

2025-11-23

Why Did Jesus Walk on Water?

Mark 6:45-52

I took a trip with my parents to Israel in March 2008. One of our stops was at the Dead Sea. It is 1443 feet below sea level making its shores the lowest land-based elevation on earth. It is almost 1,000 feet deep, making it the deepest salt sea on earth. It is first mentioned in Genesis 14:3 as the Salt Sea. It is always called the Salt Sea in scripture, never the Dead Sea. Today, the water is 10 times saltier than the ocean and so dense with minerals that people are able to float in this water. Because the water contains all these minerals, nothing can live in it. That is why we know it as the Dead Sea. **It has been called the Dead Sea** for a very long time. There is a prophecy in Ezekiel 47:1-12 that says there is a sea to the east of Israel that will be healed and life will return to it. A river of living water will flow from the sanctuary to this dead sea and bring life back to it. People will fish in it again as they do the Great Sea (the Mediterranean Sea). It must be referring to the Dead Sea. The river mentioned sounds very similar to the one in Revelation 22:1-2. We spent a night at a hotel along the shore of the Dead Sea. This stop gave us the opportunity to swim. We actually did not do much swimming. No one swam that much. Everyone was out there just floating in the water. It was a strange sensation. We could not sink. I wonder if people in the first century and before were able to float in the Salt Sea as we are able to today. I thought, since I can float in the Dead Sea, can I walk on the water in the Dead Sea. So, I tried it. No, that did not work. No one can walk on the water in the Dead Sea.

Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee, a fresh water lake. It is very different from the Dead Sea. Why did He do it? We teach that Jesus never did a miracle for His own benefit. Some people argue that Jesus walking on water was for His own benefit. I disagree with them. There is a reason He walked on water that we will see.

Mark 6:45 *“Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away.”* It is interesting that Jesus separated the disciples from the crowd that was fed. Jesus made the disciple get into their boat and go away without Him. Jesus needed to dismiss the crowd by Himself. Why? In the gospel of John, we learn that the crowd perceived through this feeding miracle that they believed Jesus was *“the Prophet who is to come into the world”* (6:14). Many in the Jewish community believed the Messiah would come around Passover time. *“Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king”* (6:15). I do not know if the disciples were involved with this or not but Jesus wanted the disciples away from this crowd.

Isn't Jesus King of kings and Lord of lords? Didn't Jesus want to be their King? Why not let this massive crowd make Jesus their king? Of course, Jesus wanted to be their King but not the way they were thinking. The crowd wanted a King who was going to provide meals for them, as Jesus just did (John 6:26). Jesus did not want to be a King who just handed out free meals to everyone. Jesus wanted to be King of their lives. He wants to be King of our lives. **He wants us to believe** that He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He wants us to turn from our selfish ways and follow His teachings, no matter the cost. That is what the disciples were supposed to learn. They do get it later. The crowd should have **believed that Jesus was God**. He came to bring them eternal life in their time of need, not just to feed them and do away with all their problems and struggles. This crowd was going to follow Jesus for all the wrong reasons, so He sent them away. Why do you follow Jesus? Later in that chapter in the gospel of John when Jesus challenged the disciples, Peter gave the right answer. He spoke from his heart. *"You have the words of eternal life"* (6:68). He then said, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"* (6:69). This is what God wants all people to work at believing.

Verse 46 *"And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray."* Jesus needed some time alone. He needed to pray. It must have been difficult for Jesus who was sinless, perfect, holy, just and compassionate to live among such sinful, imperfect, unholy, self-centered and selfish people every day. He needed time to stay connected to God the Father who was exactly like Him. **We need to stay connected to God the Father** because we are not like Him, yet we want to be. It is good to pray for others just do not forget to pray for yourself. John recorded a prayer of Jesus in John 17. Jesus began by praying for Himself first. It was also the shortest part of His prayer. I regularly pray something like this. Father, help me to know You and believe correctly. Help me to follow You and do as your Holy Spirit leads me. Help me to glorify You in every relationship I have. Empower me to do Your will. As Jesus said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). It is most important to understand that Christianity is not just the words we say but how we live for Jesus every day.

