

# Jesus Calms the Storm

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Luke 8:22-25

## Intro

The miracles of Jesus challenge our contemporary way of thinking. They remind us that not everything that happens can be explained by science or our own understanding of the world. The miracles of Jesus force us to pause and consider if we really know who Jesus is, and if we have responded to him correctly. This week in Digging Deeper we will take a closer look at the calming of the storm story in Luke 8 by examining some of the historical details of the passage and the function of miracles in the Bible in general.

## Luke 8

One of the major themes of this story is that it seeks to describe who Jesus is (8:25). Luke wanted his readers to reflect on the questions: Who is this Jesus of the Christian faith in whom we believe? How is it that he has the power to control the wild fury of nature like God? Truly he must be someone unique. Truly this one is the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32), the Lord's Christ (Luke 2:26), and the Lord (Luke 2:11). Like God, he controls the winds and the waves, and before such a person fear and awe are highly appropriate.

Luke perhaps also wanted his readers to understand how Jesus' power and might relate to their own situations. He wanted his readers to recognize that because of their Lord's power there is no need to fear. Jesus' power is greater than their needs. Therefore they should not doubt or fear but only believe, for their Lord can and will calm the storms that rage against them (Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary: Luke*, Broadman, 253).

As they wake Jesus, the disciples refer to him as "Master," employing a title that grants him the status of the leader of the group, but hardly suggests that they understand him fully. Their lack of perception of either his power or purpose is further highlighted by Jesus' questions to them. "Where is your faith?" Importantly, he does not describe them as faithless, but he clearly wonders why their faith had not shown itself in these circumstances.



Digging  
Deeper

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*Jesus got up and rebuked  
the wind and the raging  
waters; the storm subsided,  
and all was calm.  
"Where is your faith?" he  
asked his disciples.  
In fear and amazement  
they asked one another,  
"Who is this? He commands  
even the winds and the  
water, and they obey him."  
Luke 8:24-25*

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In reality, Jesus is more than “master,” in the sense of “the person in charge of the boat or the group.” This is evident in his response to the crisis of the storm. Luke's audience might have compared Jesus' actions with those alleged of Greco-Roman gods or heads of state revered as gods, who claimed, or were thought to, exhibit similar mastery over the sea. However, they should have seen in Jesus the Old Testament work of Yahweh as sovereign over the sea. And more than that Jesus was readily accessible to them. Jesus' companions react as they would to seeing God, with fear. But their amazement, followed by their uncertainty about Jesus' identity, indicates that they do not yet fathom what they have seen (Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, Eerdmans, 333-334).

### **Background to the Story**

This story takes place at the Sea of Galilee. Luke, however, refers to this sea as Lake Gennesaret in Luke 5:1. The name “Gennesaret” refers to the fertile region at the northwest border of the lake. This name is probably the local name for the lake, while the “Sea of Galilee” is the more widely held name. In Luke 5:1-11, the sea was the setting for the display of Jesus' authoritative teaching and power. It has a similar function here. Storms often rose suddenly on the Sea of Galilee. Probably, the fishermen among the disciples usually stayed closer to Capernaum on the lake during the time of year when squalls would occur. But they followed Jesus' instructions and tried to cross the sea (Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background*, IVP, 210-211; Green, 332).

In the Gospels boats appear repeatedly as vehicles used by Jesus and His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. The remains of one such boat were discovered near Magdala in 1986. Dated from the 1st century B.C. or 1st century A.D., it is made of 14 different types of wood and measures 27 by 7 1/2



The remains of an a 1st century fishing boat found in Israel in 1986.

ft. Ships form part of the setting of four of

Jesus' miracle stories: the calming of the storm (Luke 8:22-25), the walking on water (Mark 6:45-52), and the two miraculous catches of fish (Luke 5:4-11; John 21:1-14). The only place one could sleep in a small fishing boat with water pouring in from a storm would be on the elevated stern, where one could use the wooden or leather-covered helmsman's seat, or a pillow sometimes kept under that seat, as a cushion to rest one's head (E. Hilgert, “Ships” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Eerdmans, 484; Keener, 211).

In the OT and ancient Jewish thought, ships and the sea conveyed certain theological ideas. Often the sea was thought of as an enemy of the Lord over which He triumphs (Job 26:12; Psa. 74:13; 89:9). It was from the sea (the Mediterranean) that Israel's oppressors, the Romans, came. Even experienced fishermen were unable to control the matchless power of the sea, and anticipate its storms. This is probably one of the reasons that Revelation says, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” (Rev. 21:1) (Hilgert, 484).

