

Text: Matthew 14:22-33 // Mark 6:45-52 // John 6:15-21

Title: Walking on Water

Truth: Jesus is worthy of worship because He is God.

Date/Location: February 9 & 16, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

The modern figure of speech “to walk on water” refers to a job or thing which is humanly impossible. In short, it is a miracle. Here’s an example: “He finished the task so quickly, his boss thinks he walks on water.”

There were two similar events in the lives of the disciples and of Jesus. The one is recorded here in Matthew, Mark, and John, where Jesus was not initially in the boat. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record another event in which the Lord was already in the boat—asleep—with the disciples during a storm (Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-24).

Matthew 14:22-33 22 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. 23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. 24 But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. 25 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." 28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You,

command me to come to You on the water." 29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Jonah was the opposite—when he was thrown *out* of the boat, the seas became calm for the other sailors (Jonah 1:12, 15).

We need to keep in mind the function of this passage in terms of **Matthew's purpose**. It becomes **clear at the last verse**: "Truly, You are the Son of God." This miracle is one of those pinnacle miracles that highlights Jesus as a Man like no other. We learned earlier that He has authority over nature when he calmed earlier storm on Galilee (Matthew 8). He does that again here and builds on it by defying gravity as He walks on top of the water to the boat.

We conclude that Jesus is worthy of worship because He does the works of God. He is the Son of God—not merely a king! He was more than most people understood, but the disciples were beginning to figure it out.

I. Test of the Disciples, v. 22-24

A. Notice that Jesus made the disciples get into the boat. This means that he compelled them, forced them,

pressed them. There was a political *thing* going on in the background and He wanted to get them away from there. Perhaps they would be swallowed up by the enthusiasm of the crowd and also urge Jesus to become king immediately (see John 6:15).

- B. Jesus sent away the crowds, perhaps greeting some of them and doing any last-minute healing and speaking some final words. Then he went up the nearby mountain to pray by himself. This was a common practice in the Lord's ministry, one that we should do from time to time as well. Probably in 14:13 He was intending to spend time in solitude and prayer, but the coming crowd changed His plans.
- C. Timing: In 14:15, it says, "When it was evening..." and the disciples pointed out the need for food. In 14:23 it says, "Now when evening came, He was alone there." The Greek word for *evening* is the same in both cases, so it may be somewhat confusing. Did two days and evenings happen? From what I can tell, this is a single day, early in the evening, and then very late in the evening. The first could have been in what we could call the late afternoon, say 4pm. The "evening sacrifice" occurred between 3 and 5 pm.

Something I learned while looking into this matter was that there is the idea of a "relative hour" in which the day light period is divided into 12 hours, and the night dark period was also divided into 12 hours. If the daylight period was longer, like in the summer, it was still divided into 12 "relative hours" which were longer than the 12 relative hours of the shorter night period. A couple of

days of the year, the daylight and night periods exactly 12 hours (of course, on the equator that is always true).

In any case, the early evening could have been 4pm, and the later evening could have been 9 or 11pm, which is quite a few hours later. Bottom line: the language used is colloquial, not technical.

- D. Another note on timing: When the Lord came to the disciples, it was between 3am and 6am in the morning, which is the fourth watch of the night (6p-9, 9-12a, 12-3, 3-6a).
- E. The test of the disciples' faith was permitted, designed, and implemented by Christ. This was not a temptation to sin. They were put into this struggle plus "ghostly" appearance as a test. The Lord *put* them into this "fix."
Whether as a result of our own doing, or that of others, or specifically God's design, we are destined for suffering and hardships. These things try our faith in the Lord with the purpose of showing its true character and strengthening it, not destroying it.
- F. This situation may have protected the disciples from a more serious danger that they did not realize.
- G. Trust Christ in the midst of your tests. Remember He is sovereign over all your circumstances, and He is a Savior not only for eternal life, but for present life.
- H. Jesus saw what was happening to the disciples, apparently from miles away. See Mark 6:48. He cared, He came at right time, and He encouraged them so that their fear would turn to worship.

