

## 19. Jesus Walked on the Water

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the importance of following Jesus for spiritual life and not for material blessings in this world. Those who become true followers of Jesus come to Him for eternal life and not for physical blessings on this earth. In our topic today, we are going to see that later that evening after feeding the five thousand Jesus walked on the water.

After Jesus fed the five thousand, we read in John 6:15-17, “Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone. Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them.” Jesus understood the hearts of the people and He knew that they wanted to come and take Him by force to make Him a king.

The people had seen the miracles and ate the food and they wanted a king who would meet their physical needs. Jesus would warn them the next day about the danger of just seeking to get their physical needs met. Jesus said in John 6:27, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” Jesus reminded the people that there are two kinds of food. The food that will meet our physical needs which will quickly perish. We can be full for a few hours but we will become hungry again. In contrast, Jesus told the people to seek the food that endures to everlasting life.

Jesus had told His disciples earlier in Samaria, in John 4:32-34, “But He said to them, ‘I have food to eat of which you do not know.’ Therefore the disciples said to one another, ‘Has anyone brought Him *anything* to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.’” Jesus said that His food was to do the will of the Father. Here, Jesus told the people to seek the food that would produce everlasting life. Jesus would say the next day in John 6:35, “And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’” We will see that Jesus offered that spiritual food to the Jews the next day but they chose to reject the food that produced everlasting life. Most of the Jews in Judea, had rejected the fact that Jesus is the Son of God in chapter five. Now, we will see that most of the Jews in Galilee, reject the fact that Jesus is the Son of God.

In order to carry out the will of the Father, Jesus knew that it was time to take action. Matthew 14:22-23 says, “Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.” As a result, Jesus sent the disciples away in the boat. Then, he sent the multitudes away and went alone up into the mountain to spend time talking with the Father in prayer. Jesus was carrying out the will of the Father and knew that the crowd had no understanding of His purpose on this earth.

When the evening had come, the disciples had started across the sea toward the city of Capernaum.

Meanwhile, it became dark and Jesus had not come back from His time of prayer on the mountain. However, the disciples were having a difficult time as they tried to row the boat across the water to Capernaum. Matthew 14:24 says, “But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.” Here, we see that the wind was blowing from the direction of Capernaum so that made it much more difficult to travel across the water with the wind blowing against them.

Several of the disciples had been fishermen who fished in this very area. They were used to going across this water and the trip normally probably took about two hours. We read in John 6:18-21, “Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. But He said to them, ‘It is I; do not be afraid.’ Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.” The fact that the sea arose meant that the waves were getting higher and higher. As a result, this trip was taking them much longer than it had in the past.

Meanwhile, Jesus was observing their trip from the shore and knew what was happening to them. Mark 6:48 says, “Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.” Here, we see how much the wind had affected these men as they tried to cross the sea. The Jews divided the night into four watches. The fourth watch would be from three in the morning until sunrise. As a result, these men had been rowing the boat for many hours and had only rowed about three or four miles. Jesus went walking across the sea; and as Jesus got close to the boat, the disciples saw something coming across the water and were afraid.

Jesus immediately called to the disciples to calm their fears. Matthew 14:26-27 says, “And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’” Matthew tells us about one thing that happened that Mark and John do not mention. Matthew 14:28-31 says, “And Peter answered Him and said, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ So He said, ‘Come.’ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind *was* boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’” As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was able to walk on the water. As soon as he took his eyes off Jesus, he began to sink and prayed the shortest prayer in the Bible. “Lord, save me!” Jesus immediately caught his hand and they went to the boat together.

The other disciples were very glad to receive Jesus into the boat. Mark 6:51 says, “Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled.” However, two other things happened in addition to the wind ceasing. Matthew 14:33 says, “Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’” Here, we see that the disciples were caused to recognize again that Jesus is the Son of God. Then, John tells us that immediately the boat was at the land where they

were going. After spending most of the night rowing the boat against the waves and the wind, the disciples saw Jesus take the boat a majority of the way across the sea in a moment.

When Jesus sent the crowd away, some had walked around the lake back to the area of Capernaum. John 6:22-24 tells us, “On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone—however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks—when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.” The next day, when some of the people went down to the water of the Sea of Galilee, there was only one boat at Capernaum. Those people recognized it as the boat that the disciples had taken. The people knew that Jesus had not gone with the disciples in that boat, so the people thought Jesus must still be on the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Apparently, someone had carried word to the town of Tiberias that Jesus had fed all of the people the previous day since the place where Jesus fed the people was just across the Sea of Galilee from Tiberias. Many of the people were still in the general area, where Jesus had fed the people. The Sea of Galilee is about 13 miles long and 7 miles wide, but the area across from Tiberias was closer because the Sea of Galilee was narrower at that point and also several miles south of the city of Capernaum. As a result, the people came across the sea from Tiberias in little boats looking for Jesus.

The people coming across in the little boats, found part of the people that Jesus had fed the previous day. However, they saw that Jesus was not there. They also saw that the disciples were not in the area either. As a result, these people from Tiberias got back into their boats and went northwest across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum looking for Jesus. Here, we see that there were additional people who wanted to see Jesus after hearing about the feeding of the five thousand. They were eager to see Jesus and possibly see some miracles. Instead of returning to Tiberias, they took their boats and went to the city of Capernaum. These people were seeking Jesus but they were seeking Him for the wrong reasons. John 6:26 says, “Jesus answered them and said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.’” They were seeking free food rather than seeking a Savior from their sin.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the fact that people have various reasons for doing the things that they do. Some will seek Jesus because of their spiritual need while others will seek Jesus for earthly blessing. Those who only seek earthly blessing do not receive eternal life because they come to Jesus for the wrong reasons. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the various reasons why people seek Jesus.