

FPFWC Christian Development



Jesus Teaches About Faith

June 2021

Summer Quarter

June 26, 2021

Lesson #4 – Rescued from Doubt

SCRIPTURE TEXT –Matthew 14:22-33

Key Verse - Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt (now)?”—Matthew 14:31

ICE BREAKERS –

1. In what ways will you use Jesus’ practice of prayer in solitude as a model for your own devotional life?
2. How can we overcome doubts?

LESSON BACKGROUND

Matthew, Mark, and John place the account of today’s text (absent from Luke) after the account of the feeding of the 5,000. (Mark 6:45–52 and John 6:16–21 are the parallel accounts of today’s text.) That event had astonished and excited the large crowd of followers, not just because it was a great miracle but because it reminded them of God’s miraculous provision of food in the wilderness during the exodus from Egypt in Moses’ time (Exodus 16). Knowing that the prophets promised a coming deliverance like the exodus (Isaiah 40:1–5), the crowd’s wonder and excitement were on the rise.

Jesus took steps to quiet this enthusiasm. Yes, He was indeed the true king promised by God, the one who would bring freedom to God’s people as God did in the exodus. But how He became king, how He freed people, was yet to come in His death and resurrection. Only then would any of His followers, be they members of the 12 or the crowds, be able to understand and respond to Him with greater comprehension of the truth.

Jesus’ power was very much on display in that feeding, but so was the disciples’ limitation in their thinking (Matthew 14:15–17)—even though it was by then the third year of Jesus’ public ministry. The 12 disciples were witnesses to these events, which should have inspired confidence in Jesus. Their challenge was to respond to disappointment, opposition, and danger with faith in Jesus, knowing that His power could overcome every difficulty. But each new threat presented a new occasion to question whether Jesus was worthy of their trust.

Our lesson is set on the Sea of Galilee (see Lesson Context of lesson 2). In 1986, the remains of a boat from the time of Jesus were discovered buried in the mud near the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Excavated and now on display, the boat is probably typical for the time. It measures 27 feet in length

and 7.5 feet at its widest point. It could have been propelled with oars, a sail, or both.

Such boats were quite safe when the weather was fine. But storms can arise quickly on this lake. Because its western coastline features steep hills, a storm blowing in from that direction, from the Mediterranean Sea, might be seen by boaters only when it is nearly upon them. A small boat hit by high winds is in a perilous condition, even on such a small lake.

LESSON COMMENTARY –

14:22–33. Once again, Matthew gives no clues regarding Jesus' actions in sending away the disciples, dismissing the crowds, and finding solitude to pray. In the stilling of the storm in 8:23–27, the main threat to the disciples was the waves, which were on the verge of swamping the boat. Here it is a **contrary** wind that hindered their progress (v. 24). **The fourth watch of the night** (v. 25) would have been between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m., probably closer to the latter since there was apparently just enough light for the disciples to see Jesus, though not to recognize Him. The disciples thought they saw a **ghost** (v. 26; Gk. *phantasma*)—people with corporeal bodies could not do what they saw Jesus doing. When Jesus said **it is I**, the Gk. words are *ego eimi*, a phrase used in Isaiah 40–50 (LXX) by God when He alone claims to have the power to rescue His people (cf. Is 41:10; 43:1–2, 10; 45:22; 46:4; 48:17). Is 41:10 says, “Do not fear [“fear” here is *phobou*; in Mt 14:27, *phobeisthe*—same word, different person and mood], for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am [ego eimi] your God.... Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” Peter’s ability to walk on the water (vv. 28–29) was contingent upon Jesus’ identity as **God’s Son**. As long as Peter focused in faith upon Jesus, the authoritative Son, he could walk on water as Jesus did. Matthew indicates that when Jesus’ followers rely upon Him and do not **doubt**, they will be able to do remarkable things on the basis of His strength (opening the kingdom, 16:19; “moving mountains,” 17:20; reaching the nations, 28:18–20). When Peter “anxiously looked about him” (Is 41:10) at the waves he needed Jesus to stretch out His **hand** (v. 31). In other OT passages, God is the one who rescues His people from the sea (Ex 14:10–15:21; Ps 107:23–32; Jnh 1:4–2:10). Jesus took that prerogative for Himself and intimated that He was fulfilling this divine role. On the disciples’ exclamation **You are certainly God’s Son!** see the comments on 16:14–17.

LESSON NUGGET – Some storms come because of our disobedience, but this one came because they obeyed Jesus. Peter did walk on the water; but when distracted by dangers around him, he took his eyes off Jesus. We look to Jesus by faith when we trust His word (Heb. 12:1-3. Beware of distractions!

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament