. You should have seen the look on their faces. Then they came forward and arrested Him. I was so mad that I took someone's sword right out of their hand and cut off one of their ears.

Jezeree: I heard about that. What were you aiming for?

Peter: I don't know. I was just so mad. I was swinging at anything I could hit. But I'll never forget what happened after that. Jesus reached out and healed the man and He said, "Do you think I cannot call on my Father and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But it must happen this way so that scripture can be fulfilled." That was the last I heard from Him.

Jezeree: What in that is making you so upset?

Peter: It's not that. Earlier that evening we celebrated the Passover meal together. That night He told me that I would deny him three times before the rooster crowed twice.

Jezeree: Wow.

Peter: Yeah. I didn't believe Him. There was no way I was going to deny someone who I thought was the Son of God. I try to be someone my friends can depend on and here my Lord was telling me that I was going to deny Him three times before morning.

Jezeree: I can see why that would upset you.

Peter: The worst part is that His prediction came true. The first time I don't know what I was thinking. I was just standing there, trying to get all of my thoughts together. He had just been arrested and I heard some people saying that He deserved it and that He should be crucified. Some servant girl comes up to me and gets in my face and says that I was with Jesus of Galilee. I told her that I didn't know what she was talking about. Then another girl found me later and said that I was with Jesus of Nazareth. I told her that I didn't even know the man. Others heard our conversation and came to me and asked me further questions. They told me that my accent gave me away and that I had to be one of His disciples. [*Visually upset.*] I was so mad that I called down curses on myself and I swore to them that I didn't know Him. As soon as I said the words I heard the rooster crow and I realized what I had done. I wept so hard my body just shook.

Jezeree: Hey, come on. It was a long, stressful night. You didn't know what you were doing.

- Peter: I know it was a long stressful night, but I did know what I was doing. I can't just pass off my actions to the stress of the situation. I knew those people thought I was with Him and I know that I denied ever having known Him. I don't know why I did it.
- Jezeree: It might have been because you were afraid for your own life. Even now there are those who believe that all 12 of you should suffer the same fate as Jesus, well eleven now that we know that Judas is dead.
- Peter: I don't think I would even argue against it. The worst part is that I still don't know how I feel about Him. I remember the miracles and the teachings. I remember the promises and the plans we made. I think about the triumphal entry he made into this city about a week ago and I think about where we are now. He's dead. I just can't get over that. We thought we were coming to Jerusalem to set up a new kingdom. We thought that we were going to reign with Him on some sort of a new throne in this city. We thought that His reign would never end.
- Jezeree: I didn't hear about that.
- Peter: Yeah, we disciples had big plans. We shared a little bit about them with Jesus and He told us that we had it all wrong. It didn't stop us from dreaming, though. Now I look at what I thought was going to happen right about now and I can't see any way anything positive is going to happen. I fear for my life because I knew Him, I have no money because I gave everything that I had to follow Him, I have no food because no one will admit they know me, I have no hope for the future because He died on a cross - and it's all because of Him.
- Jezeree: What do you mean?
- Peter: I know it sounds harsh, but I bought the whole deal; hook, line, and sinker. He said that He was the Son of God. He said that He could give us living water that would never end. He said that if we believed in Him we would have everlasting life. He said that He was going to set up a kingdom that would never end. I believed that He was the Son of God and I wonder how the Son of God could be crucified by Roman soldiers. He said that He could call down hundreds of legions of angels, but He didn't. Wouldn't that bother you?
- Jezeree: I sure would have liked to have seen it happen.
- Peter: He told us that He was going away and that He would soon return to us, but how is that possible now that He's dead? I just don't know what to feel anymore. Deep down inside I want to believe that He was the Son of God, that He really does care for us, and that His story isn't over yet, but I'm not sure what to think.
- Jezeree: I can't help you. I'm sorry. I wish I could, but I can't offer any help or hope to you. I'm not sure if I have any myself.


Peter:            [*Bitterly.*] Don't worry about me.

