

The Language of a Rock

What I learned about Easter by the Sea of Galilee ... from a stone

Every rock is a spiritual lesson waiting to be learned when you're in Israel. Or so it seemed that way when I went there for the first time a couple of years ago.

Any believer who's traveled around the Holy Land and traced the footsteps of Jesus knows the deep, almost inexplicable awakening that explodes inside you when, while touching the same land Jesus touched, the thought crosses your mind: *This is where my Savior was. I'm actually standing where the God of the universe stood!*

It happened countless times during my visit. Everywhere I went the surroundings seemed to whisper their Christ-brushed history like a flag flapping in the wind.

Yet the one moment I'll never forget occurred along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. I'd wandered off slightly from my group and found an opening among the rocks and bushes to sit alone and take in the surroundings where Jesus chose, out of anywhere on Earth, to live. Of course, I imagined Him walking upon the water in the distant. And I wondered if He'd stood nearby when He first called Peter and Andrew to follow Him.

But then I spotted a single rock, one not jagged or rough like those to my sides. It sat on the ground in front of me, smooth and weathered as if it had been tossed and rolled by a million tides in its lifetime. I reached down and picked it up, only to suddenly experience an all-of-history-flashes-before-your-eyes moment.

The stones will cry out!

The phrase rang in my head like a divine message. Jesus spoke the words in an oft-quoted verse, Luke 19:40, after telling a group of Pharisees that if His disciples stopped praising Him, the rocks would simply take their place in shouting hosannas. Habakkuk 2:11 speaks of the “stones of the wall” crying out. And a few other times the Bible refers to rocks as if they were living beings that could at times erupt with noise to their Maker.

But along the shores of Galilee, I thought of the language of two types of “rocks” in particular—stones that were not only much larger than what I held in my hand, but also infinitely valuable in their revelation of the majesty of Jesus.

When Jesus took His final breath, we know the whole earth travailed as its Maker endured more than all of creation put together could imagine. Matthew 27:51-52 says: “At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open” (NIV).

The Father is looking for those who worship Him in Spirit and truth (John 4:23). He desires deeper intimacy with those who can respond fittingly to His Spirit. Upon Jesus’ death, both the rocks and tombs (also made of stone) *had* to “break open” their mouths and cry out in anguish. They knew no other response. Because only a handful of people on the entire planet at that time grieved the despicable injustice of the perfect Jesus crucified, the rocks took it upon themselves to give Him the response due to Him.

But notice the entirely different language spoken by the second type of rock involved three days later. This was a massive boulder of sorts, meant to cover a tomb carved out of yet more rock—the tomb that symbolically swallowed the Word (Jesus).

Again, this tomb *had* to open its mouth: The covering stone was

miraculously rolled away from a feeble attempt to contain Jesus. Only this time, out of its mouth came complete silence—the deafening silence of an empty tomb. No words or sounds could match the resounding victory pronounced that first Easter morning. How typical of God to have a stone be the first to speak that morning.

Like the rock tomb, I want to have the Word buried so deep within me that life, not death, emerges from my mouth. And as I celebrate a risen Lord this Easter, I pray I'll yield the same rejoicing, victorious silence of that open-mouthed stone:

He is not here; He has risen!