**Jesus Walks on the Sea – The Power Over Nature**

*John 6:15-21*

**Introduction**

1. After the feeding of the 5,000, John 6 also records the 5th miracle of Jesus in that gospel record – Jesus walks on the sea.
2. This familiar miracle, with the collection of all the details revealed in the synoptic gospels, is filled with significance and application.
3. Consider the most obvious fact that Jesus walking on the sea demonstrates His power over nature.
4. The Miracle
5. The Separation **(vv. 15-17)**
   1. The combination of John’s record with that of the synoptics shows there was great importance to this separation:
      1. **Matthew 14:22; Mark 6:45** – Jesus made the disciples leave and get into the boat.
      2. **John 6:15** – John explains, as the synoptics do, that Jesus desired to be alone to pray.
      3. **The reason** – they sought to ***“take Him by force to make Him king”*** – this expresses great enthusiasm in the crowd.
         1. Their enthusiasm was not foreign to that of Jesus’ chosen disciples.
         2. Despite the feeding of the 5,000, they didn’t understand – **Mark 6:52** – His full identity, and the nature of His mission (**John 6:26-27, 67-69**).
         3. **Jesus needed to be alone to pray, and they needed to be sent away from the situation as well, lest they be sucked in the misunderstanding further.**
   2. Though fear struck the disciples on a similar occasion prior to this one despite the Lord’s presence (**cf. Mark 4:35-41** – Jesus with them in the tempest, sleeping in the boat), the separation from their Master no doubt exacerbated the experience in the tempest.
6. The Adversity **(vv. 18-19a)**
   1. “The atmosphere, for the most part, hangs still and heavy, but the cold currents, as they pass from the west, are sucked down in vortices of air, or by the narrow gorges that break upon the Lake. Then arise those sudden storms for which the region is notorious.” (F.F. Bruce, quoting G. A. Smith)
   2. ***“[they were] straining at rowing, for the wind was against them.” (Mark 6:48)***.
   3. **(v. 19a)** – had rowed about 3-4 miles.
      1. “The disciples had been rowing now for several hours. They had left the eastern shores when darkness fell or very shortly afterward. And now it was 3:00 A. M. or later (Matt. 14:25: the fourth watch of the night; hence, between 3:00 and 6:00 A.M.)” (Hendriksen-Kistemaker)
      2. Significant time and exertion had passed before Jesus went to them.
7. The Miracle **(v. 19b)**
   1. Jesus walked on the sea.
   2. Some seek to discount this miracle, and explain it away by the language of the text, or in some other way:
      1. ***“on the sea”*** – *epi tēs thalassēs* – ***“at the sea”*** (**John 21:1** – when Jesus appeared to them, and ***“stood on the shore,” verse 4***)
         1. Claim the disciples were hugging the shoreline, and Jesus was walking on the shore by the sea.
         2. Synoptics show ***“on the sea”*** is the correct translation in the circumstance – ***“the boat was now in the middle of the sea” (Matthew 14:24);*** Peter – ***“command me to come to You on the water.” (Matthew 14:28), “beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!” And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him,” (Matthew 14:30-31); “He was alone on the land…He came to them, walking on the sea” (Mark 6:47, 48)***
      2. “Combining evidence of a cold snap 2,000 years ago with sophisticated mapping of the Sea of Galilee, Israeli and U.S. scientists have come up with a scientific explanation of how Jesus could have walked on water… Their answer: It was actually floating ice.” (Floating Ice May Explain How Jesus Walked on Water, Researchers Say, April 6, 2006, washingtonpost.com)
         1. The same scientist suggested in 1992 that it was a strong wind that lowered the Red Sea by 10 feet allowing the Israelites to cross.
   3. **Like with every other miracle, Jesus demonstrated He is the Creator God by His intervention in natural law to do the impossible – HE HAS THE POWER OVER NATURE.**
8. The Exhortation **(v. 20)**
   1. ***“they were afraid”*** – of the storm – also, ***“they were troubled, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’” (Matthew 14:26)*** – superstition.
   2. ***“It is I; do not be afraid” (v. 20)*** – this is when Peter asked the Lord to command him to come to Him (**cf. Matthew 14:28-31**).
   3. Jesus’ words of **verse 20** were to settle them and provoke their faith to receive the One who they knew they needed and could protect them.
9. The Reception **(v. 21)**
   1. John alone records that ***“they willingly received Him.”***
   2. Willingly – *thelō* – “’to will, to wish,’ implying volition and purpose” (VINE)
      1. ***“He saw them straining at rowing…He came to them” (Mark 6:48)***
      2. **He saw their need and came to them, but they had to make the choice by faith to receive Him.**
10. The Power Over Nature
11. Jesus’ Presence Vanquishes the Fear of Natural Forces
    1. **John 6:20** – the absence of the disciples’ superstition in John’s record connects Jesus’ exhortation to the fear produced by the storm.
       1. In Jesus’ estimation, His presence (***“It is I”***) should dispel their fear (***“do not be afraid”***).
    2. ***“do not be afraid”*** (NKJV, 48x); ***“do not fear”*** (NKJV, 53x); ***“Fear not”*** (NKJV, 13x)
       1. These, and more, vary in context.
       2. **However, what is certain is the presence of fear during this mortal life, and God’s exhortation to FEAR NOT based in His presence.**
    3. Example of Paul – **Acts 27:20-26** – despite a warning from Paul, the helmsman of the ship transporting him and others to Rome proceeded and faced ***“a tempestuous head wind…called Euroclydon” (v. 14).***
       1. Paul was assured by God through an angel that he would be safe.
       2. **God was with him through His promise and providence, and he believed God.**