Jezeree:        Thanks for sharing your story with me.

Peter:            Don't tell anyone that you found me.

[*He puts his hood back on and tentatively walks across the stage and exits.  
Jezeree watches him exit and then exits himself on the opposite side of the stage.*]

- CURTAIN -

A decorative flourish consisting of a central scroll-like element with two symmetrical, curved lines extending outwards to the left and right, resembling a stylized infinity symbol or a flourish used in book design.

Narrator: Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down off the cross, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb that was cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. That day the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir, they said, "We remember that while Jesus of Nazareth was still alive that he said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So Pilate gave the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. The last deception will be worse than the first. "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go. Make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard before it.

Scene 4: [*It is Easter morning. Mary and Mary Magdalene have been to the tomb and have seen their risen Lord. They are busy telling all who will hear their story. Jezeree has sought them out to hear their story first hand. Mary and Mary Magdalene enter together and Jezeree enters on the other side of the stage. They quickly walk towards each other as soon as they enter.*]

Mary: [*With great joy.*] Have you heard that Christ has risen from the dead?

Jezeree: Yes I've heard, but I've come to ask you some questions about it.

Magdalene: We are happy to tell you what we have seen. We've been telling everyone we've met what the Lord has done for us this great day!

Jezeree: Well, tell me. I want to hear your story too.

Mary: Early this morning we went to our Lord's tomb so that we could anoint His body with oil.

Magdalene: I know that it sounds like a foolish thing to do, but we felt like we had to do something for Jesus.

Jezeree: Wasn't He buried in a tomb and a large stone was rolled before it?

Mary: Yes.

Jezeree: And didn't Pilate post an armed squadron of guards there to be sure that nobody stole the body in the night?

Magdalene: Yes.

Jezeree: Then how were you going to get past the armed guards and even if you could, how could you remove the stone so that you could get in? A stone that size has to weigh hundreds of pounds, at least.



Mary: We didn't think it through. We just wanted to do something and this sounded like a good idea at the time.

Magdalene: Anyway, as soon as we arrived, there was a violent earthquake and an angel of the Lord came down from Heaven. He rolled back the stone and just sat on it.

Jezeree: Woah.

Mary: It was incredible. The angel was bright as lightening and his clothes were as bright as fresh fallen snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they literally shook as they were standing there and then fell on the ground like they were dead.

Magdalene: The angel said to us, "do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him."

Mary: Then, when we were heading back to tell everyone what we had just seen, we saw Jesus himself further along the way. We actually saw Him alive again! We dropped to our knees and worshiped Him. He told us that we should get up and go to the other disciples to tell them to meet with Him in Galilee.

Jezeree: That's incredible. He actually rose from the dead?

Mary: Yes He did.

Jezeree: And you saw Him face to face?

Magdalene: Yes we did.

Jezeree: And you saw an angel roll the stone away?

Mary: Yes we did. And you should have seen the look on those soldiers faces! No offense, but they were scared to death.

Magdalene: I don't blame them. We were scared too.

Jezeree: I can imagine. [*He begins to think.*] That's incredible. He raised Himself from the dead.

Mary: He raised others from the dead while He was with us, why shouldn't He be able to raise Himself too? I can't believe we didn't trust that He wouldn't leave or forsake us.

Magdalene: He was God's own Son. He had the power to create the universe, why would death and the grave have any power over Him?

Jezeree: I've never heard of anyone ever doing anything even close to this before. This is a true miracle. [*Again, thinking.*] He raised Himself from the dead.

Mary: You keep saying that. Don't you believe that it's true?

Jezeree: It's easy to say, He raised Himself from the dead. But it's hard to believe that it's true. You saw Him alive and well earlier this morning with your own eyes?

Magdalene: Yes we did.

Jezeree: And you're sure of it.

Mary: Why would we lie to you?

Jezeree: [*Absorbed in thought.*] I don't know. [*Not listening to them.*]

Magdalene: So, you don't believe us?

