

“What kind of man is this? Or, Who is this man?” Stephen Hague

Outline:

Mtt 8:23-27 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴ Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” ²⁶ He replied, “**You of little faith, why are you so afraid?**” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. ²⁷ The men were amazed and asked, “**What kind of man is this?** Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

Biblical interpretation: how to understand such miracle stories in the Bible?

- ▶ **Spiritualize or moralize?**
- ▶ Question 1: But, what does this do to this kind of story? Does it turn the story into a **promise** instead of a **proclamation**?
- ▶ Question 2: are such stories as this immediately *about* you and me?
- ▶ Question 3: If the answer to the second question, is yes, what is one **potentially bad idea** we can come to conclude?
 - ▶ Prosperity teaching: “have faith and God will still the storms of your life”
 - ▶ The real question is, does God ever promise to still all the storms of our lives?
- ▶ Christians wives of pastors in China:
 - ▶ Remember . . . if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you . . .” (Jn 15:20)
 - ▶ Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines . . . Hab 3:17f
 - ▶ “How long, O Lord must I call for help but you do not listen?” (Hab 1:2).
- ▶ God does answer prayer: Ps 107:28–32
Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses.
29 He caused the storm to be still,
So that the waves of the sea were hushed.
- ▶ We must be careful to distinguish between historical narratives like this one on the Sea of Galilee that are primarily given to reveal and **proclaim** who God is and those texts that give us examples of how to pray and trust God in troubles.
- ▶ The Bible is always asking one main question: “Who is the Messiah that God promised?” All of these stories are about answering this in different ways: in this sense, all of scripture points to Jesus, both OT and NT in a unified revelation to answer that question.
- ▶ We see in the story the **proclamation** that Jesus:
 - **is both fully human and fully divine**
 - **Jesus is Lord even over nature!** And over Baal (the storm god of Canaanites)
- ▶ Consider the broader **context** of water in the Bible
 - The global flood judgment
 - The parting of the sea at the Exodus
 - Jonah in the storm and the whale
- ▶ Context of all the NT miracle stories in the NT: all foretastes of the eventual redemption of creation. In Christ’s ministry, the **restoration of this creation** began in earnest; in his resurrection it is guaranteed!
- The **goodness of God** is proclaimed in the coming of the Messiah: the One who made the world is the only One who can remake the world, redeeming it, resurrecting it in the consummation of the new creation kingdom.

- ▶ This is where our **hope** rests in the midst of the stormy trials and tribulations of life: Jesus is coming and will reverse the pandemic of the curse, and he will reclaim his good creation and thus fulfill the Messianic covenant-promise to Adam in Eve in **Gen 3:15**.
- ▶ **And this is why we can trust him** through all the trials of life; to cling to his promises as we await that great Day – not that all of the storms and trials we suffer will **magically** go away with the wand of faith, but that **miraculously** we are sustained by him as we learn to trust, love, and worship our King Jesus who rules the heavens and the earth.
- ▶ Last question: who answers the disciples’ question in the boat?
 - The importance of interpreting passages in their context:
 - Jesus taught with authority. The sequence of interrelated miracles confirm his authority and who he is: heals leper, heals servant of centurion, heals Peter’s mother-in-law, casts out demons
 - These miracles **proclaim** who Jesus is and give evidence of his claims to be the Son of God, Messiah!
- ▶ Answer to their question:

Mt 8:28-34 When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes,^a two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.²⁹ **“What do you want with us, Son of God?” they shouted.**

- ▶ It is answered by the demon possessed men: the demons understood that **Jesus is the *Son of God***.
- ▶ When do the disciples themselves finally answer their question? See Mtt 14:31-33
- ▶ In conclusion, this story about Jesus, boats, and disciples on the Sea of Galilee simply is NOT a nice moral lesson about our personal troubles (“storms of life”) and our faith in Jesus to still those storms; it is **about who Christ is** and putting absolute trust in him, for he is worthy.

^a Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; others *Gerasenes*