

- to bury their own dead, as being "dead" too? How do you know?
10. What is meant by the expression: "Go and proclaim the kingdom of God"? What is this "kingdom of God" that Jesus wanted proclaimed by that disciple? How does that concept differ (if it does) from the kingdom of God realized in the Church today?
 11. What additional situation does Luke record in connection with these challenges Jesus gave others to count the cost of their discipleship to Him?
 12. Was the third man committed to Jesus? If not, why not? If so, in what way?
 13. What did Jesus think was wrong with saying farewell to those at home?
 14. What is meant by Luke's expression: "put one's hand to the plow"?
 15. In Jesus' warning, what does He mean by the expression: "look back"?
 16. Does Jesus mean these expressions literally or figuratively?
 17. In what way is one, who begins service in the Kingdom of God, accepts the responsibility to follow Jesus and then tempts himself to reconsider his decision by evaluating all he is giving up for this service, so particularly unfit for the kingdom of God? What does Jesus mean by the expression: "not fit for the kingdom"?
 18. Is Jesus using the expression "kingdom of God" in this admonition exactly with the same force or meaning as earlier when He charged the other disciple to "go and proclaim the kingdom of God"?
 19. Explain the absolute necessity for Jesus' challenging of the sincerity and commitment of these enthusiastic followers. Show the contrast between the open-arms reception we feel constrained to give any contact who manifests an interest in Christ, and the blunt, almost stand-offish approach actually used by Jesus Himself here.
 20. List other cases where Jesus cooled the enthusiasm of a would-be follower, in order to deepen his understanding and strengthen his commitment.

Section 16

JESUS STILLS A TEMPEST

(Parallels: Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25)

TEXT: 8:23-27

23. And when he was entered into a boat, his disciples followed him.
24. And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.
25. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Save, Lord; we perish.
26. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.
27. And the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. What do you think made Jesus sleep so soundly as to remain unawakened by the tossing of the boat during the tempest?
- b. How did fear of the great tempest prove that the disciples had "little faith"? Explain what is so faithless about fear.
- c. If the boat was "covered with the waves" why did it not sink? In what sense was it "covered"?
- d. What do you think is the answer to the men's question (vs. 27)?
- e. If these men were so faithless as Jesus says, why does He pass over their faithlessness with no more than a rebuke? Why did He not rather punish them?
- f. Have you ever been as frightened as these Apostles, just as scared by your circumstances as they were in theirs? If so, you can understand something of the fear they felt. They certainly had a right to be afraid. But Jesus rebuked them for their fear. Why?
- g. If Jesus were merely tired at the end of a busy day needing rest, why do you think He would dismiss the crowds and rush away in a boat where they could not immediately follow? Would it not have been just as good for Him to dismiss them formally at the conclusion of His work-day, rest the night through there in Capernaum, finding Himself fresh for another full day's work? Does it not appear that Jesus does not wish to be available that next day? If so, how do you account for His strange actions? In deciding upon your answer, you need to look both forward to the events that follow as well as the particular events which immediately preceded this precipitate departure.
- h. If these disciples were completely without faith, as Jesus' rebuke suggests then what does this appeal mean to Him? If they did

not believe that He could do something, why did they even bother to wake Him?

- i. Why were the disciples not as sleepy as Jesus? Had they not also spent the full, busy day with Him? Would they not also be tired? What effect would this possibility have upon their response to the storm?
- j. Put yourself in the place of the disciples during the storm before they awakened Jesus. State clearly the alternatives that lay before these men. Be especially clear in outlining what the disciples could have done besides crying out in such great fear to awaken Jesus. Should they have awakened Jesus?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Now when Jesus saw great crowds around Him that day, about evening He borrowed a boat with His disciples and gave orders for the departure to the east side of the Sea of Galilee. So, leaving the crowd, the disciples took Jesus with them, just as He was, in the boat with them, and set out for the other shore. Now other boats accompanied Him. As they got under way, He dropped off to sleep.

A heavy squall swept down off the Galilean hills down upon the sea (which is itself 682 feet below sea level) causing the wind to rise driving wave after wave into the boat until it was being swamped. They were taking in water and were in grave danger. But Jesus Himself was in the stern still asleep on the cushion. The men came and roused Him, shouting above the wind, "Lord! Master! Save us! We are going to drown! We are sinking! Don't You care?"

Jesus awoke and shouted to them, "What are you afraid of, you men with little faith?" Then He rose to His feet and rebuked the howling wind and raging waves, "Silence! Be quiet!" and the wind dropped and there was dead calm. Again Jesus said to them, "Of what were you afraid? Have you no faith? Where is it now?"

Mixed emotions of fear, awe, and marvelling filled those men, as they kept saying to one another, "Who can this be Who commands even wind and sea, and they obey Him?"