Mary: There are others who have seen the empty tomb. He promised to meet with us again in Galilee. You can come with us there if you'd like.

Magdalene: We're heading in that direction now.

Jezeree: So, do you believe that His claims to be the Son of God are true?

Mary: Of course.

Magdalene: Haven't you heard and seen enough to believe that He is the Son of God yourself?

Jezeree: I'm not sure. I spoke to John and he told me about his experiences with Jesus. He told me of Jesus miracles, His teachings, and the impact Jesus made on him. I spoke with two women who were at the crucifixion. They told me He was an innocent man. Since then I've looked into the reasons why He was convicted and I know that the witnesses that presented evidence against Him were lying. I spoke with Peter who was very confused about what Jesus claimed while He was alive and questioned what was going to happen now that He was dead. I also know that he was very upset that he denied Jesus three times. Now I'm talking to you and I'm hearing that Jesus miraculously raised himself from the dead, that an angel rolled back the stone and spoke to you. I'm hearing that you even saw Jesus alive again. And to be honest with you, I don't know what to do with everything that I've heard.

Mary: What's to be confused about?

Jezeree: There's a lot of information coming in and I'm not sure what end result it leads to.

Magdalene: Do you believe that Jesus actually performed the miracles that John told you about?

Jezeree: I've heard about them from more than one source, so I have to believe that they are true as John described them.


Mary: And do you believe that He was an innocent man?

Jezeree: I've spoken with men who know that He was falsely accused which led to His death on the cross.

- Magdalene: Do you believe that we saw the angel at the tomb, that He rose from the dead, and that we saw Him alive today?
- Jezeree: Again, from everything that I've heard I would have to say that it must have been as you've said.
- Mary: Then why are you not willing to admit that He is the Messiah, God's one and only Son, and that He rose from the dead for you and for me?
- Magdalene: Don't you understand that He is the one perfect sacrifice? His death on the cross was for you and for me. He died so that you could have life and life everlasting.
- Jezeree: John said that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that no one can come to the Father in Heaven except through Him.
- Mary: That's true. So, would you like to be able to come to the Father in Heaven when you die?
- Jezeree: Yeah, I sure would.
- Magdalene: Then repent of your sin, confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, and today will be the day of your salvation.
- Jezeree: Okay. I confess that I am a sinner and I believe that Jesus Christ is God's one and only Son, the Messiah that the Bible foretells, and that God has raised Him from the dead - you have seen that for yourselves.
- Mary: Praise God!
- Magdalene: Come with us. Come and see your Lord and Savior for yourself. Come with us to Galilee as we meet with Him there.
- Mary: What a glorious Easter Morning this is! May the whole world hear the truth and believe!
- Jezeree: Haven't you heard? Jesus Christ has risen from the dead! He is Risen!

Narrator: Praise God, Jesus Christ rose from the grave on the third day, overcoming death and the grave, providing life everlasting to all who confess with their mouths that He is Lord and who believe in their hearts that God has raised Him from the dead. This Easter morning we celebrate this glorious event and what it means to us. I say to you, as the angel said to Mary, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen! Jezeree asked pointed questions about Jesus Christ of those who knew Him best and he learned that He is the true Messiah. He is God's one and only Son, sent to earth to live life as a man, to teach us, to minister to us, and to die on a cross so that we can have forgiveness of sin and we too can have victory over death and the grave. This morning you have heard Christ's claims to be the Messiah, God's own Son. You have heard of His teachings. You have heard the Easter Story - how He was crucified, buried, and rose again on the third day. Now you have to make a decision about what you are going to do with the information you've been given. Will you accept His gift of eternal life? Will you confess with your mouth that He is Lord and believe that God has raised Him from the dead and be saved from your sin? Will you tell others of the great things that Christ has done this Easter Morning? Will you take this message to the ends of the world, proclaiming that He is Risen? It is my prayer that you accept Him as your Lord and Savior. May the whole world know of this great day!

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