

## Research; Walking on the Sea

Matt. 14:22–32

“As it is attested by actual eyewitnesses, it cannot be resolved into a legend or allegory, but must be accepted as an historic fact” (Dummelow 676).

22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

In the verses before, Jesus had just fed almost 10,000 people on the hillsides near Bethsaida and the people wanted to make Jesus a king by force. The disciples probably agreed with this popular enthusiasm, so Jesus “constrained” his disciples to leave him, get into a ship and go to Capernaum, so he could go into the mountains alone and pray. “Constrained” in Greek is *anagkazo* and it means “to compel (almost by force), command” (Thayer 36).

“He dismissed the disciples forcefully to help tame a messianic uproar (John 6:15)” (*EBC* 9.343).

John confirms this description of the same event.

*John 6:15*

*15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*

“**Straightway Jesus constrained his disciples.**—St. John narrates more fully the impression made by the miracle. It led those who witnessed it to the conclusion that “this was the Prophet that should come into the world.” They sought to seize Him and make Him a king against His will ([John 6:14-15](#)), and He, shrinking from that form of sovereignty, withdrew from His disciples, dismissed the multitude, and on the mountain height passed the night in prayer. The disciples at His bidding were crossing to the other side to Bethsaida ([Mark 6:45](#))—*i.e.*, to the town of that name on the western shore of the lake near Capernaum ([John 6:17](#)). It was, we may reverently say, as if in this unwonted stir of popular excitement—not against Him, but in His favour—this nearness to a path of earthly greatness instead of that which led onward to the cross, He saw something like a renewal of the

temptation in the wilderness, needing special communion with His Father, that He might once again resist and overcome it (Elliott's Commentary, [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com)).

**23** And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Both literally and physically

Up high, by himself, praying to the Father

**24** But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea - John says they had sailed about 25 or 30 furlongs. About 7 1/2 Jewish furlongs made a mile; so that the distance they had sailed was not more than about 4 miles. At no place is the Sea of Tiberias much more than 10 miles in breadth, so that they were literally in the midst of the sea.

Tossed: up and down, in great danger

Wind against them: waves beat with violence, not able to go forward

Christ was not with them – they felt great fear and discouragement

**25** And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

**“In the fourth watch of the night.**—The Jews, since their conquest by Pompeius, had adopted the Roman division of the night into four watches, and this was accordingly between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M., in the dimness of the early dawn. St. John adds, as from a personal reminiscence, and as guarding against explanations that would minimise the miracle (such as that our Lord was seen on the shore, or was swimming to the boat), that they were about twenty-five or thirty furlongs from the point from which they had started—

*i.e.*, as the lake was five miles wide, nearly three-fourths of the way across” (Elliott’s Commentary, [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com)).

**26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.**

“They were troubled - They were afraid. The sight was remarkable. It was sufficient to awe them. In the dark night, amid the tumultuous billows appeared the form of a man. They thought it was a spirit an apparition. It was a common belief among the ancients that the spirits of people after death frequently appeared to the living” ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Barnes’ Notes).

**27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.**

Jesus reveals himself to the disciples and tells them to be filled with joy – they don’t have to be afraid. This command was often given by Jesus to those he healed, to his disciples and to those he was teaching. Once the fear is handled, one can expect a successful outcome for any case. Get rid of the fear!

**“Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.**—The accuracy with which the words are given by St. John, as well as by St. Matthew and St. Mark, shows the impression which the incident made on the minds of the disciples. To hear the familiar tones and the cheering words was enough, even amid the howling of the winds and the dashing of the waves, to give them confidence and hope. We can scarcely doubt that in after years that moment came back to their recollection, invested for them, as it has since been for the Church at large, with something of a symbolic character. Often the sky became dark, and the waves of the troublesome world were rough, and the blasts of persecution beat on them, and the ark of Christ’s Church was tossed on the waters, and they were wearied and spent with rowing. They thought themselves abandoned, and then in the dim twilight they would see or feel once again the tokens of His presence. He was coming to them through the storm. “Be of good cheer” became the watchword of their lives” (Elliott’s Commentary, [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com)).