SUMMARY

After a particularly exhausting day of miracles, arguments and preaching Jesus ordered His disciples to take the boat in which He had preached across the lake and away from the crowds. During the voyage Jesus fell into deep sleep. A great storm threatened the life of all out on the sea. Jesus, awakened by the cries of His Apostles, arose

and, with a word, completely removed the storm, restoring perfect calm over the entire scene. The happy surprise mixed with fear expressed by the Apostles, suggested something of their appreciation of the true nature of the Lord.

NOTES

I. STRATEGIC SHIFT OF THE SCENE OF HIS SERVICE (8:23-26)

Matthew said in 8:18: "Now when Jesus saw great crowds around Him, He gave orders to go over to the other side." Mark reports (4:35) "On that day when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." Luke indicates (8:22): "One day He got into a boat with His disciples, and He said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." In order adequately to appreciate this unusual movement by Jesus, one must assemble clearly all the facts that occurred on that day. For these events explain why Jesus would deliberately sail away from obvious popularity. If we may be sure of our chronological connections, Jesus' activities on this busy day of ministry may be summarized as follows:

1. No sooner had Jesus arrived home from His second preaching tour of Galilee (Lk. 8:1-3; Mk. 3:19b-21), than a crowd gathered, interrupting any possibility of eating. His own sought to lock Him up for His own good, since it seemed to them He was going mad.
2. A special committee of scribes from Jerusalem attacked Jesus' miracles attributing His power to Satan (Mt. 12:22-37; Mk. 3:22-30). Although Jesus deftly refuted their charges with unanswerable logic proving Himself to be God's Son by deeds that only God's Spirit in Him could do, yet some of the Rabbis unreasonably demanded a sign from God that would prove His claims (Mt. 12:38-45).
3. In the midst of these attacks and responses, Jesus' mother and brothers try to interfere with His ministry (Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35; Lk. 8:19-21), but Jesus openly refused to let human fleshly ties bind Him, claimed special relationship to God shared by no man and placed discipleship on a higher plane than all fleshly relationships.
4. Leaving the house where the "very large crowds" and committees had Him cornered, He boarded a boat beside the shore so as better to handle the throng. (Mt. 13:1, 2; Mk. 4:1;

Lk. 8:4) Since they could not push out into the water to mob Him, He was able to teach them. But He deliberately taught them for hours without telling them anything except interesting stories that half-revealed, half-hid unpleasant truths they needed to learn. (See Notes on Mt. 13:1-53)

5. Apparently, Jesus dismissed the crowds and returned to the house (Mt. 13:36) where He gave private instruction to His own disciples.
6. Since the crowds did not go away (Mt. 8:18), Jesus did. (See additional notes on Mt. 8:18)

These facts lead to the conclusion that Jesus was not merely departing for awhile to rest, something He could easily have done at Capernaum. Apparently, this strategic shift of the scene of His service is intended to accomplish these three results:

1. He needed to separate His disciples for private instruction from the wildly excited but ignorant crowds who were more interested in having their sick healed and seeing wonders than in understanding His message. His Apostles **MUST** understand that message.
2. He needed to take the pressure of the increasing attacks of the Jerusalem scribes and Pharisees off the Apostles. Even though He Himself can out-argue the fiercest opposition of the religious authorities (cf. Mt. 21, 22), the very existence of this opposition cannot help but effect the emotions and conscience of the Apostles who from childhood had been taught to respect those very elders who now so vehemently oppose their Master. (See Notes on 15:12 and 16:5-12)
3. Looking forward to the later evangelization of the Decapolis area (see note on 8:34b; cf. Mk. 5:20), Jesus could have chosen the particular course He did, in order to make contact with that largely unevangelized population. Through the former demoniac, Jesus would be able to advertize, and thus, to prepare for His Decapolis ministry next year.

The unresolved question remains: if all the above is true, why then did Jesus meekly leave the Decapolis when the Geresenes begged Him to do so? Why did Jesus submit His will to the ignorant fears of a few superstitious townsfolk? Even if He, in divine deference to human weakness, chose to wait for a better opportunity in which to teach them, why did He sail directly back to Capernaum instead of landing further south down the eastern coast of the lake? Several answers are possible:

1. Because of this miracle performed on the sea, the Apostles themselves had much more reason to believe Jesus, against whatever opposition the Jerusalem leaders might offer.
2. Jesus actually accomplished much in Decapolis by sending the freed ex-demoniac through that area telling what God through Jesus had done for him. (Mk. 5:18-20; Lk. 8:38, 39)
3. Perhaps Jesus also knew that His answers had silenced the Pharisees at least temporarily, and that the Jerusalem scribes had left to make their report. (They do not reappear until later in the first six month of the third year. Mt. 15; Mk. 7) When Jesus returned, however, there remained a few Pharisees around to mutter the same old hackneyed argument (Mt. 9:32-34).
4. Also, if He had merely gotten away from Capernaum for some rest after that fatiguing day, He was now rested, accomplished His other purposes for getting away for awhile and can now return to finish His Galilean ministry (Mt. 9:35-38).

