

Easter Sunday 2010 - "Earthquake, Angels & an Empty Tomb!"

(with sections from sermon by Rev. Elliott Hull March 23, 2008 titled "And the Earth Shook").

Read the 4 Gospel accounts of the resurrection. (attached)

There are 4 gospel accounts of the resurrection. Each of them has a special emphases.

Matthew mentions the great stone that the soldiers placed in front of the tomb of Jesus. That was the women's main concern. Who would roll the stone away for them?

To their amazement, the stone had been rolled away. Matthew tells us, "There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it." That stone symbolized the finality of the death of Jesus, the massiveness of the stone is like the crushing weight of death that held Jesus in the grave and that separates the living from the dead. The stone confronted the women at the cemetery. The stone was so great it could only be rolled away by a mighty power, the mighty power of God.

The power of God shook the earth with a violent earthquake. The earthquake signifies that the Resurrection is not something personal and private, for Jesus only. The earthquake shook the very foundations of the earth! God who made all of creation touched the earth with power to change the course of history. The whole earth was shaken and changed.

The women at the tomb encountered an angel of God. His appearance was as "lightening" and it frightened them. Would you be afraid if you encountered an angel from God in a graveyard? I think so. The angel said to the women "Do not be afraid." Whenever the Bible references encounters with angels the first thing the angel says is "Do not be afraid". There is something fearsome in an encounter with angels. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, he has risen." Earthquake, lightening, angels! The resurrection was a spine tingling, earth-shaking event!

Matthew's dramatic account echoes **Mark's** account of the resurrection. Mark also has the stone, the angel, the fear of the women and the announcement that Jesus is risen. Mark writes, "The women fled from the

tomb, “trembling and bewildered...and said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.” This is a strange description of the resurrection. Some scholars have suggested that Mark is a sermon and as such it ends abruptly in order to leave the hearers with the question, ‘What will I say of the resurrection?’

Luke’s account includes the stone rolled away, the angels who appeared like lightning which frightened the women. The angel said, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!” The women went to tell the disciples but “the disciples did not believe the women, because their words seemed like nonsense.”

John tells us that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb on Easter morning and found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. She ran to tell the disciples. Peter and John ran to the tomb and found burial cloths and linens but no body. When Peter and John left the tomb, Mary remained and Jesus appeared to her, whom she mistook as the gardener.

Each of these Easter accounts tell the powerful story of the resurrection in a unique way.

For **Matthew**, Easter is a supernatural earthquake event with an angel rolling the stone away from the tomb and sitting on it.

Mark’s story ends abruptly with the women running home so afraid they said nothing to anyone.

Luke’s account tells how the event of the resurrection bewildered the disciples.

John tells of the Resurrected Jesus encountering Mary Magdalene in her sorrow and confusion and comforting her.

In the resurrection, God acted with power to defeat death and the earth shook. The angel appeared, the stone was rolled away, Caesar's soldiers shook and became paralyzed. The angel plopped himself down on the stone in one final act of impudent defiance of death and said to the women, "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." (Matt. 28:5-6) The place where Jesus defeated death is not hidden from

history, an event shrouded in mist and shadow. No, the angel invites the women to “**come and see the place where he lay.**” This was a real death, a real burial, and a just-as-real resurrection from the dead.

We too come to this place of worship on Easter looking for Jesus. For we too want to know that death does not have the last word in our lives. We want to know that God has overcome death. And in this place, week in and week out we tell again and again the greatest story ever told...the story of Jesus Christ, his victory over death in the resurrection. It is through the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Jesus that salvation has come to the world. Easter is God’s victory over sin and death.

And Jesus gives that victory to you today. Your sins are forgiven in the death of Jesus and your salvation is prefigured in his resurrection. This good news, like a powerful earthquake shakes us to the very core of our being, and gives us a shivering thrill of joy that even death cannot destroy! Thanks be to God! AMEN

Matthew 28:1-15 (New International Version)

The Resurrection

¹After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

²There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Mark 16:1-8 (New International Version)

The Resurrection

¹When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ²Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' "

⁸Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Luke 24:1-12 (New International Version)

The Resurrection

¹On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷"The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" ⁸Then they remembered his words.

⁹When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹²Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

John 20:1-18 (New International Version)

The Empty Tomb

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹⁰Then the disciples went back to their homes, ¹¹but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.