

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 14 (PART 3)

Matthew 14:22-27 - Disciples In Storm

v. 24 - “long distance” is the Greek word that means many “stadia” - a stadia was approximately 600 feet and commentators estimate that the boat was probably about 3 miles away from the land at this point.

“Battered by the waves” - is the Greek word for torture or torment (928, βασανίζω *basanizo*) and is commonly used to describe the impact of evil spirits on a person (cp. Mt. 8:6, 29)

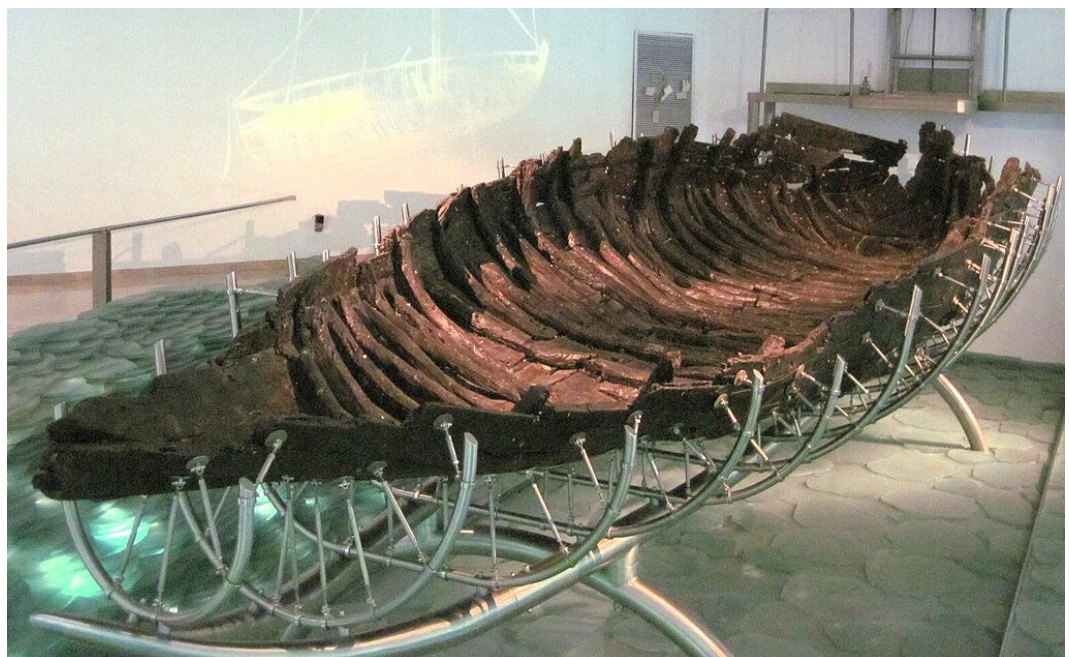
“Contrary” - opposite, against, hostile



v. 25 - “4th watch of the night” is between 3am-6am.

Sea Of Galilee - is also Lake Tiberias, Lake Gennesaret, and Lake Kinneret. It is a freshwater lake in the northern part of Israel that is fed by the Jordan River. It is about 12 miles long and 7 miles wide at its largest points. Many of the towns surrounding the Sea/Lake are central to Jesus’ ministry and appear in the gospel accounts. It had abundant fish and was an active location for fishermen. Jewish historian Flavius Josephus reports a thriving fishing industry at this time, with 230 boats regularly working in the lake. (Jewish Wars, Book 2, Section 21, Chapter 8, entry 632)

Boat - In 1986 a boat was discovered in the sea of Galilee during a time of severe drought. This boat wasn’t the exact boat of Jesus and his disciples (although it has been called “the Jesus boat”), but gives us some details about the type of boat used in the first century by fisherman like Jesus’ disciples. Here are some facts about that boat which help us envision the disciples’ situation:



- Dimensions (approx): Length: 27 ft, Width: 7.5 ft, Height: 4.3ft
- Capacity: Up to 15 people
- Construction: Built from 12 different types of wood, mostly cedar and oak
- Propulsion: Two options - [1] Rowing: Oarlocks on the sides suggest it was rowed by four rowers [2] Sailing: A central mast and sail allowed for wind-powered travel.
- Shallow Draft: This allowed the boat to sail close to shore and navigate through shallow water—ideal for fishing or beach landings like those mentioned in the Gospels.