Why bother with all these seemingly "unedifying details" out of the records of Jesus' ministry, some might ask. After all, are not Jesus' teachings of much more importance? Granted, and one of Jesus' most important doctrines clarifies the point that we can learn most about a man by studying his deeds, the fruit of his life. (Mt. 7:15-21) If this principle is true about men, how much more significantly is it in reference to Jesus? By His actions He too revealed His viewpoint, His way, hence God's way, of dealing with human problems. To understand Jesus is to have studied how He Himself put His message into practice. He had to work out practical problems. He too must live with the physical weakness of this human flesh. He must plan the tactics of His evangelistic campaign while ministering to people's personal problems.

Jesus had said, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." (Mk. 4:35; Lk. 8:22) In contrast to Galilee, the eastern region across the Sea of Tiberias was much less populously settled, (cf. Mk. 6:31 with Jn. 6:1) although nine of the ten famed Greek independent cities of the Decapolis lay scattered throughout that territory. This command of Jesus to embark can hardly be interpreted, as do some, as Jesus' deliberate leading His disciples into the danger of the storm merely in order to put their faith in Him to the test.

8:23 And when he was entered into a boat. Can this be

Peter and Andrew's fishing boat held in readiness for Jesus' frequent use and trips across the lake? (cf. Mk. 3:9; Lk. 5:2, 3; Mt. 9:1; 13:2; 14:13, 22ss; 15:39; Jn. 21:8 shows that there was always a boat ready and available when Peter just "felt like" going fishing.) It was a boat small enough that it could be propelled by rowing (Mk. 6:48; Jn. 6:19) but large enough for Jesus and the Twelve.

This verse is in perfect agreement with the facts narrated in Mt. 13 which, according to the chronological order of Mark and Luke, preceded this event. Mt. 13:36 clearly indicates that Jesus had left the boat after dismissing the crowds and gone into the house. Now He reenters the boat for a sudden departure. The suddenness is suggested by the following circumstances:

1. **His disciples followed Him.** He led them, getting into the boat first. But were the disciples reluctant to follow Him in a boat trip across that lake without any special provisions for a journey when they had hardly time to eat all day? It would perhaps have been more comfortable for them to have refreshed themselves in Capernaum. Or had perhaps the expert eyes of the Galilean fishermen spotted the weather signs of an imminent tempest? But Matthew is clear that Jesus had commanded this trip (8:18), so perhaps in the rush to leave the crowds, none of the fishermen could get together to discuss how to dissuade Jesus from going out on the lake that night. If they did have any objections, they showed their discipleship by following Him!
2. Mark (4:36a) uses a cryptic phrase: "Leaving the crowd, they took Him with them, **just as He was**, in the boat." The presence of the crowds made it inconvenient to procure the necessities for a boat trip toward sparsely populated country at the end of the day. This probability merely underlines the reality of the uncertainty in Jesus' discipleship as represented to the scribe (8:20)
3. **And other boats were with Him.** (Mk. 4:36b) Why? One boat was usually large enough for Jesus and the Twelve. Who are in those other boats—other followers trying to keep Jesus from going away without them? Are they part of the very crowd Jesus would leave behind on the shore, intent upon following Him? (See note on 8:27) Whatever the answer, the owners and occupants of these boats became witness both of the terror of the storm and the miracle.

His disciples followed Him. This fact is remarkable in light

of the stern challenge of the cost of discipleship to the would-be followers (8:18-22). The prospect of a night out on the lake in nothing but a fishing boat was probably not the idea of comfort for the landsmen among the Apostles. But though they too were to have "no place to lay their head," they sailed, because Jesus had commanded it.

Luke (8:23) inserts here the observation that "as they sailed He fell asleep." As soon as the boat began picking up speed moving through the water, the milling throngs on the shore began to fade into the distance and Jesus could now relax, leaving the handling of the boat to Peter's direction. The gentle motion of the boat was sufficient to entice Jesus' tired body to submit to sleep. Resting on the cushion in the stern, He dropped into deep sleep (Mk. 4:38).

8:24 And behold there arose a great tempest in the sea. Luke says that the storm "came down on the lake," a fact that arises out of the topography of the sea itself and the surrounding mountains. The sea, or better, lake (see note on 4:18), lying already 682 feet below sea level, is surrounded on the east and west by hills some rising as high as 2000 feet above sea level, intersected by plains and gorges. These latter function as funnels concentrating any significant wind movement upon the surface of the lake, whipping the water into waves even six feet high. (ISBE, 1166; Rand McNally, 37, 381) Mark and Luke both use a term (*laílaps*) that perfectly justifies the strongest translation, "whirlwind, hurricane, fierce gust of wind." (Arndt-Gingrich, 463)

Matthew's term *seismòs* is a term used most frequently to denote *earthquakes*, and could even refer to an earthquake under the Sea of Galilee, which lay in the geological fault of the great el Ghor rift. Hot springs and the presence of lava indicating volcanic activity around the lake, plus frequent and sometimes destructive earthquakes, leave open the possibility that such an earthquake occurred out of which tidal waves are born. Yet, Arndt-Gingrich (753) point out that *seismòs* means literally, a *shaking* and can be used for a sea storm with waves caused by high winds (cf. vs. 26f where *ànemoi* is found with *thalàsse* . . .) Both Mark and Luke emphasize the wind (*anémou megàle*).

Luke's sober conclusion (8:23) declares that these men were not merely imagining their peril; their danger was real.

Insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves. The ASV of this passage as does the KJV rendering of Mk. 4:37

gives a particularly bad translation at this point and creates a clear inconsistency with reality: "the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full." If the boat were "full" why did it not sink then? The Greek construction (*hóste* with the present passive infinitives *kalúptesthai* in Mt., *gemízetsthai* in Mk.) does not state either that the boat was already covered or already filled. The construction states only that this tendency was certainly in progress. The infinitives are present infinitives, speaking of the action as in progress, but *not* completed, as suggested by the ASV and KJV in these texts. (cf. ASV on Mk. 4:37.)

Waves towering several feet high as the boat plunges into the trough, makes this description no exaggeration. Depending upon the direction of the wind, undoubtedly the boatsmen among the Apostles would have strained their mightiest to head the boat into the wind, rowing to gain steerageway. This maneuver would help the already heavily loaded boat to resist the pounding of the monstrous waves and keep from capsizing. This orientation, incidentally, would put Jesus, asleep in the stern, farthest from the immediate blast of water as the waves smashed into the bow.

But he was asleep. It is probable that Jesus was not on the stern seat itself, as that would be occupied by the disciple operating the tiller, fighting, along with the others who were rowing, to keep the boat under control. Yet it is difficult to imagine how He could have escaped the cold veil of spray from the surface of the white-caps, or from rain lashing the open boat from above. By this time, the boat was probably rollercoasting, careening more wildly with each wave and taking in more water.

How could Jesus remain asleep as that boat bucked and plunged into the trough, wallowing through each wave, threatening to swamp with each successive minute of tempest? Our Lord was utterly exhausted! The great fatigue, produced by the constant demands of the multitudes, emphasize the reality of Jesus' human nature. Jesus was NO angel, but a sharer in the flesh and blood of the descendents of Abraham! (Heb. 2:14-18) He had preached, healed, argued and mercifully ministered to people all day. This kind of work wears MEN out. Jesus had completely collapsed into that dead sleep that comes to the thoroughly exhausted. Some commentaries affirm without reason that Jesus slept with the deliberate purpose of trying the patience and faith of His men. He had no discernible intention of delaying His help in order merely to bring them into a crisis He could get them out of, merely to show off His glory and power.

If it be objectively true that **they awoke Him**, as all three Evangelist affirm, then He was really asleep, not merely feigning sleep until the right moment. (See comments on 4:1-11 and the special study: "Temptation," which deals more in depth with the human nature of Jesus.)

8:25 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying Save, Lord; we perish. From the completely naturalistic view, these ARE facts relative to a swamping boat in hurricane-force winds. But their cries reveal not only the bare facts of the situation. They lay bare their almost complaining reproach, almost bluntly accusing Jesus of not caring. They must have been very greatly terrified to have permitted themselves to address Jesus like that! These disciples had been watching the storm since its inception, leaving Jesus to rest peacefully, so long as they could handle the situation. But now the danger is increasing much too rapidly. Now, rather than see Jesus' sleeping as typical absolute consciousness of safety however great the storm, these Apostles, not fully aware of Jesus' nature and identity, were tempted to regard Jesus' sleep as typical human weakness and inability to conquer the demands of the human nature, especially in this moment. Jesus was asleep, so they must have thought, because He is just another man after all, hence His sleep betrayed a real indifference to their terror, not because He could not understand their fear, but because He could do nothing about it. "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" (Mk. 4:38) How could anyone spend THAT much time with Jesus and yet ask that exceedingly thoughtless and presumptuous question?

Lk. 8:24 "Master, Master, we are perishing!" Their repeated cries betray their desperation. All three Evangelists use present tense verbs or participles (*légontes, légousin*), indicating the repeated appeals to Jesus to wake up. Was this no time for prayers? Just because Jesus was sleeping, did God sleep also? Did they actually believe that a sleeping Jesus could not save them, but would also Himself drown? Or is their cry "we perish" meant to include only themselves? Did they suppose that Jesus could save Himself and leave them to a watery grave? What a reflection upon His love and merciful care for them! The answer to these questions depends upon the view they held of Jesus expressed in their amazed question: "Who then is this? What sort of man is this?" Did they suppose that the ship could sink "wherein lies the Master of oceans, earth and skies"? However great this gale, the storm has not yet been made than can sink God's Son!

