

## ***IT IS I: Recognizing Christ In The Storm.***

### **Mark 6:45-52**

In Mark 6 we have one of the most spectacular and dramatic scenes recorded in the Bible. Christ walking on water.

What was Christ's purpose in walking across the sea? Was it simply to get to the other side faster or easier than his struggling disciples?

Mark's Gospel says that he "would have passed by them," suggesting that if they hadn't seen him and had continued struggling through the night, he would have gotten to the far shore ahead of them and been waiting.

So why did Christ walk on water? Was he just looking forward to seeing the looks on their faces when they found him already there?

In fact, the purpose of Jesus' walking on water had nothing to do with getting across the sea and everything to do with fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures that spoke of the nature and mission of the Messiah.

In the Old Testament God empowered men like Moses, Elijah, and Elisha to part the water, but, Jesus is the only one that ever walked on the water.

Psalm 89:7-9 declares, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.”

In this Psalm, David describes Jehovah as one, “Who rules the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.”

Similar kind of imagery applies to Christ here in Mark 6:51, “And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.”

This wasn't the first time Christ subdued severe storms at sea. We read earlier in Mark's Gospel 4:41, “And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Jesus walked on water because He could. He is the God-man. He is Jehovah of Psalm 89. Jesus walked on water to remind his disciples that He was not merely a man but Almighty God who had power over creation and circumstances.

That is why Paul writes in Col 1:16-17, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

The disciples were terrified by the raging water and this was magnified when they saw a man walking on the water. They thought it was some strange spirit. Christ had to identify Himself to his disciples, “It is I. Fear not!”

Christ revealed His true divine identity. No one short of deity could walk on water. According to some Bible translators, another legitimate way this verse could be translated is for Jesus to say “I AM,” is here. God's name, the I Am, reveals the fullness of His nature. All of God's nature and attributes are embodied in His name.

The disciples witnessed something that never was seen before in the history of the world. Christ walked on water and quieted a raging sea. They were still so amazed when they knew that it was no spirit, that they were much more astonished than they ever were before, when they saw the wind and the sea obey his commandment.

Like the disciples in the midst of the raging storm, there are times in our lives when we don't recognize Christ coming to us. We are so preoccupied, distracted, and absorbed in our troubles that Christ looks strange to us. In those times, Christ must come and remind us, "It is I. Fear not!" The title of my message is *Recognizing Christ In The Storm.*

### **1. We recognize Christ in the Storm because Christ has his eye on us.**

We read in verse 48, "*And he saw them toiling in rowing*"; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them."

Christ "saw" this from His mountain top, and through the darkness of the night, for His heart was with all of them: yet He would not go to their relief until His own time came.

What was Christ doing on the mountain top? We read in verse 46, "And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray."

Christ praying for His people is emphasized throughout the New Testament. The Apostle Paul identifies Christ in the Letter to the Hebrews as our great High Priest. Therefore, Christ prays continually for His people.

We read in Hebrews 5:6-8, "As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.*"

Christ prayed for Peter. We read in Luke 22:31-32, “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

Peter's faith did fail, but not utterly. He did fall, but he did not fall off, apostatize, or forsake his Master and his cause finally, as Judas did.

A Bible commentator writes, “Every body sees, from Peter's denial of his Lord, that his faith did fail, and his great courage too; and yet they read, in the common translation, that Christ prayed that it might not fail: can they then conceive that our Lord's prayer was heard? The translation which I have given above removes this embarrassment and apparent contradiction. It was certainly Peter's advantage that our Lord did pray for him; but it was not so much for his honour that he should stand in need of such a prayer, beyond all others.”

We recognize Christ in our trials because Christ is watching us.

## **2. Recognizing Christ in the storm dispels fear and darkness.**

We read in verses 49 and 50, “But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: For they all saw him, and were troubled.”

Much stronger than that. They were literally "terrified" as they saw Jesus walking on the sea. They see a spirit so they thought. They cried out "from fear" as any one would have done. Perhaps a little touch of sailor superstition.

The sight was remarkable. In the dark night, amidst the tumultuous billows, appeared the form of a man. They thought it was an apparition.

See how the disciples take their deliverer to be a destroyer: their fears were highest when their deliverer and deliverance were nearest. They did not behold Christ with the eye of faith.

C.H Spurgeon observes, “Yes, the disciples saw him; saw Jesus their Lord, and derived no comfort from the sight. Poor human nature's sight is a blind thing compared with the vision of a spiritual faith. They saw, but knew not what they saw. What could it be but a phantom? How could a real man walk on those foaming billows? How could he stand in the teeth of such a hurricane? They were already at their wits' end, and the apparition put an end to their courage. We seem to hear their shriek of alarm: "they cried out for fear." We read not that "they were troubled" before: they were old sailors, but a spirit — ah, that was too much of a terror. They were at their worst now; and yet, if they had known it, they were on the verge of their best. It is noteworthy that the nearer Jesus was the greater was their fear. Want of discernment blinds the soul to its richest consolations. Lord, be near, and let me know thee! Let me not have to say with Jacob, "Surely God was in this place; and I knew it not!"

