

The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Walking On The Water (Part One)

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Forerunner, "Bible Study," March-April 2011

Christ's miracle of walking on the water (Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:15-21) took place soon after feeding the 5,000. The next day He preached a sermon in the synagogue that turned their rejoicing into near total rejection—almost all but the twelve disciples left Him. A representative of God must not trust in human *praise* nor withhold the truth to try to *please* people. Instead, as a true witness, he must preach God's truth regardless of the world's disapproval.

Later, Jesus told His disciples to set out in their boat for the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. At three hours after midnight, straining at the oars against the storm, they were still only halfway across the lake. In a contrary wind and tossed by the waves, the disciples did not realize that Jesus was fully aware of their difficulty. They were about to learn of His sympathy and willingness to come to their aid. He approached the distressed disciples in an entirely unexpected way, by walking on the turbulent sea as if it were stable as rock.

Clearly, He had been praying for and watching out for them while on the mountain, but when He passed near them, they did not recognize their Savior. The night was extremely black in the storm, and their nerves were on edge with fear. Under these conditions, they thought He was a spirit, an ominous apparition of some kind. But He encouraged them immediately with familiar reassurance: "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." Later in their lives during times of anxiety, this moment probably came to mind as a lesson deeply received and continually comforting.

1. Why does Jesus force the disciples to go without Him? Matthew 14:22; Mark 6:45; John 6:15.

Comment: This text contains a strong sense of urgency, especially in the word "made," which implies "compelled," and "immediately" amplifies it. Only John tells why He urged His disciples to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee: to get them away from the crowd, which was so excited by the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 that they would have taken Him by force to make Him king (John 6:15). The crowd, on the verge of revolution against the Roman government, put the disciples in grave danger.

They did not fully understand that Christ's work as Savior of the world did not involve conquering governments at that time, so they were susceptible to the crowd's influence in wanting to make Him king. This influence may be why they were unwilling to leave Him at what they may have thought was His crowning moment. In their growing admiration of Jesus, the disciples were likely reluctant to be separated from Him even for a moment, yet He sent them away. The storm, then, had the effect of saving them from strong ambitions, and they would later realize that the stormy night, along with the earlier exciting day, had worked together for their good (Romans 8:28).

2. What is significant about the words "It is I"? Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 6:20.

Comment: These three words are in Greek only two words (*ego eimi*), and they are much more powerful and significant than most Bible readers realize. Jesus says not, "It is I" but "I am," which is a direct assertion of His deity. Moses had asked God:

"Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:13-14).

Clearly, Jesus is declaring that He is the *Yahweh* of the Old Testament. Throughout the New Testament, there are a number of significant amplifications of this: Christ is the "I AM" that is the bread of life; the light of the world; the good shepherd; the resurrection; the way, the truth, and the life; and the Alpha and Omega, among other things (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; Revelation 1:8).

In the Garden of Gethsemane the night before the crucifixion, the "I AM" lesson was made unambiguous. When soldiers came to arrest Christ,

He went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am *He*" ["He" has been inserted by the translators]. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, "I am *He*," they drew back and fell to the ground. (John 18:4-6)

The disciples in their peril at sea needed the great "I AM." These two words alone should have removed all their fear.

In this incident, the disciples show that they were growing in faith. In the earlier miracle of Christ stilling the storm on the sea, they asked, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matthew 8:27). Now they have advanced in their knowledge to recognizing Jesus as God (as "Son of God" indicates) and worshipping Him.

Recognizing that Jesus is God means that their worship was correct doctrinally. True worship cannot be separate from true doctrine. Jesus said to the woman at the well, "You worship what you do not know" (John 4:22). He could say this to some even in the greater churches of God today who sadly do not know enough about the Father and Christ. We, too, must know Him as the Son of God and fully divine to worship Him acceptably.