Here is the self-revelation of Jesus' disciples. The true nature of their character, their comprehension of Jesus' message and nature, their faith and their doubts are all exposed by this life-and-death crisis. So long as the going was relatively easy and there had been no peril to life and limb, with only an occasional skirmish with the Pharisees, the discipleship of these men had not been so severely tested nor so closely bared in its weakest form. And yet, however imperfect these followers may be shown to be, they are a comprehensible picture of the nature of the Church; imperfect subjects being perfected. Who were these men? I wonder if we do not read our name written between the lines here.

1. They were loyal men. They had gone with Jesus whatever the cost. Now they come TO JESUS and, however brusquely they awakened Him, lay before HIM their plight. But they were only half-trusting "Save us!" is the voice of faith, but "We perish!" is the cry of doubt. Considering the desperation of their cries and the pity of Jesus' response, what did the disciples really expect of Him when they shook Him awake? It is certain that they did not expect what actually occurred. Is it possible that they possessed an unreasoned, undefined, almost blind, desperate hope that Jesus possessed an unlimited power? Or rather, as Edersheim (*Life*, I, 601) suggests, there existed in them a belief that coexisted, not with disbelief nor even with unbelief, but with the inability to comprehend His full nature. It is certainly true that Jesus' revelation of Himself gradually emerged through what He said and did. Each new, unique piece of evidence declared His identity or, better, filled in the outline of his true personality in the character of the God-Man. The presence of some faith in these terrified disciples is proved by the fact that these expert sailors who had wrestled with Galilean storms before, appeal to Jesus who had never handled boats. How could a former carpenter be of any help when these knew that all their skill had found a crisis completely beyond their poor, frail powers? Their half-believing, half-fearful appeal is not directed only to the human Jesus, but has some reference to His divine ability, even if the men themselves are very ignorant of His identity.
2. They were afraid. Why? Because of the human habit of depending completely on their own means and solving their problems by their own wits alone. They had tried to battle that storm by themselves and were not depending upon Him.

Now they HAD no other alternative! He had been merely their last resort, their escape hatch, their emergency exit. Though He wanted to be their constant companion, sharing and helping with their problems and fears by giving them answers, inward peace and calm, they had kept Him on the fringe of their lives, holding Him in reserve until they had tried all else.

3. They were doubters. How simple it would have been to crawl over to Jesus, arouse Him and in perfect confidence say: "Lord, this storm has gotten beyond our small powers to cope with it. But you, who possess all power over sickness and disease, you can do something about this tempest too."

II. THE SOVEREIGN STILLS THE SAVAGE STORM, SHOWING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STEADFASTNESS UNDER STRESS

(8:26)

8:26 **And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?** Both Mark and Luke record a rebuke after the calming of the storm, while Matthew places this reproof before that fact. It is more than likely that Jesus said it both times: before, to draw their attention to what He was immediately about to do; and then after, to show them the moral implications of their fear. It would seem, therefore, that we have before us a marvellous example of absolute serenity and composure in the face of what threatens to destroy everything. Before moving a muscle to deal with the storm, Jesus dealt first with the panic of His men. **Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea.** Then (*tôte*) seems almost emphatic in revealing the deliberateness with which Jesus acted. Anyone else could have objected: "But Lord, this is no time for sermons! Please, do something about this storm!"

Why are ye fearful, o ye of little faith? Whatever the tone of Jesus' voice or the look in His eyes, these words clearly constitute a rebuke. His rebuke is full of:

1. Absolute assurance that in matters that are really important, even this Force 9 or 10 gale was nothing! If there is a God in heaven whose word cannot fail, even death in the waves may be calmly awaited or else His immediate aid may be humbly asked and confidently expected. Here is the courage of faith: these men should have kept their fear under control with an unshaken confidence in God that keeps them doing their best to keep the boat rightside up, when there is every

good human reason to panic. Jesus' clearheaded indifference to circumstances, that had torn these lesser men's reason and faith from the moorings, could not help but begin to restore order in their hearts. He deliberately let the storm rage on, while He rebuked their faithlessness.

2. Loving pity, because in crisis these HIS men had failed. They were the men who one day would unflinchingly face trials, harrassment, persecution, and death. And Jesus would not then be physically "in the same boat with them." Here, however, their growth in faith is insufficient to pass the trial by storm.
3. Sovereignty over their souls. No rabbi could have demanded such unwavering trust as did the Lord. Any religious teacher could have rebuked his students for failing to trust God, but Jesus responds to His disciples' rebuke for His seeming indifference and inability by scolding them for their failure to trust HIM! This rebuke finds its fullest expression when Jesus did what no rabbi would have dreamed of attempting: the stilling of the storm. Thus, He showed in what sense He intended His rebuke, repeated also after the storm, to drive the point home.