Storms - The Sea of Galilee has some unique geographical and meteorological features that make it prone to sudden, violent storms:

- Low Elevation: It sits about 700 feet (213 meters) *below* sea level, in a basin surrounded by hills.
- Cool Air Meets Warm Air: Cold winds from the Golan Heights or Mount Hermon to the northeast rush down into the warm, humid air over the lake.
- Wind Tunnels: The steep valleys act like funnels, accelerating wind speeds and whipping up waves fast.

These storms could hit suddenly, often catching fishermen and travelers off guard—exactly like what we see in the Gospel stories.

Ghost? - ESV Study Bible - “Ghost represents *phantasma*, a Greek term for spirit appearances or apparitions. The disciples may have thought an evil spirit was trying to deceive them.” This word is only used in relationship to this story (also in Mark 6:49).

Matthew 14:28-33 - Peter Walks On Water

Q - What do you think of Jesus’ invitation for Peter to come?

Q - What do you think of Peter’s response?

I think it would be wrong to conclude that one microscopic speck of doubt cancels real faith. 99% faith and 1% doubt doesn’t equal 100% doubt. Instead what we see here is that overtime Peter’s doubts rose to overcome the faith that initially got him out of the boat. Matthew records that Peter did get out of the boat and walked on the waves with him! But as he moved towards Jesus, his attention turned away from the Lord and to the wind, waves and his fears (v. 30). And that is what caused him to begin to sink.

v. 33 - “you are certainly God’s son...” - this is the conclusion the disciples make after this amazing incident. “Son of God” does not just speak of Jesus’ origin or DNA as the literal son of God, it is also a messianic title that dates back to the Davidic covenant (1 Chronicles 17).

Matthew 14:34-36

This brings us to the halfway point of Matthew's gospel and he leaves us with a statement of the continuation of Jesus' ministry and how there is a building anticipation of what might be when Jesus comes to town. Certainly things are exciting for the common folk of the land, but there's also a build up of another kind that will be seen - the conflict with the religious leaders and their plotting to destroy Jesus. But for now we pause and reflect on this wonderful chapter.

I'd like to put together two of the stories from this chapter from the vantage point of the disciples. We have two of the most miraculous records in this one chapter - the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus walking on the water and calming the storm. Both of these feature the 12 disciples on the front row of the action.

What is interesting to me about these two stories is they have some very different elements while also including some similar ones. Both records have the disciples unsure of what to do and needing Jesus to be involved to have a resolution. The disciples are helpless and to a very different degree. One, the need to feed the multitude probably wasn't too stressful to Peter, James, John and the others, but fearing for your life in a storm in the middle of the sea in the middle of the night is panic inducing. But Jesus' disciples are learning something, and we should learn it too.

1 - For Better Or For Worse, Jesus Is There - Best day or worst day → there is Jesus. Greatest blessing or greatest trial → there is Jesus. Jesus is there in the small things (dinner plans) and Jesus is there in the big things (on the Sea). The blessing and miracle of the feeding should have sustained them in the trial and uncertainty of the boat. But it didn't...*but there was Jesus*

In the miracle of the feeding, Jesus said: "*bring what you have to me*". In the storm on the sea, Jesus *comes to them*. He is there.

2 - If You Are Following Jesus, Jesus Is There - **The places that Jesus brought them to, he also cared for them in.** The reason all the people are in the desolate place is because of Jesus! *He feeds them.* The reason the disciples are in the boat is because Jesus made them get in. (**v. 22**). *He rescues them.* The reason Peter is on the waves is because Jesus said "come" (**v. 29**). *He's with him on the waves and he pulls him back up.* So in the moment where you are following Jesus but yet it feels like you're alone? → Look again. Listen again. He is there.

This chapter teaches us that there is miracle working power in the hands of Jesus. In this chapter there are two broken things in the hand of Jesus that feel this and are changed by this. Jesus has **two broken things** in his hands in this section. The bread (**v. 19**) and Peter (**v. 31**). In both cases, in his hands, something special happens. So, while the breaking of the bread and the stormy sea isn't just some metaphor - they teach us that we can bring the broken things in our lives, and in the hands of Jesus something miraculous can happen.