## Miracles

The array of Jesus' miraculous activity is significant because it points to the scope of God's concern and control in the world. The book of Luke contains 29 miracle stories. Six of the miracles in Luke's Gospel are unique to him. No other person in the Bible has the scope of miracles that Jesus does. The only other figures and periods that are close are the time of the exodus with Moses and the period of high apostasy with Elijah-Elisha. Only then do we see a combination of healing and exercise of authority over the elements. But no one matches the various types of miracles, the altering of creation, the healing of the blind, the cleansing of lepers, and the power to raise from the dead. In this variety we see an authority that is unique in scope, a figure who is greater than Moses.

In the Gospels, we see that Jesus points to the miracles as his "witness" and evidence of who he is. In Matthew 11:2-5 Jesus demonstrates that the miracles are a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah and demonstrate who he is. In Matthew's record of Jesus calming the storm, the disciples ask: "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matt. 8:27). The question is raised because the creation was seen to be in the hands of God (Job 40-42), a point demonstrated already by the miracles God performed at the exodus as a sign to Pharaoh. When Jesus walks on the water, the testimony goes beyond what the miracle shows about God; it also helps to show who Jesus is. The resulting confession combined with worship is, "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33).

Jesus' miracles, like many other biblical miracles, also teach deeper theological truths. In Luke 5:1-11, Jesus orchestrates a huge catch of fish for his disciples, and uses the opportunity to tell the disciples that they will become "fishers of men." The healing of lepers demonstrates that God cleanses through Jesus. The raising from the dead shows Jesus' ability to give life. So, the miracles are not only events in themselves, but pictures of God's saving activity in the world. (Darrell L. Bock, "Miracle" in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, Baker, 515-516).

In understanding miracles it is important to bear in mind that the biblical concept of a miracle is that of an event which runs counter to the observed processes of nature. The word "observed" is particularly important here. The church father Augustine emphasized that we shouldn't think of miracles as events which run counter to nature, but rather that they are events which run counter to *what is known* of nature. Our knowledge of nature and science is limited. It's not that miracles run counter to the way that the world should work. In reality, they restore some of the true order that the world should have to it.

Biblical miracles have a clear objective: they are intended to bring the glory and love of God into stark reality. They are intended to draw us away from the mundane events of everyday life and direct our attention to the mighty acts of God in the world. In the New Testament the emphasis on miracles is tied to the redemptive activity of God in the world. They are part of the proclamation of the good news that God has acted ultimately on our behalf in the coming of Jesus Christ into history. Miracles are a manifestation of the power that God will use to restore all of creation to its proper order, to restore the image of God in humans to its full expression, and to destroy death (J. D. Spiceland, "Miracle" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Baker, 779).

## Final Thoughts

Sometimes we try to explain away miracles. We might be tempted to think that the storm just happened to calm down the moment Jesus awoke, and superstitious disciples attributed the end of the storm to Jesus. However, that's a pretty arrogant way to look at things. Several of the disciples



4. Do you think it still makes sense to believe in the devil? What evidence do you see in our world that Satan and demonic forces exist?

- It's not very popular to believe in Satan, but it is undeniable that he exists. I base this on the testimony of the Bible. The Bible makes it clear that Satan is a personal, real being who exists to destroy us. Even if this sounds foolish, we have to accept the Bible's truth over what sounds popular.

5. How can we stay alert and protect ourselves from the schemes of Satan (Read 1 Peter 5:8-9)?

- Peter tells us to be "self-controlled." This means to keep ourselves from sinfulness. Staying away from sin is an important way to protect ourselves from Satan. When we reject the temptation of sin, we are more able to avoid the schemes of Satan. We also need to be alert. We need to realize that there is someone (really someones including the demons) who wants to tear us away from God. We get into trouble when we fail to remember that there are spiritual forces that are working against us in this world.

6. How does knowing that Jesus will return to conquer his enemies and vindicate his people encourage us today?

- This reminds us that any trials we face are temporary. Sin and evil will not run wild forever. A day is coming when Jesus will destroy Satan once and for all and put an end to evil. This should encourage us that the world will not always be like this. One day we will experience true freedom from sin. Also, it teaches us perseverance. We should continue to follow Jesus because we will be vindicated in the end when he returns.

### **Personal Application**

7. How can understanding Jesus' victory at the cross help you overcome persistent sins in your life?