It is obvious that the purpose of Jesus' question was to cause these men to see for themselves the seriousness of their moral stature, but why ask THIS question? Fear is God's blessing created into man's nature to trigger his instinct for self-protection. Otherwise, total fearlessness breeds that imprudence that lays the unsuspecting open to all that can harm. Why, then, are the disciples so wrong to fear? It was not that they had no faith at all, for they did have a "little faith". Nor was it that they should not have feared at all, else they would have been psychologically untrue to the nature God gave them. Nor was this rebuke given for seeking Jesus' help. Why did Jesus say it then?

1. Trench (*Miracles*, 90) cites Mk. 4:40 thus: "Why are you so fearful?" According to a number of Greek readings, so (*houtos*) belongs in the text here. (See *Synopsis*, 120) This suggests that their culpability lay in the excess of terror displayed. Fear was important to their self-preservation, but it should have prompted them to pray for God's preservation, rather than cause them to forget His care. Fear is proper, but it must never be allowed to destroy the rationality of genuine confidence in God's goodness. (Study Isa. 26:3; 43:2; Psa. 46:1-3)

2. Lenski (*Matthew*, 347) reduced this question of Jesus to an exclamation "How frightened you are!" based on the use of the Greek *tì* as a translation for the Aramaic *mah*, "how." Just as Jesus had marvelled, exclaiming the greatness of the centurion's faith (Mt. 8:10 comments), now His exclamation implies that He had the right to expect more faith and understanding of His own disciples. Accordingly, Jesus is marvelling at their failure to grasp His true nature. (cf. Lk. 2:49)
3. They were much too afraid to die in Christ's company and service. As long as HE is safe, so are His followers! All who sail with Jesus are safe, regardless of the greatness of any tempest that may come!

The further rebukes of Jesus after the storm, as recorded by Mark and Luke give a bit more insight into Jesus' meaning:

4. "Why are you so afraid? Have you not yet faith?" (Mk. 4:40)
This suggests that Jesus, while admitting that these disciples possessed some faith, is deciding that they were not yet arrived at that point in their discipleship where they should have been able to arise in unshakeable trust in God to meet the challenge to their very lives.
The translation "not yet" is justified from the reading followed by Aland, (*Greek NT*, 137) who selects this reading with reasonable certainty. (*oupo* against *pòs ouk*)

"Where is your faith?" (Lk. 8:25) challenges these men to discern the true character of their discipleship, if under these circumstances, their confidence in Jesus and dependence upon Him had been so easily forgotten.

5. It might just even be that the disciples HAD prayed to God, but their continued terror betrayed a lack of confidence in the result of their prayers. Worse yet, they fear that their prayer is useless. Where is the faith of Daniel or Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Elijah and countless others who faced death in the service of the invisible God? These disciples had not only the undoubted history of God's great deliverances of those men of faith, from which to profit, but they had lived and walked personally with Jesus. Even if they yet saw in Him no more than a great prophet, their failure to trust God is nonetheless to be rebuked, if not outright condemned. (Psa. 107:23-32; see comments on Mt. 6:19-34 esp. 6:30b)

Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. His words of rebuke: "Peace! Be still!" (Mk. 4:39) One act alone was worth an encyclopaedia full of philosophical discussion regarding Jesus' sovereignty over the sea and men's souls. One magnificent proof immediately cleared all doubts. And to produce this great wonder, Jesus' word alone was enough. He needed no special instruments through which His power was exerted to effect the stupendous result. (cf. Ex. 14:16, 21; 2 Kg. 2:14; 4:29-37)

Rebuke the winds and sea: is this simple personification of these natural elements in order to emphasize Jesus' full control over them, as if they were but domestic animals before their Master and Owner?

And there was a great calm. This calm is defined by Mark and Luke by the specific notice: "the wind ceased and the raging waves ceased." A multitude of experiences has taught one to expect a sudden drop of the wind on Lake Tiberias, but this would not immediately calm the rolling sea. Yet, contrary to nature, these eye-witnesses testify to the immediacy of the miracle as a direct result of Jesus' words. Their evidences:

1. The *sea* obeyed Jesus; it did not keep rolling after the wind died.
2. The verbs used by the witnesses are aorist, i.e. not specifically defining the time of the action involved (Mt.: *egéneto galéne*; Lk.: *epaisanto*), whereas if the writers intended to convey the impression that the sea gradually calmed in a natural way, they would have been expected to have used the imperfect tense. This latter tense would have expressed the continuity of the dying down. As the text stands, the wind and the sea ceased their raging at Jesus' word.
3. The impression upon these men well acquainted with the ways of the sea is totally inexplicable, were there no miracle. Yet they were convinced by what they saw that this was indeed a supernatural act of God. The incontrovertible reality of their experience was too obvious to allow these disciples the sort of naturalistic rationalization indulged in by professors of theological or philosophical faculties who spin fine theories miles and centuries from the facts actually seen by the apostles.
4. The rebuke for faithlessness seriously reflects upon the supposed inventors of this fiction, if there were indeed no real miracle. Were there no immediate sign which took place at Jesus' word, He could not have possibly rebuked their failure to

imagine what staggers the imagination! Further, as Edersheim (*Life*, I, 604) suggests, the narrative very markedly expresses that the apostles certainly did not expect Jesus to react to the storm in the way He did. This is a fact, incidentally, which proves also that there was nothing in the popular messianic expectations nor apparently in rabbinic thought to supply a parallel idea out of which some unknown Christian author could have created the legend out of which this "story" is supposed to have come. (See Edersheim, in *loc.*)

