**“THE STONE WAS ROLLED AWAY”**

**TEXT**: Matthew 28:1-7

**THESIS**: To speak about the stone which was rolled away from Jesus’ tomb and what it symbolizes.

**INTRO**:

**A.** The order of events seems to be that Jesus is raised from the dead sometime before daylight on that first Easter Sunday morning. Mary Magdalene and another Mary arrive about 6AM at the tomb. Suddenly the ground beneath their feet begins to quake. A shining angel descends from above and with superhuman strength breaks the seal the Roman Govt. had placed upon it and rolls the stone away, then as if to celebrate his triumph, sits on the stone. The guards at the tomb are so awe struck, they collapse. The women are addressed by the angel and told that Jesus is no longer among the dead but is alive once more. He further instructs them to inform the disciples.

**I would like to call the stone which failed to seal the tomb, to witness of Jesus’ resurrection this morning.** Jesus told his disciples on Palm Sunday that if the people did not proclaim Him their Messiah on that day that the stones would have cried out to witness for Him. Let’s see what this stone has to say…

**I. A DOOR IS OPENED:**

 **A.** The Door of The Tomb Is Removed!

 **1.** Here then is a doorway without a door.

 **2.** The death house of our Savior was firmly secured by a huge stone, which has now been set aside.

 **3.** This empty doorway speaks to us of the fact that death’s ancient prison house is with-out a barrier; the saints shall pass in, but they shall not be shut in!

**ILLUS**: It wasn’t a dead man who walked out of the empty tomb, it was the living Savior! The door wasn’t rolled away to let Jesus out, but to let the witnesses in!

➕ Recently one of our members was witnessing to a Catholic priest. The priest showed him a “tomb” where, he said, Rome had sent some of the remains of our Savior’s body. The challenge was thrown out that if Jesus is risen, there are no “remains”! This man also asked the priest to open the “tomb” to see some of the body of our Savior. (If even a finger bone of our Savior was left in that original tomb, He is NOT risen! And we are yet in our sins!)

➕ Like Samson who tore the gates of Gaza, posts, bar and all, away and left the stronghold of the Philistines open and exposed, so has it the grave door been torn away by our Savior. The city of death and Hell has been invaded and the door has been torn asunder and is henceforth bereft of power against the believer!

 **4.** If Jesus had not paid in full our sin debt, He would have continued to be a captive of the grave, but “He is not here, He is risen!”

 **5.** Our sins were the great stone which shut the mouth of His sepulcher, but He has torn away the door and death is no longer a dark dungeon and ante chamber of hell; but rather a perfumed bedchamber and vestibule of heaven!

**QUOTE**: Spurgeon: “…as surely as Jesus rose, so must His people leave the dead; there is nothing to prevent the resurrection of the saints. The stone which could keep us in the prison has been rolled away. Who can bar us in when the door itself is gone?”

**POEM**: Who shall rebuild for the tyrant his prison? The sceptre lies broken that fell from his hands; The stone is removed; the lord is arisen: The helpless shall soon be released from their bands.

**II. A MEMORIAL IS SET UP:**

**ILLUS**: Stones are often used as memorials. After Joshua did what Moses was not permitted to do, and crossed over into the Promised Land, he set up to rock piles to witness to future generations of God’s power and victory. The stone rolled away from Christ’s tomb testifies also of God’s power and victory.

 **A.** The Wall Becomes A Witness:

 **1.** The stone was erected as a wall to keep Christ in the tomb and to keep others out, but rolled aside from its position of separation, it witnesses to His power

 **2.** The angel sits atop the stone to invite all to come in to witness the miracle of the resurrection.

 **3.** The stone says: “Here my Master conquered hell and death! Come and see!”

 **4.** If the Master is risen, there is the promise that we will share in His victory!

**ILLUS**: That stone which was to seal the dead inside has now been rolled aside and proclaims His freedom from death, corruption, and hell. It shouts of the power and victory Christ had over the grave. It is an eternal witness to His resurrection and consequently to ours.

**III. A REST IS PROVIDED:**

 **A.** The Angel Sitting Atop The Stone Speaks Of Rest:

 **1.** The angel sits there silently breathing defiance to the Jews and their misguided zeal, to the Roman soldiers and their power and to any who would roll back that stone to seal His tomb if they can or if they dare!

 **2.** The angel also quietly sits there beckoning to the believer and whispering *“The Master’s work is done, come hither and rest also.”*

**ILLUS**: Do you mourn departed loved ones who were saved? The stone and its sitting angel tell you they are resting awaiting their resurrection. Are you soon expecting to strike your earthly tent, is the death angel hovering near your home? Then take heart, death has lost its terror because of the empty tomb of our Savior! He has left the dead, no more to die! And because He lives you shall live also!

**IV. A FOUNDATION IS LAID:**

  **A.** The Resurrection Is The Foundation Of Our Faith:

 **1.** The fact of the resurrection is the keystone of Christianity.

 **2.** Disprove the resurrection of Christ and Christianity is a cruel hoax.

*1 Cor. 15:14-20*

*14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

*15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.*

*16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:*

*17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*

*18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*

*19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

*20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*

*1 Cor. 15:55*

*55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

**ILLUS**: Do you place your entire dependence upon the merits of His shed blood which is certified by His resurrection? Then you have a foundation which is sure and secure. If you are building upon any other foundation, it is mere shifting sand and your hopes will be dashed. There is nothing beyond death and the grave for you but eternal emptiness, torment and hell fire!

**V. A BOUNDARY IS ESTABLISHED:**

 **A.** There Are 2 Sides To The Stone Rolled Away:

  **1.** On one side are the guards who fall as dead men, in fear of what they have witnessed! v.4

 **2.** On the other side are the timid, trembling women invited by the angel seated on top of that stone, *“Fear not…”* v.5,6

 **3.** That stone rolled away becomes the boundary between the living and the dead the seekers and the scoffers, the believers and the unbelievers, the seekers, and the haters.

 **4.** To His enemies His resurrection is a “stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”

 **5.** To His followers His resurrection makes Him the Head of the Corner.

**ILLUS**: The resurrection acts much like the pillar which the Lord placed between Israel and Egypt; it was darkness for Egyptians, but light and comfort for God’s own.

 **6.** His resurrection is the promise of every believer’s resurrection to eternal life, because they are on the right side of that stone.

  **7.** But what fear should grip the soul of those on the other side of that stone; there is nothing to look forward to but a resurrection to eternal death.

**CONCL**:

🔅That stone rolled away by the angel and upon which he sat is a sure prophecy of doom for the unsaved and delight for the saved. O thank God for the empty tomb! Thank God “THE STONE HAS BEEN ROLLED AWAY!”

🔅You don’t have to believe it, but you will pay the consequences. The 883 ft. Titanic on its maiden voyage hit an iceberg, but this was *“the ship that couldn’t sink”!* So even though the damage was severe, the crew didn’t believe it would be disastrous, and the band played on while the passengers continued drinking, reveling, and dancing. If only the White Star Line had put enough lifeboats aboard. If only the crew had believed the severity of the damage. If only the people had believed the gravity of the situation and headed immediately to the lifeboats. If only… They didn’t believe, despite the facts, so they had to pay the consequences.

One day you too will say “If only…” if you don’t believe now.

**“THE STONE HAS BEEN ROLLED AWAY!” FOR YOU! Believe it!**