

## Jesus and Storms



David Wilkerson March 1, 1978

Jesus ordered His disciples into a boat that was headed for a collision. The Bible says He "constrained them to get into a ship..." It was headed for troubled waters; it would be tossed about like a bobbing cork; the disciples would be thrust into a mini-Titanic experience - and Jesus knew it all the time.

"And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away" (Mat 14:22).

Where was Jesus? Up in the mountains overlooking that sea. He was there praying for them not to fail the test He knew they must go through. The boat trip, the storm, the tossing waves, the winds were all a part of a trial the Father had planned. They were about to learn the greatest lesson they would ever learn. And that is how to recognize Jesus in the storm.

They recognized Him to this point as the miracle worker, the Man who turned loaves and fishes into miracle food. They recognized Him as the friend of sinners, the One who brought salvation to every kind of lost humanity. They knew Him as the supplier of all their needs, even paying their taxes from a fish's mouth.

They recognized Jesus as "the Christ, the very Son of God." They knew He had the words of eternal life. They knew He had power over all the works of the devil. They knew Him as a teacher, teaching them how to pray, to forgive, to bind and to loose.

But they had never learned to recognize Jesus in the storm. And tragically, those disciples who thought they really knew Him best could not recognize Him when the storm hit.

That's the root of most of our trouble today. We trust Jesus for miracles and healing. We believe Him for our salvation and the forgiveness of our sins. We look to Him as the supplier of all our needs. We trust Him to bring us into glory one day. But when a sudden storm falls upon us and it seems like everything is falling apart, we find it difficult to see Jesus anywhere near. We can't believe He allows storms to teach us how to trust. We are never quite sure He is nearby when things really get rough.

The ship is now tossing; it appears to be sinking; winds are blowing; they have everything contrary against them.

"But the ship 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 spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:24-27).

They were so suddenly swamped, so suddenly overwhelmed, the very thought that Jesus was nearby watching over them was absurd. One probably said, "This is the work of Satan - the devil is out to kill us - because of all those miracles we've had a part in."

Another said, "Where did we go wrong? Which one of us has sin in his life? Let's have a heart-searching; let's

confess one to another. God is mad at somebody on this boat!"

Another could have said, "Why us? We're doing what He said to do! We're obedient! We are not out of God's will. Why all of a sudden this storm? Why would God allow us to be shaken up so much on a divine mission?"

And in the darkest hour, "Jesus went unto them..." How difficult it must have been for Jesus to wait on the edge of the storm, loving them so much, feeling every pain they felt, wanting so much to keep them from getting hurt, yearning after them as a father for his children in trouble! Yet, knowing they could never fully know Him or trust Him until the full fury of the storm was upon them. He would reveal Himself only when they had reached the limit of their faith. The boat would have never gone down, but their fear would have drowned them more quickly than the waves beating on the ship. The only fear of drowning was from despair - not water - and fear and anxiety!

Remember, Jesus can calm that sea anytime, simply by speaking the word, but the disciples cannot. Could faith on their part have been exercised? Couldn't they command the sea in Jesus' name — "Greater works shall ye do." Could not the promises have been put into practice - "All things asked in prayer... ye shall have!" Not until we have learned to recognize Jesus in the storm! Not until we receive faith to ride out the storm! Not until we learn to "be of good cheer" when the boat appears to be sinking.

"And when the disciples saw Him ...they were troubled saying, It is a spirit (a ghost)...." (Matthew 14:26).

They did not recognize Jesus in that storm! They saw a ghost — an apparition. The thought of Jesus being so near, so much a part of what they were going through, did not even enter their minds.

Here is the danger we all face - not being able to see Jesus in our troubles. Instead, we see ghosts. In that very peak moment of fear, when the night is the blackest, the storm is the angriest, the winds are the loudest, and the hopelessness so overwhelming, Jesus always draws near to us to reveal Himself as the Lord of the flood - the Savior in storms.

"The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever" (Psalm 29:10).

They compounded their fears. Now, not only were they afraid of the storm, they had a new fear — ghosts! The storm was spewing up ghosts. Mysterious spirits were on the loose!

