**Research: Jesus walking on water**

**Mark 6:34, 45-51**

“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).

34And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

“*he came out*] Comparing the account in the Fourth Gospel, we may conjecture that on landing, the Lord and His disciples ascended the hill-side ([John 6:3](http://biblehub.com/john/6-3.htm)) and there waited awhile till the whole multitude was assembled. Then descending, He saw them all, and moved with compassion began to “*teach them many things concerning the kingdom of God*” ([Luke 9:11](http://biblehub.com/luke/9-11.htm)), and healed them that had need of healing ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Cambridge Bible).

“Much people ...as sheep ... - They had no one to teach them and guide them. The priests and scribes were proud and corrupt; they despised the common people and neglected them ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Barnes’ Notes).

45And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

“And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before—Him.

“unto Bethsaida—Bethsaida of Galilee (Joh 12:21). John (Joh 6:17) says they "went over the sea towards Capernaum"—the wind, probably, occasioning this slight deviation from the direction of Bethsaida.

“while he sent away the people—"the multitude." His object in this was to put an end to the misdirected excitement in His favor (Joh 6:15), into which the disciples themselves may have been somewhat drawn. The word "constrained" implies reluctance on their part, perhaps from unwillingness to part with their Master and embark at night, leaving Him alone on the mountain” ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

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. The blue lettering is not in the Lesson.**

*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.*

46And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

Perhaps he needed to put down the temptation of ambition that had strongly presented itself to him. “The burden of Jesus’ prayer is not revealed; but it is possible that the crowd’s attempts to make him king (John 6:15) prompted him to seek his Father’s face” (*EBC 9*.543).

“Nothing is better to keep the mind humble and unambitious, than to seek some lonely place; to shut out the world, with all its honors; to realize that the great God, before whom all creatures and all honors sink to nothing, is round about us; and to ask him to keep us from pride and vain glory” (Barnes 69).

47And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

The disciples had left ahead of Jesus to sail to Capernaum, to be prepared to meet him there later. They were in the middle of the Sea of Galilee when a great wind arose, perhaps sweeping down the desert from the east or west from the Mediterranean Sea. These winds were known to swirl around the bowl-like hills of the Galilee area and cause large and immediate storms. The disciples could hardly sail their small boat, while it struggled into the head wind. John says that they had gone twenty or thirty furlongs, approximately four miles, which would put them directly in the middle of the lake. The sea was boisterous, the wind against them. So they were probably struggling with the sails all throughout the night.

“And when even was come—the later evening. It had come even when the disciples embarked (Mt 14:23; Joh 6:16).

“the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land—John says (Joh 6:17), "It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them." Perhaps they made no great effort to push across at first, having a lingering hope that their Master would yet join them, and so allowed the darkness to come on. "And the sea arose" (adds the beloved disciple, Joh 6:18), "by reason of a great wind that blew” ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

48And 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.

“And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them—putting forth all their strength to buffet the waves and bear on against a head wind, but to little effect. He "saw" this from His mountain top, and through the darkness of the night, for His heart was all with them: yet would He not go to their relief till His own time came.

“and about the fourth watch of the night—The Jews, who used to divide the night into three watches, latterly adopted the Roman division into four watches, as here. So that, at the rate of three hours to each, the fourth watch, reckoning from six P.M., would be three o'clock in the morning. "So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs" (Joh 6:19)—rather more than halfway across. The lake is about seven miles broad at its widest part. So that in eight or nine hours they had only made some three and a half miles. By this time, therefore, they must have been in a state of exhaustion and despondency bordering on despair; and now at length, having tried them long enough” ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

“And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea,.... It being now morning, and perhaps might have moon light; and besides, there is always more light upon the water than land; they were able to discern something like a man, walking upon the surface of the sea, but had not light enough to distinguish what, or who it was; and, moreover, had no thought of Christ, or expectation of seeing him; and the appearance of a man walking upon the waters being so unusual, and astonishing” ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Gill’s Exposition).

50 For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

“For they all saw him, and were troubled. 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—given by Matthew, Mark and John (Mt 14:27; Mr 6:50; Joh 6:20)—"It is I," which from the mouth that spake it and the circumstances in which it was uttered, passes the power of language to express” ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

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

“and the wind ceased; from blowing; it was laid at once, as soon as ever Christ entered the ship:

“and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. The Ethiopic version adds, "at him"; they were astonished, when they found it was Christ, and not a spirit; and they were more amazed at his walking upon the sea; and they marveled still more abundantly, when they observed that the wind ceased upon his coming into the ship; their amazement was beyond expression, and therefore many words are made use of to signify it by” ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com), Gill’s Exposition).

**The verses in blue below are not recorded in the book of Mark, but Matthew, and they are not in this week’s lesson, but are part of the story:**

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.

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.

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.

*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. **Walking on the Se**

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. 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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