

An Angel of the LORD Rolled Back the Stone

Matthew 28: 2-4

At dawn on Sunday the seventeenth of Nisan

DIG: What specific supernatural events does Matthew claim took place on that Sunday morning? Why was the stone rolled back? What did the angels look like? Where else in the Bible do we find others looking like that? What does that mean? Who else witnessed this miracle? How did they behave? How did they shake (see verse 2)? What was ironic about the way they behaved?

REFLECT: What does the Lord need to do to get your attention? Do you need a spiritual earthquake or do you merely respond when He says: **Peace be with you**? Who moved the stone? Can you explain this to a seeking unbeliever? Have an answer ready!

On the eve of His crucifixion the Son had asked His Father to **glorify** Himself (John 17:1) by raising Jesus from the dead. In due time the Father answered this prayer of the Son. But there obviously needed to be human witnesses to substantiate this miracle. As a result, there was a violent earthquake (Matthew 28:2a). This earthquake, like the one at 3:00 pm the previous day (see Lw - **Accompanying Signs of Jesus' Death**), adds to the drama of the scene, and to the sense of **divine** intervention.

For an angel of the LORD came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone as Mary Magdalene and the other women were on their way, and sat on it (Mattityahu 28:2b). Why was it necessary to roll back the stone? It was obviously a sign of His resurrection. Who would have known that the tomb was empty if no one could get in! But was it open to let Messiah out? No. A week later though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among His talmidim and said: **Peace be with you** (John 20:26b)! Walls, wooden or stone, were no longer a hindrance to Him. By the time the stone was rolled back He was already gone. The tomb was not opened to let Him *out* but to let others *in*.

The angel's appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow (Matthew 28:3). It is interesting to note the description of the angel because it is very unusual in Scripture (Daniel 10:6; Revelation 10:1). The same kind of **glory** revealed in Christ at the Transfiguration (see Gb - **Jesus took Peter, James and John up a High Mountain where He was Transfigured**) was revealed through this angel sitting on the stone and two other angels seen inside the tomb (Luke 24:4).

The only other witnesses to this scene were **the Temple guards**. It said something about how intense the situation was when even those battle-tested **men were so afraid of the angel that they shook and** couldn't even run. **Matthew** uses a play on words by using the root word for **earthquake** in **Matthew 28:2** and **the earth shook** in **Matthew 27:51**, to describe how **the Temple guards** trembled. **They became like dead men (Matthew 28:4)**. It's quite ironic that those assigned to **guard** the corpse themselves **became like dead men! They** were helpless in the presence of **the angel**. While the *Gospel* writers did not record all the details of the resurrection, they did clearly state the accompanying events and the results of the resurrection.¹⁶⁴⁸