

STONE EASY TO MOVE?

The gospels say that a miracle healing man called Jesus Christ lived. They say he died by crucifixion and three days later he rose again. The tomb he was placed in was found wide open with the stone that had been across the entrance moved back and the tomb was mysteriously empty. His body was gone. Certain witnesses claimed that Jesus appeared to them as a resurrected being.

The gossellers did use Old Testament stories to create stories about Jesus and it is a core Christian theme that it is full of figures and types of Jesus.

The framework for the story about the stone seems to have been taken from the book of Daniel by Matthew. Daniel is put in a den and a sealed stone is put over the mouth of it. An angel appears to Daniel who shines like lightning and makes him collapse. The same happens to the guards of Jesus' tomb. Daniel falls at the feet of an angel after who tells him not to be afraid. The women at Jesus tomb meet Jesus appearing angel-style who says they must not be afraid.

The Christians claim that the stone was very heavy. They like to claim that for it makes it look more likely that nobody could have stolen Jesus' body and started the resurrection legend. There is no evidence that one man or maybe a woman would have been unable to move it on their own. Why not suppose that if there was a miracle it was probably that somebody got the strength to get the stone shifted and the body out? Surely if you have to assume a miracle you have to assume a lesser one rather than a greater one?

A heavy stone is hardly a great thing in a book that says Samson had magical strength and the Gadarene demoniac was able to break the chains which secured him with the power of the demons. There is a cloud hanging over Jesus' innocence with regard to sorcery.

The Jews did not close tombs properly for the first three days in case the person would revive (page 89, The Turin Shroud is Genuine). They would have done this especially in the case of Jesus if they thought he could raise the dead and heal. The stone for the tomb of Jesus would have been in place well enough to keep animals out but Jesus could have got out.

The New Testament states that Jesus' tomb was cut out of a rock. Since that is so difficult it would seem to be a small tomb with a small stone for a door. The stone would have been like a flagstone for why have a big boulder? A flag would seal up the gaps better. Flags were used and rolled back and forth along a groove in the ground. And the angel in Matthew could still have sat on it if it were lying on something high.

The simplest way to shut defenders of the miraculously vanishing body idea up is to ask them what proof is there that the tomb was finished? If it was half-finished then who knows what happened? Accidents will happen and stones will fall out when the job is incomplete. They will answer that Jesus would not have been put there if it was not finished knowing fine well that the inside could have been ready.

It is interesting that Frank Morison says that two men could have moved the stone of the tomb (page 148, Who Moved the Stone?).

There were at least five women according to Luke and there is one in John and two or three in the rest. They wondered who was going to move the stone for them but that may say nothing about the size for that was a man's job and that society was rigidly sexist. When they had no men in their company it gives us the clue that only one man was needed. How? For they were going to ask a passer-by for one man is easier to find than a few. There would have been few men about at that hour. (Or maybe the women meant they needed somebody with authority to break the seal, which is out of the question because they would have got their permission from the authorities before they had set out at all.) If so, one man would have done when they were just going to keep an eye out for one of the few men about to do it. An inconsistency in the story is that they ran to the apostles minutes later instead of bringing one along to move the stone. Some say the stone was heavy when five women could not move it. But most of them may have been old and they may have only imagined it was that hard to move. When they went alone it suggests they believed they could move it themselves. Matthew and Mark have two or three women which must be taken to be exact for they would not have implied that such a small number went alone to the tomb obviously intending to open it which would indicate a small stone that was easily moved and a grave easily robbed. It is certain that the stone was easily moved and not ultra heavy. The stone might have just been a light flag that was cut in a hurry so that the tomb would not be left open.

The tomb might have been partly open but closed enough to keep animals out and the women might only have needed it moved a bit to climb into the tomb. Or maybe they thought they needed it. Jesus could have got out through the gap.

Matthew 27:60, Mark 15:46 and Luke 23 say that Joseph moved the stone back to close the tomb at the burial and don't mention anybody else. John says that Nicodemus was there as well burying Jesus. Nobody else was mentioned so there was nobody else meaning that just two men could move the stone. The gospel would not omit mention of another helper who moved the stone for it would have been to its advantage to have a stone that only say ten strong men could shift. Luke's at least five women could manage it. Matthew's "angel" who he never says was supernatural moved the stone alone. Matthew says that the angel who we know could be just a man moved the stone. He may not say the man physically lifted the stone out but he could mean that and that is significant.

The Secret Gospel of Mark says that Jesus moved the stone of a young man's tomb by himself.

Scholars who say there were no guards would say that the stone must have been exceptionally heavy when no guards were needed to keep intruders out. That is stupid for if the disciples would have stolen Jesus they could have got enough men to move the stone so the guards would still have been needed.

Worse is the argument in Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Vol 1 that Jesus' stone would have been heavier than usual for there was a danger of theft (page 208). The best way to avoid theft is not to let anybody know where the body is. And the tomb was not made for Jesus so the stone would have been ordinary and who was going to transport a mammoth rock at that time? If there were guards nobody would have worried about the stone. And the Matthew Gospel says Jesus was left unguarded for a long time which shows there was nothing unusual about the size of the stone.

The Bezae Manuscripts say that Mark 16:4 originally said that the stone could not be rolled away even by twenty men (page 71, The Resurrection Factor). But there is no evidence that the manuscripts are right or that this was in the original. The best manuscripts omit that reference. Also, since the stone was flat one can imagine how big it would be if twenty could not move it. Nobody would have a stone that size at their tomb. And the Jews would not have been able to say the apostles stole Jesus for there were only eleven of them and most of them were believed to have turned against Jesus because of the way they treated him at the end. This left only a few to steal the body if they wished.

The stone had to be removed by rolling it up a slot in an incline (page 86, The Resurrection Factor). But the women found it at a distance from the grave see page 87 of the fundamentalist tripe The Resurrection Factor. If this is so, then it sounds like the stone fell out and rolled a bit away from the tomb. That would scare the soldiers off, giving somebody the chance to remove the body. Perhaps the slot went on down past where the stone was positioned at the door and was kept in place with a brick or something. Jesus might have been able to move the brick so that the stone would slide and he could get out. Perhaps there was a rope to the brick and somebody hiding in the bushes pulled it out scaring the soldiers away for they were superstitious. This person then was able to rescue Jesus.

Richard Carrier on his Internet site, Why I Don't Buy the Resurrection Story, says that stones across tombs in Palestine at the time of Jesus were very small and none larger than 4.5 feet high are known. The 4.5 feet one is on Herod's family tomb meaning the others were probably smaller for it was a royal tomb. The stone of Jesus would have been less than a ton in weight and not hard to push from inside and the word roll in the gospels suggests that the stone was a big flat thing. But it can't have been that big for the gospels would love to tell us if it were.

Jesus knew he would die one day and the gospels say he planned to rise again long before he did. The tomb could have been rigged to manufacture evidence that Jesus rose. It could have been a magic trick.

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