

PETER #3 Learning To Follow Jesus

“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Jesus said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” (Matthew 14:22-33)

Notes:

- The boat was a “*long way from the land*” (14:24) probably about 3 miles (4.8 km) out into the lake (cf. Jn. 6:19), which would’ve been 4–5 miles (6.4–8.0 km) wide at that point, depending on where they crossed.
- The “*fourth watch*” (14:25) The Roman military divided the night into 4 watches of 3 hours each, from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. The 4th watch would have been between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m., which means the disciples had been battling the storm for over 9 hours (cf. “by this time,” 14:24). ESV
- “Why did you doubt?” ‘Doubt’ in Greek is *distazo*—pulled two ways—between faith & fear. “Peter’s trust in the power of Christ gave way to his dread of the wind & waves.” [Robertson, *Word Pictures in NT*, p. 120]
- By walking on water in a furious storm, Jesus demonstrates that he is the Lord over all creation, and so there is no need to be afraid (v. 27) or to *doubt* (v. 32). The only fitting response is to worship Jesus & to acknowledge that *truly He is God’s Son* -- the only time in Matthew that the disciples use this full title to address Jesus. ESV

Mark’s Record of the same incident:

“Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat & go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after Jesus had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and Jesus was alone on the land. And He saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. About the 4th watch of the night Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” He got into the boat with them, & the wind ceased. They were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.” (Mark 6:45-52)

Notes: The Sea of Galilee is 696 feet (212 m) below sea level, resulting in violent downdrafts & sudden windstorms (cf. Mk. 4:37). Jesus sees their need & walks on water toward them. *He meant to pass by them*, not so that they would fail to see him (in which case Jesus would have stayed farther away from them), but so that they would see him “pass by” (Greek: *parerchomai*), walking on the water, thus giving visible evidence of his deity... The passage echoes the incident where God “passed” before Moses (the same verb, *parerchomai*, occurs in the Greek Septuagint of Exodus 33:19, 22; 34:6), giving a glimpse of His glory. But it also echoes Job 9, where Job says that it is God who “*trampled the waves of the sea*” (Job 9:8; the Greek Septuagint has *peripatōn ... epi thalassēs*, “walking on the sea,” using the same words as Mark 6:48, *peripatōn epi tēs thalassēs*) & then Job also says, “*He passes by me*” (Job 9:11, Greek: *parerchomai*). There is an implicit claim to divinity in Jesus’ actions. The disciples are overwhelmed by what appears to be a *ghost*. Like God in the OT, Jesus calms their troubled hearts by identifying himself (Jesus’ response “*It is I*” echoes Exodus 3:14) ESV.

John’s Record of the same incident:

“When evening came, Jesus’ disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, & started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, & Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea & coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.” (John 6:16-21)

Notes: The disciples *had rowed about three or four miles*. If the feeding of the multitude [immediately prior] took place at the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, the shortest distance to Capernaum would be 5–6 miles (8–10 km). *Walking on the sea* is not something Jesus did just to amaze the disciples, but rather it is a powerful, visible demonstration of Jesus’ sovereignty over the world that He created (Heb. 1:3, 10). In the OT, God alone rules over the seas (e.g. Psalm 29:10-11; 89:9; 107:28-30). Jesus’ words, “*It is I*,” represent the Greek phrase *egō eimi*, which in other contexts can be translated “I am.” It may allude to God’s self-identification as “I am who I am” (Exodus 3:14) & may thus be an indication of Jesus’ divinity. This connection becomes more clear when the phrase is repeated in later verses in John’s Gospel. ESV

I. After Two Years of Following Jesus

A. What has Peter seen?

- Jesus’ compassion, righteousness, love, mercy, grace, etc.
- Healing the lame, dead, blind, deaf, mute, demons possessed, etc.
- Miracles

B. What has Peter heard?

- Teaching with clarity, authority & without condemnation
- Testimonies of changed lives

II. Encountering a Stormy Situation (Matt. 14:22-25a)

A. Jesus forces the disciples to sail to the other side.

- Jesus “constrained, compelled or forced” the disciples to leave by boat [A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the NT*, vol. 1, *Matthew & Mark*, p. 118]

B. Jesus prays alone while the disciples sail away

C. The storm: winds blew & waves beat against the boat

D. The disciples would have been exhausted from the storm

III. Walking On the Waves (Matt. 14:25a-32)

A. Jesus came walking on the water toward the disciples.

- “Some...explain it away by urging that Jesus was only walking along the beach and not on the water, an impossible theory...Matthew uses the [Greek word] *epi*” –“upon” Robertson.

B. The disciples were afraid: “*It’s a ghost!*”

C. Jesus says: “*Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.*”

D. Peter desires to follow Jesus: “*Command me to come to you...*”

E. Peter gets out of the boat & walks on water!

F. Peter sinks

- “It is one thing to see the storm from the deck of a stout [strong] ship, another to see it in the midst of the waves (F. F. Bruce) Peter was actually beginning to sink, to plunge down into the sea...(Bengel) It was a dramatic moment that wrung from Peter the cry, ‘Lord, save me!’...” [A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the NT*, vol. 1, *Matthew & Mark*, pp. 119-120]

G. Peter cries out: “*Lord, save me.*”

H. Jesus rescues Peter and they both got into the boat

IV. The Disciples Worshiped Jesus (Matt. 14:33)

The disciples worshiped Jesus, as they worshiped God (devout Jews know God alone is to be worshiped); and Jesus accepted it. Recall Jesus response to Satan’s temptation —“Jesus said to him [Satan], “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.’” (Matt. 4:10)