

PETER AND THE MIRACLE OF THE AQUATIC EXCURSION

Matthew 14:22-33 tells us of an experience the disciples lived through that I am sure was told and retold for the rest of their lives. How blessed we are that Matthew, Mark and John give us this fascinating story. It is a story that teaches us the Deity of Christ, the sovereignty of God, and the necessity of every Christian to trust Christ in every circumstance. Let's us go on this grand adventure of faith by examining:

I. The Change of Location

In Matthew 14:22, 23 we find the Lord has just fed the multitude with the five loaves and two small fishes supplied by a lad's lunch. Rather quickly everything changes. God never leaves us on the mountaintop. Life is full of variety. Even Canaan, the Promised Land is not all mountaintop experiences. He declares, *"But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys..."* (Deuteronomy 11:11a). There was a very valuable lesson to be learned out on the deep blue sea that would not be learned on the mountain. Are you willing and ready to go where God leads us to learn what He wants us to learn? The Bible records a statement involving this incident that reads, *"And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened"* (Mark 6:51,52). It is hard to believe that after seeing Jesus perform miracles, the disciples would still need to be schooled in faith and trust, but it is true.

A. The meaningful test is set up.

In Matthew 14:22 Jesus does not give the disciples the luxury of His physical presence with them in the ship. This is a test of their faith. Will we trust Him only when we see Him? On the other hand, will we continue to trust Him when as the Bible records in John 6:17b, *"...it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them?"*

B. The masses are removed.

In Matthew 14:22, 23a the influx of people are sent away. When God wants to do something good, He often does it in the presence of a multitude; when He wants to do something great, He often does it in the presence of the few that really love Him.

C. The ministry of prayer is invoked.

In Matthew 14:23b the Lord retires to the mountain to pray while he sends the disciples across Sea of Galilee. We are reminded again of the importance of prayer. We should never underestimate the importance. Travel back to Exodus 17:8-13 and we will see very clearly that victory accomplished in the valley was first won in the heights of prayer.

II. The Challenge of the Tempest

Matthew 14:24-27 presents us with something we never ask for, i.e. a storm. Even though the challenge is extreme, it does not exhaust the omnipotence of God to take care of the situation and His children whom He loves.

A. Control is lost.

In Matthew 14:24 we are told the ship was tossed and the winds were contrary. In the same story as told by Mark we see the disciples are toiling and rowing (Mark 6:48). John tells us it was dark and a great wind blew (John 6:17, 18). Anyway you look at it, the disciples have lost control. It is a scary thing to be in this situation. A man who often is involved in air travel told me how frightened he gets when experiencing severe turbulence. He said it helps him to close his eyes, put his hands in a position as though he is holding the airplane controls. He said when he pretends he is in control, he feels better. There are times when we can pretend all we want, but if we are not in control, the best thing to do is trust the One and Only One who is control!

B. Christ takes a walk.

In Matthew 14: 25 it is between 3:00 and 6:00 in the morning when Jesus comes walking out on the troubled sea. The waves do not stop Him, the wind does not dissuade Him and the dark does not frighten Him. He is not running; He is in no hurry. God always moves in His time, seldom early, but never late.

C. Crisis is confronted.

In their panic, the disciples, as we see them in Matthew 14:26, 27, superstitiously believe Christ to be a ghost. The Lord Jesus confronts the crisis

by telling the disciples, *"It is I..."* As long as we know it is Jesus coming to us in the midst of our storms, we can follow the admonition to be *"...Be of good cheer..."* and *"...not be afraid."*

III. The Class of Water-Walking

Matthew 14:28-31 gives us the narration of Peter's walk on the water. Let us join Peter in Water-Walking 101.

A. The Big Request

In Matthew 14:28 Peter asks a big favor of the Lord. He asks if he could come out on the water to Jesus. We know that he sinks, but he did something John, James or Matthew did not do--he walked on the water! God is honored when we ask for big things. When our requests cannot come through unless God comes through for us, He is pleased. Jeremiah 33:3 is a "walking on water" kind of promise.

B. The Benevolent Response

In Matthew 14:29 Jesus offers Peter one simple word, *"Come."* He doesn't give details, He just says, *"Come."* Too often we refuse to walk by faith because we want a superfluous amount of assurance before we take a step of faith. If we know Jesus said, *"Come"* then we need to start moving. How kind our Lord is! He did not rebuke Peter, but lovingly admonished him to move beyond his dreams and act on his heart's desire.

C. The Bedlam Released

Matthew 14:30 reveals Peter's great problem in water-walking: he takes his eyes off Jesus. It always gets crazy when we take our eyes off Jesus.

D. The Breathtaking Rescue

In Matthew 14:31 in response to a simple prayer for help, Jesus comes to the rescue. Peter is rebuked for not staying with the faith walk. We ought never to undo in doubt what we did in faith. We get into trouble when we believe our doubts and doubt our beliefs. We need to doubt our doubts and believe our beliefs!

IV. The Calm Repose

Matthew 14:32, 33 illustrates that when Jesus shows up, everything changes. I want Jesus to not only show up in the personal storms of my life, I

want Him to show up in my home, His church and in every avenue of my life! When Jesus shows up, we can always expect a calm.

A. The Restored Disciple

Matthew 14:32a says, *"And when they were come into the ship..."*, therefore we are able to say Peter got back up, but only with the help of the Lord. Peter was headed for the proverbial "Davey Jones locker" had not Jesus extended His loving hand.

B. The Raging Stops

In Matthew 32b we find *"...the wind ceased."* On an earlier occasion the disciples said, *"...What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"* (Mark 4:41b). How soon we forget who God is and what God can do. Jesus is the same in Matthew 14, Mark 6 and John 6 as He was in Mark 4. Peace follows Jesus wherever He goes.

C. The Reverent Recognition

As the disciples approach Jesus in Matthew 14:33, they are overwhelmed with His deity and declare Him to be the Son of God with all power. Oh, how the world needs to see Jesus as He really is!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.