5. The witnesses say that Jesus addressed the natural elements, commanding them to be still. Jesus' integrity is brought into question by this fact: either He is a madman or an imposter, if He said what these men testify: "Peace! Be still!" and if He could not compel the wind and waves to submit to His will. A truly honest, self-effacing Jesus would also have had to correct the false impression created in the minds of His disciples, for their leading questions in response to whatever happened (if there were no miracle) definitely place Him on a par with divinity. If the Evangelist have falsified the record by declaring that Jesus actually spoke words He never intended, then we have no basis for certain knowledge about this event at all.
6. The unusual but perfectly credible question: "what manner of man is this?", given as the conclusion to this section by all these Evangelists, further evidences the trustworthiness of the narrative. Inventors of gospel fiction would have been tempted to conclude the record with an extended argument or at least with a stated conclusion regarding the deity of Christ, something to the effect of: "by which, we have now demonstrated the supernaturalness of Jesus."
7. Another evidence of the accuracy of the facts narrated in this section is the general representation of Jesus. All three Gospel writers picture Jesus, whom all apostolic testimony declared to have been "in the form of God", as surrendering to the pangs of hunger, and the demands of exhaustion upon His human body. Now, as Edersheim argues (*Life*, I, 600), if the Apostles had set about to devise this fiction to exhibit Jesus' supernatural power by ascribing to Him power to calm the tempest with a single word, how is it that they do not sense the glaring contradiction between this conclusion and the circumstances with which they introduce the situation? There Jesus is

imagined as exhausted and asleep because of His great fatigue. Edersheim concludes:

Each of these elements: (Jesus' humanity and His divinity) by themselves, but not the two in their combination, would be as legends are written. Their coincidence is due to the incidence of truth. Indeed, it is characteristic of the History of the Christ, and all the more evidential that it is so evidently undesignated in the structure of the narrative, that every deepest manifestation of His Humanity is immediately attended by the highest display of His Divinity, and each special display of His Divine Power followed by some marks of His true Humanity. Assuredly, no narrative could be more consistent with the fundamental assumption that He is the God-Man.

III. THE SEAMEN SEEM TO SENSE THE SECRET OF HIS SUPERNATURAL SUPREMACY (8:27)

8:27 And the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him? Mk. 4:41: "They were filled with awe." Lk. 8:25: "And they were afraid and marvelled . . ." This evident surprise of the Apostles is evidence of their inadequate comprehension of Jesus and His powers, for had they comprehended the towering stature of His divine nature, they could not have been surprised at anything He did. So, there is nothing at all incredible about this question.

Study the disciples' growth of faith from the question posed in the Capernaum synagogue: "What is this?" (Mk. 1:27; Lk. 4:36), to this question: "What sort of man is this? . . . Who then is this?", to their later affirmation: "Truly you are the Son of God." (Mt. 14:33). We grow so accustomed to inspired Apostles who inerrantly proclaimed Christ's message, that we can easily forget that these same men had been exactly what the word "disciple" implies: "learners who can make mistakes before their ignorance and prejudice begins to diminish before the advances of knowledge and comprehension of their Master's message."

The men. Why does Matthew use this expression instead of "the disciples" or perhaps "the apostles"? Is he intending thereby to intimate the distance between these awed witnesses of the miracle and the supernatural Jesus who effected it? The sensation of the awesome presence of God in their midst begins to settle down over these

men. (cf. Lk. 5:8) They had witnessed great and marvellous cures and miracles before, but this was a supernatural event in their own element. It touched them personally. Another difference that marked this miracle is its display of Jesus' supremacy over nature in so large a degree. And even though objectively it requires no more power perhaps to rebuke a hurricane than it does to change water into wine, yet the emotional impact upon the observers was much greater. Here also is painted the sagacity of the Master: by producing so great a variety of miraculous evidence of His identity, nature and power, He leaves no room for doubt even in the weakest disciple that Jesus can do ANYTHING that God can. Even though one of the extraordinary characteristics of Bible miracles, that distinguish them from heathen prodigies, is the notable absence of the love of the marvellous in the matter-of-fact tone in which the Gospel writers narrate these events, yet the astonishment registered in the reaction of these disciples to this miracle rings true psychologically. (See A. B. Bruce, *Training*, 49) Had they NOT been surprised, we might have wondered at the truth and authenticity of the story. As it is, Matthew and Peter (through Mark) both faithfully record their own unbelief and surprise, even though it pictures them yet less developed, less mature than their later offices required. As Bruce accurately observes, by the time they wrote these facts into our present Gospels, their sense of wonder at these tremendous deeds had been deadened by being satisfied. They had seen too many miracles while with Jesus to be able any longer to react to them as we find them doing in this text. But even though their sense of wonder at the power of Jesus did not continue, they never ceased to be deeply moved at the marvel of His grace.

