

## **“Jesus Walks on the Sea”**

John 6:15-21

Immediately following Jesus’ Feeding of the Five Thousand, which is the only miracle that is recorded in all four gospels:

## **“Jesus Walks on the Sea”**

Three of the gospels record this significant miracle.

Recall that after Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath, that He was accused of breaking the Sabbath. Jesus further angered the Jews when He claimed equality with God the Father. Then Jesus preached a sermon on His deity [John 5:17-47] and for further proof of His claim to be God, He fulfills Elisha’s prophetic miracle by multiplying the five barley loaves and the two fish.

Let’s read the record of Jesus walking on the sea in the gospels.

There are some very important aspects of this miracle in each account.

Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-53; John 6:15-21

### **Matthew 14:22-33**

**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."**

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

**Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. 46 And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. 47 Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. 48 Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. 49 And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; 50 for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." 51 Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. 52 For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.**

#### **John 6:15-21**

**Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.**

**16 Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. 18 Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. 19 So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. 20 But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.**

The feeding of the 5000 men, plus women and children, so excited the multitudes that the people wanted to make Jesus an earthly king.

The people grossly misunderstood the mission of Messiah because they had not been taught correctly, an error that is prevalent even today.

They wanted an earthly king that would break the yoke of Rome. They were not interested in a king who rules in the hearts of men. The crowds without realizing it were opposing His very purpose in coming.

This is the same thing that Satan failed to do in the wilderness temptation of Jesus.

### **Satan offered Jesus a crown and a kingdom without a cross!**

In Matthew we are told that Jesus sent His disciples on ahead of Him. The word “made” is “strongly urged” or He constrained His disciples to go before Him. They apparently did not want to go on ahead of Him!

He sent them away so He could be alone.

Suddenly there comes up a furious storm and the disciples were not making any headway rowing against the strong wind. Mark says they were straining against the oars and that they were in the middle of the sea. It was as far to one side as it was to the other. They were past the point of no return.

Jesus comes walking on the sea and they think it is a ghost.

Jesus reassures them.

Peter’s faith is impulsive, but it is honest. But the waves quickly frighten Peter and he cries out for the Lord to save him. And so He does.

As with all the miracles of our Lord, they have meaning on at least two levels.

There is no ignoring the power of Jesus over the weather and the sea.  
But there is much more to learn about why Jesus walked on the sea.

A skeptic can deny that the miracle happened at all; but once you allow the fact of the miracle then you need to find out what is the lesson.

The Gospel is established by the OT Scriptures.

**Romans 1:1-4**

**Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.**

**A preacher who cannot preach the Gospel from the OT simply does not know the Gospel!**

As in the Feeding of the Five thousand with Five Barley Loaves and the Two Fish, Jesus Walking on the Sea, is based on the OT.

The multiplying of the bread was foretold in 2 Kings 4:42-44 where Elisha fed the prophets. Elisha's miracle is prophetic of Messiah.

We saw that Christ Himself must first break the loaves before the apostles can distribute it. **Breaking the bread** means the **doctrine** of Christ and **eating the bread** means to **understand** the doctrine.

Jesus said, **“But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent you do not believe.”** [John 5:38]

When He who is that Word, came to them, they rejected and crucified Him.

## **PREDESTINATION AND FREEDOM**

Many in our churches today have been taught to reject predestination and divine providence. They might allow for God to be in control of some things but they strongly reject the biblical teaching that God is in control of everything!

Those who oppose this biblical teaching say if predestination is true then man is merely a robot and by that they mean that man cannot be responsible for sin if somehow God is behind the evil that men do.

It is a profound mystery how God works in total sovereignty and yet we act freely to do and to think what we do. Please do not reject what I am teaching about biblical predestination until you have carefully studied the Scriptures.

One of my favorite warnings from Charles Alexander is:

**“Never underestimate the power of a preconceived notion.”**

The most important thing that you can do is to just read the Bible.

Many years ago I was teaching the Book of Romans during lunchtime at the place where I worked. After a discussion on predestination a man came to my office and said, “Jim, I have been teaching Sunday school for 14 years and predestination comes up from time to time but no one believes it.” I said, “Larry, you have to believe something about predestination because it is in the Bible.”

Then I gave him some Bible references, especially the story of Joseph and of Esther, and asked him to study them in the context of the story.

About a week later he came to me and said, “Jim, predestination is everywhere in the Bible, the Bible reads like a different book now!”

What has that to do with Jesus multiplying bread and fish and walking on the sea? Only everything!

Think back over the scene.

“The people assemble in the precise numbers required. The lad brings his basket containing the exact number of loaves and fish. Without any feeling of compulsion, each obeying the free desire of his own will, all nevertheless are secretly impelled to do whatever they did in accordance with a holy plan, the object of which was the preparation and execution of God’s eternal purpose of redemption in Christ Jesus.” [Charles Alexander]

At the hour of the crucifixion of Christ, wicked men, working in the power of darkness blaspheme our Lord. Judas betrays the Son of Man with a kiss. A sham court is convened. Herod and Pontius Pilate are the devil’s fools used by a holy God. Was all of this only circumstance and random chance?

