

My Boulder Roller (The Quest for Divine Intervention): A Markan Resurrection Theology

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Abstract- This paper offers a critical theological and contextual rereading of Mark 16:1–3 through the metaphor of the "boulder" as an existential, spiritual, and socio-political impediment, and God as the ultimate "Boulder Roller." Building on resurrection theology, the study integrates biblical exegesis, systematic theology, pastoral theology, and African contextual realities. The paper argues that the rolled-away stone in the Markan resurrection narrative functions not merely as a historical detail but as a polyvalent symbol of divine intervention that dismantles human limitations—sin, death, fear, misrepresentation, poverty, illness, anxiety, and national crises. By engaging patristic insights, classical theologians, and contemporary biblical scholarship, the study contributes to resurrection-centered theology and praxis, particularly within contexts of suffering and instability. The paper advances the thesis that divine intervention is not episodic but covenantal, rooted in the resurrection of Christ, and activated through faith practices such as prayer, praise, and obedience to the Word.

Keywords: Resurrection, Divine Intervention, Mark 16, Boulder Metaphor, African Contextual Theology, Hope

I. INTRODUCTION

The resurrection of Jesus Christ stands at the very heart of Christian theology and proclamation. As the Apostle Paul asserts, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile" (1 Cor. 15:17). Among the resurrection narratives, Mark 16:1–3 presents a striking human question: "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" This question, voiced by faithful but anxious women, frames the existential tension between human limitation and divine possibility.

This study adopts the metaphor of the "boulder" as a hermeneutical lens for understanding human crises and the quest for divine intervention. While earlier philosophical reflections—such as the Zen parable popularized by Ryan Holiday—interpret obstacles as self-overcoming opportunities, Mark's Gospel

introduces a radically different logic: obstacles are overcome not merely by human resilience but by divine action. The resurrection stone was not rolled away by human effort; it was already moved by God. This paper therefore seeks to reinterpret the Markan resurrection narrative as a theological paradigm for divine intervention in both personal and communal crises, with particular attention to the African and Nigerian context.

II. METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study employs a multidisciplinary theological approach:

- Biblical exegesis, focusing on Mark 16:1–8 within its literary and historical context;
- Systematic theology, engaging doctrines of resurrection, providence, and divine intervention;
- Pastoral theology, addressing lived faith and suffering;
- Contextual theology, particularly African Christian experience of hardship, insecurity, and hope.

The metaphor theory of theology is also applied, recognizing metaphor as a legitimate vehicle for theological meaning.

III. EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF MARK 16:1–3

Mark's Gospel is characterized by realism, urgency, and human vulnerability. The women Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome approach the tomb motivated by love and devotion, not resurrection faith. Their concern about the stone reveals four theological realities:

1. Historical realism: The stone was "exceedingly great," sealed and guarded (cf. Matt. 27:62–66).

2. Human limitation: The women recognize their incapacity.
3. Faithful obedience: Despite uncertainty, they proceed.
4. Divine surprise: God had already acted.

Mark deliberately leaves unanswered *who* rolled away the stone, emphasizing divine agency rather than angelic mechanics. The removed stone does not enable resurrection; it reveals resurrection already accomplished.

IV. RESURRECTION AS THE FOUNDATION OF DIVINE INTERVENTION

The resurrection is not merely a miracle among many; it is the decisive act of God in history. As Moltmann argues, the resurrection is God's protest against suffering, injustice, and death. The stone at the tomb symbolizes death's finality, yet its removal proclaims God's irreversible victory.

Christ is the "first fruits" (1 Cor. 15:20), guaranteeing the future resurrection of believers. Thus, every divine intervention in history derives its authority and possibility from Easter morning.

V. THE THEOLOGY OF THE BOULDER

In biblical tradition, stones function as:

- Barriers (Matt. 27:66),
- Memorials (Josh. 4:7),
- Judgment instruments (Exod. 17:4),
- Foundations (Ps. 118:22).

In Mark 16, the stone is a barrier between despair and hope, mortality and immortality. Theologically, a boulder represents any force—spiritual, social, political, or psychological—that restricts God's intended fullness of life.

VI. TYPOLOGIES OF CONTEMPORARY BOULDERS

6.1 The Boulder of Sin

Sin alienates humanity from God, producing guilt, fear, and death. Christ's resurrection validates

justification (Rom. 4:25), rolling away sin's condemnation.

6.2 The Boulder of Death

Death, the ultimate human fear, has been rendered powerless. Resurrection transforms death from termination into transition (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

6.3 The Boulder of Defeat

Defeat arises when circumstances overwhelm hope. Resurrection theology reframes suffering as temporary and glory as eternal (2 Cor. 4:17–18).

6.4 The Boulder of Poverty

Poverty dehumanizes and destabilizes societies. Christ's self-emptying (2 Cor. 8:9) grounds a theology of dignity, generosity, and divine provision.

6.5 The Boulder of Misrepresentation

Misrepresentation distorts identity and truth. Jesus himself endured false accusations, yet resurrection vindicated his identity as Messiah (Mark 8:27–30).

6.6 The Boulder of Ill-Health

Healing narratives (Luke 8:43–48) reveal Christ as restorer of wholeness. Resurrection guarantees ultimate healing beyond mortality.

6.7 The Boulder of Anxiety

Anxiety reflects distrust in divine care (Matt. 6:31–34). Resurrection assures believers of God's abiding presence even amid storms (Mark 4:35–41).

6.8 The Boulder of National Crisis

In contexts of insecurity, corruption, and governance failure, divine intervention theology becomes a communal cry. Resurrection faith resists despair and empowers ethical responsibility.

VII. DIVINE INTERVENTION: CONCEPT AND BIBLICAL WITNESS

Divine intervention refers to God's active involvement in human history to redeem, restore, or judge. Scripture records interventions through:

- Natural forces (Exod. 14:21),
- Human agents (Moses, prophets, apostles),
- Supernatural acts (resurrection).

The resurrection is the definitive intervention, reframing all subsequent divine actions.

VIII. CATALYSTS OF DIVINE INTERVENTION

8.1 Prayer

Prayer aligns human dependence with divine will (1 Pet. 3:12). Hezekiah's deliverance exemplifies prayer-induced intervention.

8.2 Praise

Praise enthrones God amid crisis (Ps. 22:3). Paul and Silas' imprisonment narrative (Acts 16) demonstrates praise as a trigger of liberation.

8.3 The Word of God

The Word is living and transformative (Heb. 4:12), guiding discernment and action.

IX. IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Resurrection faith demands:

- Pastoral accompaniment of suffering communities;
- Prophetic engagement with injustice;
- Ethical leadership grounded in hope;
- Rejection of fatalism and idolatry.

The Church becomes a sign of the rolled-away stone—bearing witness to God's ongoing intervention.

X. CONCLUSION

The women's question—"Who will roll away the stone for us?"—remains humanity's question. Mark's Gospel answers not with human strength but divine action. God is the ultimate Boulder Roller. In Christ's resurrection, every stone that imprisons humanity has been decisively challenged.

In times of personal suffering and national crisis, resurrection theology calls believers to faithful movement toward God, trusting that the stone has already been rolled away. The empty tomb remains the Church's enduring proclamation of hope.

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