The men reminds us also of the **other boats** and pricks our curiosity about their occupants and owners too. If, as suggested above (8:23), they survived the storm to witness the miracle, how did they react? Foster (*Middle*, 111) asks: "Did the men in these boats turn back after the storm feeling they had had enough for one day and seen enough for a lifetime? There is nothing to indicate that they were present when Jesus and the Apostles landed at Gergesa." If they turned back to Capernaum after the calm, their account of the news would have whipped Capernaum's excitement to fever pitch. What a story they would have had to tell! This explains the "great crowd" (Mk. 5:21) that gathered about Jesus to "welcome Him" (Lk. 8:40) immediately at the seaside when He returned next day.

What manner of man is this? What indeed! (See Psa. 89:9; 107:29) Have we learned better what these men had not yet

fathomed, that of which they were but then beginning to catch a glimpse: the voice which the wind and sea obeyed was the voice which spoke the world itself into being? Although the Evangelists record only this puzzling question as the only one uttered, the very question itself was probably the cause of many others: Indeed where WAS our faith? Why did we ourselves fail? How could we have questioned His control over this storm? Perhaps the more reflective among them pondered: when or how will we fail Him again? Note how deftly the three Evangelists conclude their narration with this thought-provoking question. They add no answer that might have been uttered that night. This splendid literary device is rhetorically perfect to kindle fires of thought and set the thoughtful reader to musing.

LESSONS TO OBSERVE FROM THIS TEXT:

1. When Jesus is in the boat, it is **SINFUL UNBELIEF** to say: "We are perishing!" All who sail with Jesus are **SAFE**, however great the storm. Jesus' very incarnation was His way of "getting into the boat with us" by which He shares our storms with us. Though He is not physically present in the boat in our present storms, He is nonetheless sympathetic and powerful to save.
2. And since Jesus has been "in the same boat with us," it is just as presumptuously sinful to scream: "Do you not care if we perish?" His human suffering is God's evidence proving that Jesus cares more than we can ever imagine. He cared so much if we perish that He went to the extreme limit of the cross, worked the supreme miracle of the resurrection, just to show us just how much He cared! "Do you not care?" does not apply to Jesus!
3. Though fear as an instinct is fundamental, yet we cannot let fear destroy our confidence in His control. Let us abandon our total dependence upon human help, and failing resources, casting ourselves completely, confidently upon Jesus. No matter how great our trials, things are still in His control.
4. We dare not leave Jesus to last place in our life as a mere escape hatch for emergency use only. He wants to be our Companion and all-powerful Friend and Guide throughout life. Let Him be the **FIRST** one to whom we turn!
5. It is quite possible but just as inadmissible to mix doubts about Jesus with faith in Him. Jesus wants all or nothing.
6. Our shattered nerves, our broken hearts, our wasted energies,

our straining muscles, our haunted lives need this word of Jesus: "Peace! Be still!"

7. However imperfect our faith and prayers, Jesus is still waiting to answer our cry, strengthen our faith and justify our confidence in Him.
8. All these foregoing points have no significance unless we understand that Jesus is God whose word created and sustains the universe and in whose control our destiny rests.

FACT QUESTIONS

1. List all of the events that the Gospel writers clearly indicate as having taken place on this day which concludes with the storm on Lake Galilee.
2. What is significant about the quantity and nature of the events you have listed in question 1, that explains a detail described in this account of Jesus' stilling the tempest?
3. True or false? Jesus and His disciples were the only witnesses to what transpired on the lake that night. Prove your answer.
4. Describe the tempest, explaining both its nature, as described by Matthew, Mark and Luke, and its possible natural origin.
5. Quote the cries of the apostles as they awoke Jesus.
6. Describe Jesus' reaction to their cries.
7. Give all the words that the Evangelists use to describe the reaction of these Apostles to Jesus' stilling the tempest.
8. Justify Matthew's use of language when he describes Jesus as "rebuking the winds and the sea." Anyone knows that both the wind and the sea are inanimate objects with no conscience or soul to rebuke.
9. What is so remarkable, from a natural point of view, about the fact that, immediately after Jesus rebuked the storm, there was a dead calm?
10. Matthew and Mark say that "there *arose* a storm on the sea;" while Luke affirms that "a storm of wind *came down* on the lake." Show the perfect harmony between the narratives, that explains this apparent contradiction.
11. At what time of day did the storm start? What effect would this fact have on the disciples' nerves, if any?
12. Describe the probable type of boat Jesus and His disciples were in, how it was propelled, or maneuvered. Picture how it would react in this storm.