What does the Scripture say?

**Acts 2:22-24**

**22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know — 23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.**

Again we read:

**Acts 4:27-28**

**27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.**

“The powers of evil are shackled to the throne of God so that in the end **only one will is supreme** in the universe, that of God Almighty... If it were otherwise, then there would be more ‘gods’ than one in creation, and Satan’s end and design would have been achieved. The Sovereign Lord of All must in the end carry out all He ever set out to do, and those who deny divine predestination can succeed in their philosophy only by substituting the will of man for the will of God [or worse substituting the will of the Evil One].”

“Divine predestination does not imply any impairment of moral agency. The integrity of the human soul ... is carefully guarded, yet in the depths of divine wisdom, where no unhallowed judgment can enter, He who lives in the Eternal Moment and has no history either past or future, Who is the beginning and the end within Himself, Who works all things after the counsel of His own will, and none is able to say unto Him, ‘What are you doing?’ ” [Charles Alexander]

So dear souls do not rebel against the Word of God and attempt to elevate man’s will above the sovereign will of Almighty God.

Divine predestination will give you great comfort when you understand that it is a wise and merciful God and not blind chance that will keep you in Christ and to present you finally to live in eternal peace with Him.

Does not this most assuring passage in the Bible teach predestination?

**Romans 8:28-30**

**28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.**

The miracle of multiplying the loaves and fish is followed immediately by another miracle, which proclaims in its mysterious depths a new aspect of Christ's sovereignty: **HE WALKS UPON THE SEA!**

Do not imagine that the only purpose of this miracle was to demonstrate the Lord's power over wind and wave. He intended to teach a profound spiritual lesson based on the OT Scriptures.

But before that, something extremely significant, especially in our own day, occurs. John 6:15

**CHRIST REFUSES AN EARTHLY KINGDOM**

**Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.**

There is a strange theory that has gained popularity in the past hundred years, which makes the theory modern in terms of biblical interpretation, which says that Christ 'offered' His kingdom to the Jews, but they refused it.

The kingdom, they say, was therefore postponed until the end of the 'church age' [another invention of man] and then the kingdom will be forced [not offered] on Israel after the flesh by Christ who will reign on earth for a literal period of 1000 years.

Please keep reading John 6:15 until you understand that it was not the Jews who rejected the kingdom, but Christ who rejected them. He did so because their conception of the kingdom was false.

**Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.**

Christ's kingdom is entirely spiritual having no relevance to nationality, genealogy, privilege, or anything else to be found in man.

You must see that all the OT promises are complete in Jesus Christ and in His church. There is nothing, no age, or millennium on this earth, to follow the church at the end of this present age.

So what happened when Christ refused to be an earthly king?

John is writing to show the absolute deity of our Lord. He does this by bringing in OT prophecies and events to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah promised long ago in the Scriptures who was to come as a true Man.

**Truly Man and yet truly God, Immanuel, God with us!**

What miracle of Christ is more tied up in the OT figure and type, and more calculated to display the absolute omnipotence of Christ, than His walking on the sea; His calming of the raging wind and sea; and the safe arrival of the ship on the other side?

All events, even the so-called natural events, are providential and under His control. He turns all the pages of history, as this miracle will make plain.

E.g., Hurricanes cause great damage. Does God have anything to do with that? Of course He does! Can I tell you what good purpose will come out of it? Of course I can't. Our problem when something "bad" occurs is that our sinful pride tells us that we need to understand it. And worse than that we need to understand it "right now"! We can't wait to see how God will bring good out of evil.

This is why I read all three of the gospel accounts of this miracle. John does not tell about Peter, who at Christ's command walks on the sea, and then was overwhelmed by the terror of the storm and begins to sink.

Refusing to be made an earthly king, the Savior sends His disciples on ahead while He goes up alone to a mountain to pray.

As darkness closes in, our Mediator continues in prayer.



The boat containing the twelve apostles makes its way across the sea.  
But the boat is overtaken by a violent storm that comes up suddenly!

From His throne of prayer the Lord sees their plight.

**Psalm 139:11-12**

**11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me,"**

**Even the night shall be light about me;**

**12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You,**

**But the night shines as the day;**

**The darkness and the light are both alike to You.**

At all times **He knows what He will do.** [John 6:6]

Mark tells us it is the fourth watch of the night, the darkest hour before the dawn when men's hearts fail them in weariness and fear. Jesus walks upon the sea! They see His godlike form upon the tumult of the waves. He makes as though He would pass them by [Mark 6:48]. They think it is a ghost, a spirit, and they cry out in fear!

**“for they all saw Him and were troubled.”** [Mark 6:50]

Faith alone triumphs over such fear, **“It is I, do not be afraid.”**

When the Christian faces the unknown he can be afraid. It may be sickness or the uncertainty of old age, or even the prospect of death, but we have this word from Jesus, **“It is I, do not be afraid.”**

**“Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.”**

Here is a miracle within a miracle. Some say that they were nearly across and because it was dark they could not see the shore. But Mark says they were in the midst of the sea. They were as far from one side as they were from the other. The wind was contrary. They rowed hard with no progress. It was when Jesus came into the ship that it was immediately in its desired haven.

