

# In the Fulness of Time – Part 99

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## **Walking on the Water. Matthew 14:22-33**

In this section there is a repeated occurrence of the Greek word *eutheos*. In the King James Version it is translated “*straightway*” in verses 22 and 27; in verse 31 and in John 6:21 it is translated “*immediately*.” These four usages summarize the events, showing the direct, immediate involvement of Jesus.

### **Immediately, He Expressed His Authority. Matthew 14:22-23**

14:22-23 “And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a boat and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain privately, to pray; and when evening was come, he was there alone.”

Apparently, Jesus had to *constrain* His disciples to leave because of the reaction of the multitudes who wanted to “*take him by force and make him king*” (John 6:15). This word *constrain* is from *anankadzo*, a rather strong verb, which is translated *compel* in Luke 14:23; Galatians 2:3. It is possible that even the disciples began to be caught up with the enthusiasm of the multitudes. By this time, however, Jesus had made it clear that official Israel had rejected Him (cf. Matt. 11:20; 12:24; 13:11-15), and any attempt to make Him king by mob action would be immediately and utterly squelched. In addition, the purpose of God to give His Son as the Lamb of God would be fulfilled because of the very fact that the Jews rejected Him! The way to the throne of David was to be through the Cross of Calvary. Jesus therefore dismissed the multitudes with the same authority, before they could generate a scene and attempt to present Jesus as the Son of David, the true King of Israel.

Jesus sensed the need for communication with His Father and went up into a mountain alone to pray. We are not given any insight concerning the time or content of this season of prayer. Perhaps it had to do with the rejection by His own people, and His preparation to meet the coming betrayal, trials and crucifixion.

### **Immediately, He Exhibited His Reality. Matthew 14:24-27**

14:24-27 “But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. 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 straightway Jesus spoke to them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

According to the Greek text of John 6:19, the boat was 25 or 30 stadia from shore, which would be 3½ to 4 miles, about midway in the Sea of Galilee. This is important to note for two reasons; first, it proves that Jesus was not merely walking on the beach as one theory has it, and second, it proves later in the story that He had the ability to appear immediately and bodily as a real person before them.

He arrived sometime between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M., which was the fourth watch of the night. At first the disciples thought it was a *phantasma*, or *phantom*. This is not the word for spirit, but it is like our word for ghost. It must be remembered that these men were tired, hungry and thirsty after rowing all night. It is not stated just when the storm began, but since Jesus sent them away before He dismissed the multitudes, an educated guess could include five or six hours of “*toiling in rowing*” (Mark 6:48). The fear which gripped them could also have made their minds weary and confused, along with the fatigue of their bodies. Like many other human beings in time of great stress, they neglected to apply what they really knew to be a fact. Instead, they were *troubled* (from *tarasso*, which carries with it the ideas of fear and perplexity). Evidently both emotions were being experienced after such a traumatic time in a troubled sea. But Jesus immediately spoke the words, “*It is I,*” preceded by a positive encouragement, “Be of good cheer” and followed by a negative, but assuring word, “*Fear not.*” For the middle pronouncement of His reality Jesus used the strong, *Ego eimi*, which is the “*I AM*” of John 18:5, His way of proving that He was the same miracle working Messiah, the God/Man Who had walked with them for two years.

### **Immediately, He Exerted His Sovereignty. Matthew 14:28-31**

#### *His Sovereign Response to Peter's Faith. 14:28-29*

14:28-29 “And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.”

Contrary to what some may think, Peter was not attempting to be presumptuous nor spectacular. When he said, “Lord, if it be thou,” two things are notable: first, this is a first class conditional clause, an assumption of reality. Peter was not saying, “I am not sure whether you are real;” just the opposite! He *is* sure, and on that basis he makes his request. Second, Peter used the title Lord when speaking to Christ. Inherent in this title is *sovereignty!* This is proven by Peter's actual request, “Bid me come unto thee on the water.” He wanted Jesus to command him (*keleuson*, used in the military of an order given by a superior officer and passed down to all under his command) to come *on* (*epi*, the same word used of Jesus walking on the sea in verse 25) *the water*. Certainly Peter knew that Jesus would not fulfill this request simply for spectacular value; he trusted implicitly in the sovereign power of Christ!

Perhaps too much emphasis has been placed upon Peter's fear when he saw the wind; his faith is quite evident in his works, so to speak, for he climbed down out of the boat and actually walked on the water! It is a reminder of Exodus 14:29 in one way. There, God parted the waters of the Red Sea and the children of Israel walked on dry ground; “*the waters were a wall*” on both sides. Here the waters became a walkway to Peter, just as solid as dry ground! How many of us would have had such

faith? Would any others of the Twelve had done as much?

### **His Sovereign Response to Peter's Fear. Matthew 14:30-31**

14:30-31 "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?"

Peter took his eyes off the goal, which was to go to Jesus; instead, he looked at the circumstances which were indeed, treacherous because the storm had not yet stopped. The wind was still blowing strongly, and as Peter continued to *look* at it (the participle *blepon* signifying continuous looking), his faith faltered and fear took over. Once again Peter called upon his sovereign *Lord (kurie)* this time, to save him from drowning.

As mentioned with regard to Matthew 6:20, this statement "*O, ye of little faith*" was used in the plural, including all His disciples. Here it is used of Peter specifically, in connection with the sovereign power of Christ. By catching Peter immediately, Jesus exerted His sovereignty over the elements. Peter must have covered nearly all the distance from the boat to Jesus. Just a step or two remained;

Jesus merely had to stretch forth His hand to save Peter. True, Peter's faith faltered, but it did not utterly fail; he still had faith in Jesus to save him. The Lord wanted to know the purpose of Peter's doubt; He knew that the wind was the cause, but to what purpose did Peter doubt, after coming so far as to be in reach of Jesus. When Jesus describes the strength in Matthew 17:20, He says that it need only be as small as a grain of mustard seed, but it must also be living faith; then "nothing shall be impossible to you," and so would it have been with Peter!

### **Immediately, He Exercised His Deity. Matthew 14:32-33**

14:32-33 "And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the boat came and worshiped him, saying, Of a truth, thou art the Son of God."

Only John 6:21 observes that "*immediately the boat was at the land.*" This is done in connection with the exercise of Jesus' deity in bringing the boat more than three miles to the shore in an instant. This in itself would be enough to make the disciples wonder in amazement and then worship Him as Son of God. But they also had the evidence of His command to Peter to walk on the water, of saving Peter and claming the storm. Yet, this was not to be the last time their faith would falter. He had to remind them in 16:8 of their little faith, and more severely in 17:16-21 of their unbelief. If we were put through the same exhausting and agonizing experience for hours through the stormy darkness, one wonders; would we exhibit even a little faith. *In the fulness of time*, we will welcome His return in the air, and see Him in reality, as we now look to Him with *eyes of faith!*