You would think that at least one disciple would have recognized what was happening and say, "Look friends, Jesus said He would never leave us or forsake us. He sent us on this mission; we are in the center of His will. He said the steps of a righteous man are ordered by Himself. Look again - that's our Lord; He's right here. He's never been far away; we've never once been out of His sight. Everything's under control."

But not one disciple could recognize Him! They did not expect Him to be in their storm. They expected Him at the Samaritan well. They expected Him to be there with outstretched arms, bidding little children to come; to be in the temple driving out the money changers; to one day be at the right hand of the Father to make them kings and priests. But never, never did they expect Him to be with them, near them - in a storm!

It was to them just an act of destiny! An unexpected disaster! A tragic accident of fate! An unwanted, unexpected, unnecessary trial! A lonely, fearful journey into darkness and despair! A night to be forgotten!

But God saw that storm through different eyes! It was as much a test for these disciples as the wilderness was for Jesus. God took them away from the miracles, shut them up in a tiny, frail boat, far from the upper room, and then He turned nature loose. God allowed them to be shaken - but not sunken!

There was only one lesson to be learned - only one! A simple lesson - not some deep, mystical, earth-shattering one. Jesus simply wanted to be trusted as their Lord in every storm of life. He simply wanted them to maintain their cheer and confidence even in the blackest hours of trial. That's all!

Jesus did not want them to conjure up ghosts! But they did, just as we all still do. Every man in that boat must have conjured up a ghost for himself. Jesus must have appeared as twelve different ghosts in twelve separate minds of those disciples.

Perhaps one thought to himself, "I know that ghost; that's the ghost of lying! I lied a few weeks back. That's what

this storm is all about. That's the reason we're in trouble; I lied. That's the ghost of lying, trying to warn me to quit lying. I will! I will! Just get me out of this mess and I'll quit lying."

Another probably thought, "That's the ghost of hypocrisy! I'm two-faced. I'm a phony. Now I can see what I am in this storm. That's why the storm! God sent that ghost to warn me to straighten up. I will! I will! No more hypocrisy - just deliver me."

Another - "That's the ghost of compromise! I've been compromising lately. Oh, my. I've really failed the Lord. It's been a secret thing I tried to hide. But I'm scared now. You allowed this storm; You sent that ghost to warn me to get back to holiness. I will! I will! Just give me another chance."

Another - "That's the ghost of covetousness! I've been too materialistic."

Another - "That's the ghost of wasted time! I've grown lazy. I've not been witnessing! I've grown cold, lukewarm. I've learned my lesson..."

Another - "That's the ghost of grudges. I've not been forgiving like I should. I've been avoiding certain people! That's why God is shaking me up - to teach me to quit holding grudges."

Another - "That's the ghost of secret sin! Evil thoughts. I can't seem to give it up, so God had to send this storm to expose me."

Another - "That's the ghost of broken promises. I promised God I'd do this thing, and I didn't do it. Now, God is getting back at me. He's mad at me so He put me out in this storm. I'm sorry. That's the lesson - I've learned my lesson."

No! No! A thousand times no! Those are all ghosts of our own minds - apparitions only. None of these are the real lessons to be learned. God is not mad at you. You are not in a storm because you failed. These ghosts are not even in your storm.

It is Jesus at work, seeking to reveal Himself in His saving, keeping, preserving power! He is wanting you to know that the storm has one purpose only and that is to bring you to complete rest and trust in His power and presence at all times. In the middle of miracles - and in the middle of storms! It is so easy in a storm to lose a sense of His presence and feel that we are left alone to battle against hopeless odds; that somewhere along the line, as a result of sin or compromise, Christ has forsaken us and left us out there all alone in that tossing boat.

What about those times when the contrary winds are sickness, disease, and pain? When cancer strikes? When pain and fear are so overwhelming, you can't spare a thought about the closeness of Jesus? Your sudden storm is upon you, and there is no other thought than survival. You don't want to die. You want to live! You see the ghost of death in the shadows and you tremble. You don't have the strength to face even the next hour.

That is what the presence of Jesus is all about. It is a revelation that is the most powerful when it comes to us when most needed.

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