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

Only the Gospel of *Matthew* tells us about Peter's enthusiasm to follow Jesus walking on the water. It is in line with his human disposition, which is depicted as confident and impetuous. "He was rash, headlong, incautious, really attached to Jesus, but still easily daunted, and prone to fail. He was afraid, therefore, when in danger, and sinking, cried again for help. Thus he was suffered to learn his own character, and his dependence on Jesus" (Barnes 69).

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

Peter was a fisherman who was familiar with and unafraid of the lake, accustomed to swimming in its waters. His faith was strong enough to get him out of the boat to walk on the water, but not strong enough to withstand the turbulent storm.

"Here is an instance of the characteristic ardor and rashness of Peter. He had less real faith than he supposed, and more ardor than his faith would justify. He was rash, headlong, incautious, really attached to Jesus, but still easily daunted and prone to fall. He was afraid, therefore, when in danger, and, sinking, cried again for help" ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Barnes' Notes).

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

The word "boisterous" in Greek is *ischyros*, and it means violent and powerful (Thayer 309). As soon as fear took over Peter's thought, he began to sink. Peter looked down at the water and not up. He did not keep his eyes fixed on the Christ.

"seeing the wind, that is, the effects of it. It is one thing to see a storm from the deck of a stout ship, another to see it in midst of the waves.— he walked at first, now he begins to sink; so at the final crisis, so at Antioch ([Galatians](#)

[2:11](#)), so probably all through. A strange mixture of strength and weakness, bravery and cowardice; a man of generous impulses rather than of constant firm will” (Expositor’s Greek Testament, [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com)).

**31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?**

Jesus is supporting not only his weight, but the weight of Peter, overcoming the laws of gravity.

The word “hand” in Greek is *cheir* and “symbolizes the might, activity and power of God in upholding and preserving one” (Thayer 667).

“Caught” is *epilambanomai* in Greek and metaphorically it means “to rescue one from peril, to help, to lay hold of or seize with the hands” (Thayer 240).

“Little faith” translates into half-faith. When Peter let doubt and fear into thought, it caused him to sink. “Doubt” is *distazo* in Greek and means “to waiver back and forth” (Thayer 152).

**32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.**

As soon as Jesus, with his calm, peaceful loving thought, entered into the ship, the turbulent wind died down.

“**The wind ceased.**—St. Mark adds that “they were above measure astonished” at the sudden lull. For the most part these mountain squalls died away gradually, and left the waves rough. Here the wind ceased in a moment, and ceased as their Lord entered the boat” (Elliott’s Commentary, [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“When they were come into the ship the wind ceased - Here was a new proof of the power of Jesus. He that has power over winds and waves has all power. John adds [John 6:21](#) that the ship was immediately at the land whither they went; another proof, amid this collection of wonders, that the Son of God was with them. They came, therefore, and worshipped him, acknowledging him to be the Son of God” ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Barnes’ Notes).

*John 6:19-21*

*19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship; and they were afraid.*

*20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.*

*21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

In the Gospel of *John*, we read that they were immediately at the land whither they went; which means that Jesus was able to transport twelve men along with himself instantly to the other side.

As a result of Jesus' hours of communion with his heavenly Father on the mountaintop, Jesus teleported himself and his disciples over the Sea of Galilee, overcoming matter, gravity, time and space when he performed this miracle of walking on the water to meet with his disciples.

The disciples could not come to Jesus, so he went to them, -- noblesse oblige. They could not meet him on his own plane of thought, so he met them on theirs. Yet what a trying thing to get into a boat when one has been walking on the water! Probably not one of that little company understood in the least what this must have meant to Jesus. Such rare compassion was beyond their comprehension, and they only wondered that as he entered the ship "the wind ceased." They however witnessed to the divine power thus manifested, when they said, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

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