

Walking on the Water (John 6:16-21; Mark 6:45-52)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (9/5/2021)

Introduction

In the John 6, we have two miracles back-to-back.

1. The structural component of the text contrasts the crowd (unbelievers) and the disciples (believers). This structural component may be outlined as ABCAB:

A = 6:1-15 – the feeding of the 5000 (testing the disciples)

B = 6:16-21 – the helpless disciples at the mercy of the storm (testing the disciples)

C = 6:22-26 – the pursuing crowd wanting more bread (contrasted with the disciples)

A = 6:27-58 – the Bread of Life discourse (the unbelieving crowd)

B = 6:59-71 – the “hard saying” response (weeding false disciples)

2. A theory worthy of consideration aligns the seven signs with the seven discourses.
 - 1) Water into wine miracle (2:1-11) points to the discourse on new birth (3:1-21).
 - 2) The healing of the nobleman’s son (4:46-54) points to the discourse on the water of life (4:1-42).
 - 3) The healing of the paralytic (5:1-18) points to the discourse on the divine Son (5:19-47).
 - 4) The feeding of the 5000 (6:1-15) points to the discourse on the bread of life (6:22-65).
 - 5) Walking on the water (6:16-22) points to the discourse on the life-giving Spirit (7:1-52).
 - 6) The healing of the man born blind (9:1-57) points to the discourse on the light of the world (8:12-59).
 - 7) The raising of Lazarus (11:1-57) points to the discourse on the Good Shepherd (10:1-42).

I. The Background

1. Why did John include the episode of His walking on water?
 - a. In early Christian tradition this story was linked to the feeding as part of the training of Christ’s disciples.
 - b. This paragraph contains vital information about what happened after the feeding and how the disciples returned to Capernaum.
 - c. This paragraph is also tied to the “exodus” theme introduced in the feeding miracle—Jesus is the true Manna and the true Prophet.
2. Jesus displayed His omniscience and sovereign power to the disciples for their faith to be strengthened (Mark 6:52). Several miracles are involved during this text: Jesus walked on water, Peter also walked on water (Matthew 14:28-32), Jesus stilled the storm, the boat was instantly transported to the destination.

II. The Escape

1. The situation: the crowd wanted to seize Jesus by force and make Him king (v. 15).
2. Jesus experienced personal stress from this situation. How did He handle it? Jesus dismissed the crowd in order to get alone (“*Himself alone*”) to pray (John 6:16; Mark 6:46).

III. The Storm

1. The disciples needed to see His divine power to offset their disappointment in His refusal to be crowned.
2. The disciples were helpless.
3. The Savior came to their rescue.
4. The Savior took control.

Lessons

1. Like the disciples, terrified in the boat, we need Jesus to teach us what real faith involves.
 - a. We are like the disciples in that we tend to look only at the storm raging—the problem that overwhelms us—not the supernatural solution that God is about to reveal in stilling the storm.
 - b. We see only the impossibility of our situation, not the *power* and *glory* of the Savior who desires to walk on water for us.
2. The Lord creates the storms in our lives in order to come to us on the water.
 - a. Storms show us that we must learn to trust Him (Matthew 14:26, 27).
 - b. Storms teach us how to see the unseen reality and to live in that sphere (Psalm 148:8).
3. Here is a microcosm of the church.
 - a. Jesus is in the place of intercession (Hebrews 7:25).
 - b. Believers are in the midst of the storm (Matthew 14:31).
 - c. Jesus is coming to take us safely to shore (Hebrews 9:27, 28).