       3. **Though God’s concerns and plans for Paul were clear, God left it up to him whether he would continue to fear or have faith.**
    4. God has always allowed His people to experience the extreme phenomena of natural existence – from natural disasters to the ebb and flow of kingdoms and their wakes of conflict, to personal health difficulties, physical accidents of all sorts, and death.
    5. Jesus’ words of exhortation before the limited commission explain the abated or conquered fear among disciples – **Matthew 10:28-32**
       1. Though Jesus speaks of persecution, the foundation of His exhortation is widely applicable.
       2. **(v. 28)** – Natural forces can only take our bodies.
       3. **(vv. 29-31)** – Though we see immense value reflected in our estimations of some natural things, according to God, our value is supreme, and He cares for us.
       4. **(v. 32)** – There is spiritual reward and supreme fellowship on the other side of this physical experience.
12. Jesus’ Power Encourages Faith in the Face of Storms
    1. **Jesus’ actions were not independent of the disciples, but were meant to be interactive:**
       1. Jesus saw them – **Mark 6:48** – then He came to them.
       2. Jesus has the power to calm the storm with a word – **Mark 4:39** – other miracles demonstrate the distance is not a factor.
       3. Jesus would have walked past them – **Mark 6:48** – He had come to them but did so in a way that provided them opportunity to see Him, recognize Him, and invite Him.
          1. **The knowledge and visual of His power in walking on the water is displayed to incite an invitation of faith for His presence.**
       4. Even with Peter – **Matthew 14:28-32**
          1. Peter says, ***“come to You,”*** but Jesus only says, ***“Come”*** – leaving the extent of His journey up to Peter’s faith.
             1. Would he ***“hold the beginning of [his] confidence steadfast to the end” (Hebrews 3:14)?***
          2. **(v. 31)** – Peter had faith, but it was doubt that caused him to sink.
          3. **Jesus’ permission, thought He certainly knew the maturity level of Peter’s faith, was meant to encourage its step in further growth.**
    2. While God always has the option to spare the faithful from any difficulty, His main interest is in their faith, and He so acts to strengthen it – **cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7**
    3. The just shall live by faith – **Habakkuk 2:4; 3:17-19** – the prophet struggled with the Lord’s plan to use the unrighteous Chaldeans to chastise His people, but according to God’s will he chose faith.
       1. **Hebrews 10:35-39** – the storm of persecution was allowed to push the brethren to greater faith, which God had confidence they would do **(v. 39).**
13. Jesus’ Transcendent Power Over the Natural Beckons Us to Pursue the Spiritual
    1. The miracle in John’s record is one of the 7 recorded, but is not given quite the emphasis and place as other miracles – however, its placement is key.
       1. This happens after the miracle of feeding the 5,000.
       2. **Mark 6:51-52** – contrasts their reaction to the miracle with their underwhelming conclusion (or lack thereof) to the mass feeding.
       3. **Matthew 14:33** – shows their impressive conclusion after the miracle.
       4. The lesson Jesus taught the multitudes in connection with the miraculous feeding was meant for His disciples as well – **John 6:26-27, 66-69** (One of them failed to follow fully – **vv. 70-71** – he was present physically, but went away with the multitude spiritually)
       5. After the disciples failed to grasp the significance of the miraculous feeding by Jesus, He demonstrates with a following miracle that He transcends the natural (He is not from here), **which once again demands that we consider that His purposes are not on the plane of the natural, but the spiritual, the eternal.**
    2. Many refuse to believe in the miracles of the bible because they do not fit the paradigm through which they view the world and history. However, when evidence points to the inescapable conclusion that these miracles did occur (**cf. John 21:24-25),** it demands that one alter his view of the world to include the God who created it, who would certainly have the power to intervene in these ways.
       1. This evidence not only points to the existence of God that can, and has intervened in miraculous ways, **but it necessarily implies, and produces evidence for, things which transcend the natural existence and therefore are worthy of greater focus than what we see** **(cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18).**
    3. Every time God has stepped into history, whether providentially or miraculously, it has been with the intention to further carry out His eternal spiritual plan to save sinful man. (**cf. Isaiah 43:1-3** – to bring Israel back from captivity, ultimately to bring His Servant, the Messiah, to save the world.)
    4. The greatest storm we face is not physical but is the whirlwind of sin and death. God’s miraculous displays incite faith in His power to save us from this spiritual storm of eternal consequence – **Romans 6:23** – we know this is certain because of who He proved Himself to be, and what He did for us according to God’s will.
       1. We ought to pursue this eternal life in Christ with all our might (**cf. John 6:27**).

**Conclusion**

1. Our Savior and God is the One who created all we see.
2. While the natural, burdened by the curse of sin, leads to great pain, destruction, and loss, it is not worthy of our fear.
3. Jesus demonstrated His power over nature, and by doing so beckons us to courage and faith.
4. The fact that nature is subject to Jesus’ power ought to impress us with the fact of Jesus eternal nature and lead us to cling to His protection in the storms of a spiritual nature we cannot see with our physical eyes – He can and will deliver us from those storms.