The Apostle Paul writes in Acts 26:18 concerning the gospel reaching the Gentiles, “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”



*To open their eyes.* To enlighten or instruct them. Ignorance is represented by the eyes being closed, and the instruction of the gospel by the opening of the eyes.

*And to turn them from darkness to light.* From the darkness of heathenism and sin, to the light and purity of the gospel. Darkness is an emblem of ignorance and of sin; and the heathen nations are often represented as sitting in darkness.

Until the disciples recognized that the man walking on the water was Christ they were under the grip of fear and darkness.

But once they heard their Master speak to them, “It is I. Fear not!” all fear was removed. This leads to my third point.

### **3. We recognize Christ in the storm because we hear his voice.**

Verse 50, “And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: *it is I*; be not afraid.”

There is something in these two little words, "It is I," which from the mouth that spoke it and the circumstances in which it was uttered, passes the power of language to express.

Here they were in the midst of a raging sea, their little boat the sport of the elements, and with just enough of light to view an object on the waters which only aggravated their fears.

But Jesus deems it enough to dispel all apprehension to let them know that He was there. From other lips that "I am" would have merely meant that the person speaking was such a one and not another person. That, surely, would have done little to calm the fears of men expecting every minute, it may be, to go to the bottom.

But spoken by One who at that moment was "treading upon the waves of the sea," and was about to hush the raging elements with His word, what was it but the Voice which cried of old in the ears of Israel, even from the days of Moses, "I AM"; "I, EVEN I, AM HE!"

Christ went to the disciples and found them in their danger. What relief, and joy, and consolation must have flooded the hearts of the disciples. Christ is here. All is well! Christ is here. Nothing can harm us now! The man walking on the water was not a spirit. It was our Lord and Master Jesus Christ!

There was no mistaking that voice. A Christian author writes, “If Isaac knew the voice of Jacob (Ge 27:22), Saul the voice of David (1Sa 26:17), and Rhoda the voice of Peter (Ac 12:13), much more did the apostles know the voice of the great Master.

In the Gospel of John chapter 10, three times Christ refers to his sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd.

John 10:3, “To him the porter openeth; and *the sheep hear his voice*: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”

John 10:16, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and *they shall hear my voice*; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”

John 10:27, “*My sheep* hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

*My sheep.* My church, my people, those who have the true spirit of my followers. The name is given to his people because it was an illustration which would be well understood in a country abounding in flocks.

*Hear my voice.* It means that they hear and obey his commandments.

*They follow me.* A flock follows its shepherd to pastures and streams, John 10:3. Christians not only obey Christ, but they imitate him; they go where his Spirit and providence lead them; they yield themselves to his guidance, and seek to be led by him. When Jesus was upon earth many of his disciples followed or attended him from place to place.

In Mark 6, the disciples heard Christ say to them, “It is I. Fear not.” Immediately, they knew the man walking on the water was not a spirit, but their Good Shepherd.

We recognize Christ in the storm because we hear his voice.

#### **4. Recognizing Christ in the storm leads to safety on the other side.**

We read in verse 51, “And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.”

*51. And he went up unto them into the ship*--John’s Gospel says, “Then they willingly received him into the ship”--or rather, “Then were they willing to receive Him” (with reference to their previous terror); but implying also a glad welcome, their first fears now converted into wonder and delight.

“And immediately,” adds John, “they were at the land where they went,” or “were bound.” This additional miracle is recorded by John alone.

A Bible commentator writes, "As the storm was suddenly calmed, so the little boat--propelled by the secret power of the Lord of nature now sailing in it--glided through the now unruffled waters, and, while they were wrapped in wonder at what had happened, not heeding their rapid motion, was found at port, to their still further surprise. Then are they glad, because at rest and quiet now they be; So to the haven He them brings which they desired to see."

Even though our circumstances may feel unbearable, we can rest assured that our God, the Lord Jesus Christ, will preserve us through them and bring us safely home.

Recognizing Christ in the storm leads us to safety on the other side.

In closing, the disciples found themselves in the middle of a raging storm. Jesus came to them walking on the water. We recognize Christ in the storm because Christ has his eye on us. Recognizing Christ in the storm dispels fear and darkness. We recognize Christ in the storm because we hear his voice. Recognizing Christ in the storm leads us to safety on the other side. May the Lord help us to recognize Christ in our storms! Let us pray.