

## Synchronizing the Resurrection Narratives (6): Event #2: The earthquake (very early Sunday morning—perhaps 3:00-4:00 a.m.), Matt. 28:2-4.

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In the last two essays I established via solid exegesis of the original Greek (instead of subjective attempts to piece together Matthew 28:1 with the other gospel accounts of women visiting the tomb), that Mary Magdalene and another Mary went out to *see* Jesus' tomb Saturday evening about an hour before sunset probably around 5:45 p.m. Hence, the first of the resurrection puzzle piece to put in place is

**Matthew 28:1** Now late on the Sabbath (Saturday), as the first day (Sunday) was about to begin (just before sunset on Saturday), Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

Again, this trip is not to be confused with the visits of the women on Sunday morning. These two Mary's simply went to "*look*" at the grave. They did not anoint the body; there was no preparation. They made a quick visit to see the grave and return home. The next event is recorded in

**Matthew 28:2-4** 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.<sup>3</sup> And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow;<sup>4</sup> and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

This took place just prior to the next visit by Mary Magdalene on early Sunday morning while it was still dark as recorded in John 20; perhaps it was between 3:00-4:00 a.m. Let's note a few things about this earthquake event:

1. Earthquakes are often associated in the Bible with special events in which God is getting man's attention; e.g., "Listen, the Lord is Speaking" (Exod. 19:18, at Mt. Sinai; Matt. 27:51, at the death of Christ; Rev. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13-19, in the end times).
2. The angel stepped forward and must have taken the stone completely out of its groove and turned it over on its side. The result is that the heavy slab was lying flat on the ground and the angel was sitting upon it, to symbolize Christ's triumphant.

3. The stone was *not* rolled away to enable Jesus to make His way out of the tomb but to enable the women and Peter and John to enter into it. Mary Magdalene will be the first one to arrive just before daybreak on Sunday as recorded in John 20 (third event).
4. The marvelous radiance of the angel's countenance gave proof of his descent straight from heaven. The sparkling luster of his garment indicated holiness (cf. Dan 7:9; Matt. 17:2; Rev. 1:16; 10:1; 12:1; 20:11).
5. The guards' reaction is to be expected. They were overcome with fright. The same root Greek word used of the earthquake is used of the guards; both the ground and the guards were shaking. My guess is that the guards were shaking more than the ground!
6. The guards "became like dead men"; in other words, they were knocked unconscious, motionless as if dead.
7. The stone, the seal, the guard! What a sense of security all this had given to the chief priests and the Pharisees. Yet, before God all of the human activity was futile.
8. Christ's resurrection was the work of the Triune God. The Father raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 6:4), so did the Spirit (Rom. 8:11), and even Christ Himself as the second person of the Trinity took back His own human body (John 10:18).

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