It is impossible to ignore the OT Scripture that underlies and anticipates this event.

The Lord is deliberately and intentionally giving a commentary on those divine words that describe the perils of the raging sea.

Psalm 107:23-32

**23 Those who go down to the sea in ships,  
Who do business on great waters,  
24 They see the works of the LORD,  
And His wonders in the deep.  
25 For He commands and raises the stormy wind,  
Which lifts up the waves of the sea.  
26 They mount up to the heavens,  
They go down again to the depths;  
Their soul melts because of trouble.  
27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,  
And are at their wits' end.  
28 Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble,  
And He brings them out of their distresses.  
29 He calms the storm,  
So that its waves are still.  
30 Then they are glad because they are quiet;  
So He guides them to their desired haven.  
31 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness,  
And for His wonderful works to the children of men!  
32 Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people,  
And praise Him in the company of the elders.**

The psalms are God's poetry and song. But the many of the psalms are prophetic. E.g., You cannot read Psalm 22 and not see the detailed description of the crucifixion of the Lord.

Even so, Psalm 107:23-32 is about Christ and the church.

Psalm 107:1-3

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!  
For His mercy endures forever.  
**2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,**  
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy,  
**3 And gathered out of the lands,**  
From the east and from the west,  
From the north and from the south.

The Lord shows in this psalm and in the Gospel that the storms, which all of His people encounter, are raised by His own providence so that they might learn to trust Him in their distresses.

**For He commands and raises the stormy wind,  
Which lifts up the waves of the sea.**

That storm that comes into your life dear Christian is raised by the omnipotence of your Savior and is for your blessing. The apostle Paul instructs us about this in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:

**16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

**Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!  
For His mercy endures forever. [Psalm 107:1]**

No storm can arise in your life that He has not sent and He who commands the storm controls what He commands.

And so Jesus walks on the sea proving that He is God according to the OT Scriptures!

Job spoke as a prophet when he said,

**He alone spreads out the heavens,  
And treads on the waves of the sea; [Job 9:8]**

Study Job Chapter 9 and learn that Job is declaring the absolute sovereignty of God and when Jesus walks on the sea He is saying, **“I am God!”**

Unless Jesus had raised the waves by a great storm He could never have given His disciples a commentary on Job 9 and Psalm 107.

Know that Jesus raised the storm and that He controlled the storm. And know that Jesus has been given all power in heaven and in earth and none can say to Him, “What are you doing?”

Do you remember how Jesus revealed His majesty to Nicodemus?

**“You must be born again.”**

**“But how can a man be born when he is old?”**

**“How can these things be?”**

Jesus then quotes a verse from Proverbs 30 and allows Nicodemus to see that He is the Son of God.

**Proverbs 30:2-4**

**2 Surely I am more stupid than any man,  
And do not have the understanding of a man.**

**3 I neither learned wisdom  
Nor have knowledge of the Holy One.**

**4 Who has ascended into heaven, or descended?  
Who has gathered the wind in His fists?  
Who has bound the waters in a garment?  
Who has established all the ends of the earth?  
What is His name, and what is His Son's name,  
If you know?**

There are other references in the OT to the waves and the sea and God who treads upon the waves of the sea.

**Psalm 77:19**

**19 Your way was in the sea,  
Your path in the great waters,  
And Your footsteps were not known.**

**Psalm 65:7**

**7 You who still the noise of the seas,  
The noise of their waves,  
And the tumult of the peoples.**

Jesus walks upon the stormy waves of history and brings His church through it all to the heavenly harbor at last.

William Cowper wrote:

1. **God moves in a mysterious way**, His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm.
2. Deep in unfathomable mines Of never failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs, And works His sovereign will.
3. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take, The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head.
4. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning Providence He hides a smiling face.
5. His purposes ripen fast, Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower.
6. Blind unbelief is sure to err, And scan His works in vain;  
God is His own interpreter; And He will make it plain.

### **Some Lessons and Observations:**

Sometimes trials are to take our minds off of temptations. E.g., the disciples were about to get into trouble by trying to make Jesus an earthly king. They wanted to argue with Him and had to be constrained to go on ahead of Him. So He gave them something to occupy their minds – a terrible storm!

Sometimes trials are only preparation for higher service.  
E.g., John Kitto was an archeologist who became a great writer. He said that he might not have been interested in writing if he had not gone deaf.

During our trials the Lord is watching and praying for us [Mark 6:46].

The Lord came to them over the very thing that threatened them.

A “Jesus” that you think that you can control is a false Christ.

The Jesus with the power to raise and control a great storm and who walks on the sea is the only one with the power to save you from your sin.

**HE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN**

In John 6 we have seen the double symbolism of Jesus feeding the five thousand and Jesus walking on the sea. The John alone gives the discourse by our Lord Himself on His being the Bread of Life.

We will take up the Lord's sermon on the **Bread of Life** the next time I preach from the Gospel of John [D.V.].

But to leave you with a "teaser" Jesus makes a sevenfold declaration the He is the Bread of God, who came down from heaven,

Cf. John 6:33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, and 58.