II. Response of Disciples, v. 25-27

- A. In the other account about the Lord calming the sea, the disciples were in fear of their lives. This fear of death drove their thinking entirely at that moment of time. Such fear controlled them, just like fear controls many people today.¹ This is a similar situation, but the Bible tells us that they were straining at the task of rowing (Mark 6:48) and were tossed to and fro by the waves. So, it was not so much fear at that point as it was extreme difficulty, and *that* in the middle of the night when sleep would have been a nice activity.
- B. Waad Haddad preached on this in March 2020 at the very beginning of the pandemic, and he reminded us that faith and peace go together; and doubt and fear go together. He said that when you do not have faith in God, what is fake seems real and what is real seems fake.
- C. The disciples thought they were seeing a ghost because what they saw happening was impossible. True enough. But did they really believe in *ghosts*? It was now that the trial turned from difficulty into terror.
- D. But the Lord was gracious and told them not to fear because they were seeing Him whom they know so well.

III. Peter's Response to the Lord, v. 28-31

- A. Peter's request to come onto the water was good. It was not a sin. He actually walked on the water for a moment. It may be that this kind of activity is possible, perhaps in

¹ Fear of death, fear of COVID, fear of climate change, fear of losing one's job, fear of bad weather, fear of what other people will think or say, etc. These things far too often take higher priority than what God says to us!

our glorified bodies or at designated times when the Lord permits it. We will see...

- B. But when Peter saw the wind (and waves), he became afraid. It is often said that he got his eyes off of Jesus. Keep your focus on Christ.
- C. He cried out with a short prayer, which is effective if offered in faith (even a little faith, like Peter had). Doubt is opposite of faith; Doubt and little faith go together.
- D. Jesus saved Peter from drowning and brought him into the boat as Jesus Himself entered the boat.

V. Result of the Test, v. 32-33

- A. Christ came into the boat, and test was over. The wind stopped. The waves calmed down quickly.
- B. The disciples realized they were dealing with a man who was more than a man. He was the Son of God. No other explanation for the data they had seen thus far fit better. The “liar” or “lunatic” options simply do not fit with One who works such miracles and speaks such evident truth.² *He*, my dear friends, is the same One with to Whom we will give account (Heb. 4:13).
- C. Return to the beginning of these notes to review the main point, which John stated in a different way: “these [things] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that you might may life in His name” (John 20:30-31). This life is not only eternal, but

² Note that the working of miracles alone does not authenticate a messenger from God. Satan can do things that appear to be miracles and he will do so during the Tribulation (Rev. 13:14, 16:14, 19:20). However, his representatives will not be speaking the truth (Deut. 13:1-3).

real life from the death of sin that starts immediately when one becomes a follower of Jesus.

Conclusion

Christ is able to take care of us here while taking care of our eternal life as well.

Direct our prayer toward Christ to ask His help. But do so in faith, trusting that the Lord will help you as He sees fit.

Return to passages like this to review often that you do not get too far off base. It is easy to stray away and look at our own things, our own circumstances, our own problems, our wind and waves, and forget Jesus is in charge. He is using all of that to improve our character and to strengthen our faith.

Appendix: Verses 34-36

- A. The Lord and disciples in the boat returned to the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee to a place called Gennesaret. The trans-Galilean trip was around 5 to 7 miles over water. During a clear day you could probably see the other side, but at night in a storm, there was no way to be sure where landfall would be.
- B. People at Gennesaret recognized Jesus—somehow—and sent messengers to bring the sick. They had enough background to know that Jesus could heal, and that He almost always would heal. At least that is how it seems from the way the account unfolds. They crowd-sourced the information to one another about his arrival and transported sick people to the place. They probably figured this was their best or only chance of being made well.

We would hope that the people had the same desire to come to Jesus for spiritual healing. Alas, we humans are so focused on the here and now and the physicality and sensuality of things that we miss the real underlying sin problem that impacts all of life including our emotions and happiness. Without God, no person can be truly well, joyful, happy, etc.

- C. They begged to be healed. But God's people do not have to beg. They can simply ask and trust God, because God's character is such that He is pre-disposed to give good gifts to His people (Matt. 7:8-11).
- D. Somewhat strangely, the people could touch the bottom edge of Jesus' garment and they would be made well. This is similar to what we seen Mark 5:27-28; Acts 5:15, 19:11-12. Note in the latter verses the Scripture says that God was working "unusual" or "extraordinary" miracles. These were not just miracles—which are themselves unusual. These things were *doubly extraordinary*. This could be a fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy that "greater works than these he will do" (John 14:12).

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