Verses 47-48 *"Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. 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."* The scene is set. It is evening. There is a full moon around Passover. There are fires burning along the coast. There may even be a lantern burning on the boat the disciples are in, in spite of the strong winds that are blowing. Jesus can watch what is happening to the disciples when He is on the

mountain. He sees the disciples struggling, rowing against the wind. They are not going anywhere. Jesus walks down to the shore. He sees the disciples still rowing against the wind. They have made no progress. They may have even been pushed backward. But Jesus told them to make this journey. Aren't they doing God's will. Why is life so hard then? Why don't things go my way? Doesn't God care? Sometimes life seems this way. You are giving all your effort to make some progress in life, but it seems like everything is stacked against you. You just cannot get ahead, even when you think you are doing God's will. Why is life so hard? The disciples were in a difficult spot and going no where.

“Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.” The fourth watch of the night is from 3:00 am to 6:00 am. It is early Spring. It is still dark during all these hours. The disciples have been rowing all night and they are exhausted. Jesus comes walking to them. The translation we have here in Mark reads that Jesus *“would have passed them by.”* This is not the best translation. The Greek reads Jesus was going towards them and *“wished to go by them.”* This can be translated as it is in Mark, but why would Jesus want to walk past His own disciples whom He loves. That is not who Jesus is and what Jesus does. This phrase can also be translated, He *“wished to go beside them.”* This, I believe is a more accurate reading when we consider the other accounts. Matthew records that Jesus *“went to them”* (14:25). John writes that Jesus was *“drawing near the boat”* (6:19). If Jesus intentionally walked on the water as a short cut to the other side of the lake, I could see why people would think that Jesus did this miracle for a selfish reason. But He did not. Jesus walked on the water in the midst of very strong winds, with waves blowing all around Him because He was intentionally going out to help His disciples in the midst of their struggle. Jesus does the same for us. As His children, He never leaves us. He never forsakes us (Hebrews 13:5). Nothing in all of creation can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:35-39).

Verses 49-50 *“And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’”* How would you react if you were a disciple? You are tired. You have not slept all night. You are exhausted from rowing. You are frustrated because you are not getting anywhere. Then out of the corner of your eye, the light from the lantern on the boat shines on a figure who is walking on the water and coming right at you. You scream! Everyone looks. Everyone is terrified! You have never seen anyone walk on water before. You think it is a ghost, a phantom, an evil spirit. What else could it be. Then you hear a voice, a voice you recognize. It is the voice of Jesus. You hear Him shout, *“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”* The sheep know their Master's voice!

Verse 51 *“Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled.”* This is a turning point in the life of the disciples in their understanding and belief in Jesus. It is at the end of this chapter in John when Peter makes his great confession for all the disciples. *“You have the words of eternal life. Also we **have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God**”* (John 6:68-69). Jesus came to earth so that we may know Him and know God’s great love for us. He came to earth to teach us to love God and to do His will, which is primarily to love one another the way He loves people. After Jesus climbed into the boat, the disciples experienced peace. Jesus could have calmed the raging wind from the shore, but He did not. The disciples would not have known that Jesus did it. Jesus could have stopped the wind at any time He wanted to, but He waited until they knew who He was and why He came. Here, Jesus gave no command to the wind and waves to be still. It just happened. The disciples *“were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled.”* They were changed.

Verse 52 *“For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.”* The disciples should have understood and known who Jesus was from His miraculous feeding of the multitude. They did not. Their hearts were hard. It took another struggle in the middle of a lake and Jesus coming to them, walking on water to rescue them, to change their hearts. What would it take to get you to believe who Jesus is? There are people, many people, that no matter what Jesus does, they will not believe. Jesus reminded the disciples, the twelve that He chose, that not all of them were changed. One of them was a devil (John 6:70-71). There are some people who always want more proof. They will never have enough proof. God has given us His word. Don’t wait. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repent. Be changed.

Questions to ask yourself: Why do you follow Jesus? What does it mean to do the work of God? (John 6:29). What would it take for you to believe, for you to obey? Why? Hasn’t God done enough for you already?

Actions to take: Believe who Jesus claims to be. Say no to temptation and sin. Have compassion for other people. Do acts of kindness to different people every day.

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