

## Who Moved the Stone?

**Intro:** This spring I've been trying to do some work on our yard. A few days ago I decided to clean up an unsightly area on the cemetery property adjacent to our yard. In addition to the stumps, sticks, and other debris, there was a large rock. My neighbor noticing my efforts came over to help me remove the rock. After prying it from the ground we found the rock to be about 5-6 thick and roughly 3-4 square feet in area, typical limestone of our area. We quickly discovered that a rock that size is quite heavy; in fact, so heavy that two of us could not do much more than lift it and turn it over—virtually impossible to pick up. So the only way to remove it was to use his lawn tractor and a log chain and drag it across the yard where we could dispose of it.

That experience has caused me once again to think about another stone of much greater significance.

*Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene \*came early to the tomb, while it \*was still dark, and \*saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. (John 20:1)*

### Features of the Stone Covering Jesus' Tomb

***The text clearly indicates that the stone was of great size!***

*and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. (Matthew 27:60)*

*And looking up, they \*saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. (Mark 16:4)*

***The text indicates that the women coming to the tomb knew they could not move it by themselves, though there were three of them.***

*And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" (Mark 16:3)*

***There is an interesting parenthetical note in the Bezae manuscripts in the Cambridge Library in England.***

*"And when He was laid there, he put against the tomb a stone which 20 men could not roll away".*

Clearly it is a copyist's insertion but one that seems to be relatively old. Would one have taken the liberty to add such a note without some insight into the size of the stone? Would the writer have inserted this without some certainty about the size and weight?

***Historical or archaeological evidence offers us a probable picture of how tombs were covered.***

The Biblical evidence comports with pictures like this of tombs dating from the first century.

Obviously it was carved in the rock and had an entrance large enough for a person to go through even if "stooping" to enter; thus, 4 to 5 feet in height and 2-3 feet wide.

***GA engineers used the data from the Biblical record and geologic information about the rock in Palestine to calculate an approximate weight for the tomb stone of Joseph's tomb.***

These engineers have calculated the weight of a stone of the size comparable to the Biblical and archeological descriptions. They calculated that this stone would have weight between 1 ½ and 2 tons! Obviously a stone of this size would have required many strong men to move it from its place. As a point of comparison, the stone I removed in my back yard with my neighbor's help would have been a third or fourth the size of these tomb stones!

**Who moved the stone?**

***The enemies of Jesus had no reason to move the stone.***

They were concerned that the body might be stolen by the apostles and a theory of resurrection pawned off on the masses.

*Now on the next day, which is the one after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.' "Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest the disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how." And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone. (Matthew 27:62-66)*

Roman guards were placed to prevent someone from moving the stone. Failure to achieve such a mission would have cost them their lives.

***The apostles could not have moved the stone***

They were not psychologically prepared to do such a thing. They were in fact living in fear of their own lives.

*When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and \*said to them, "Peace be with you." (John 20:19)*

They could not have successfully gotten past the guards. Imagine a scene where the disciples tip-toe past a number of Roman guards. Imagine to move a 1 ½ ton stone without some much as making a noise sufficient to awake sleeping guards. Incredible!

The Biblical text clearly indicates that the stone was removed before the disciples visited the tomb again.

***The stone was miraculously removed by an angel of God.***

Matthew reports that an angel of God moved the stone:

*And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. (Matthew 28:2)*

Only this explanation can account for all the evidence given in the gospels. But we may need also to ask, "Why was the stone moved?"

The stone was not moved so that Jesus could get out! Jesus was capable, as later evidence shows of walking through walls. The stone seems to have been moved so that those outside could look in!

*And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow; and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. And the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. (Matthew 28:2-6)*

Perhaps an equally important question is:

#### **Who did the stone move?**

***It moved the apostles to seek the truth about Jesus' resurrection.***

*Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb. (John 20:3)*

***It moved them to give their lives in testifying that He was alive.***

*"This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. (Acts 2:32)*

***It moved them to suffer great things for their testimony, so much so that Paul said that if the resurrection was not true, the witnesses of it were most to be pitied.***

*If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15:19)*

**Their behavior is totally consistent with the message they preached that Jesus was seen alive many times during the 40 day period after His death until the time of His ascension to heaven, of which also they claimed to be witnesses.**

**What event had the power to move the apostles to overcome all fears, face the power of the enemy who had crucified their Lord and charge them with killing the Son of God and that affirming that He was alive!? Only the resurrection can explain the way the disciples were moved to alter their life's course and endure so many things!**

**Conclusion: Does the stone move you!? Is there any alternative explanation (natural or supernatural) that better fits the evidence? Do you believe that He arose from the dead?**