



## Understanding Jesus

Everything that I am going to teach you, you already know in your heart. The Holy Spirit and I are just going to remind you.

**If ye love me, keep my commandments.** (John 14:15, KJV).

**It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men [witnesses] is true.**  
(John 8:17, KJV).

### *Stilling the Storm*

*35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36 And when they had sent away the multitude,*

*they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. 37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? 39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have **no** faith?*

*41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, **What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?** (Mark 4:35-41, 649 chaps KJV cf Psalms 107:23-32).*



You might answer the disciples with, "I know, I know, this is the Son of God also called God The Word. He can do anything!"<sup>1</sup> And if you do say this to yourself, and think that this is the understanding the verse intends, you will probably move on to the next verse, satisfied that you "got the message" not realizing that you have missed the whole point of the story. But, if you are inquisitive, you might wonder, why didn't the fishermen bail out the ship as usual. Why did they wait until the boat was "full" before waking the Master? How was it possible that the Master, asleep on his pillow, didn't get wet, and so wake up? After the wind was stilled, how did they sail to the other side? These are all good questions which God expects you to ask, for He wants to reveal something of the truth about the divine life by telling you this story. But to find the spiritual meaning you must test the text as you would test a gold coin to see if it is real, by scraping, rubbing, and cutting it, to prove its value. So let us begin by imagining that we are a part of this adventure.

Lake Galilee is the same size as Lake Moultrie. Let's imagine we are on Lake Moultrie, in SC, in a 30 foot sailing ship. And a storm comes up. We can see the shore and it is no more than 4 miles away.

The waves begin to build - how big could they get on Lake Moultrie? We are in a 30 foot sailing ship, we are competent boatmen, and we have fished this lake all our lives. Would we be concerned about the waves? But perhaps you are worried about something else, someone you have left on the shore - a spouse - and you are concerned for her peace of mind, and you can't get in touch with her. You can see how the tension could build up as you worry about being delayed by the bad weather. Imagine the tension becoming unbearable, and so you call out to God to bring you home safely, to prevent any harm coming to your family while you are absent, and to calm them so that they will not worry about you. And God answers you, as Jesus did the disciples. And immediately your worries float away, and all is calm at home and at sea.

This is what God wants you to experience through this story. But if you read this story as if it were only the historical event which you are "watching" as you might a news item on television, and you are not a part of this story - not one of His disciples in the ship - you will completely miss the message of the Spirit. For is a theological maxim that

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<sup>1</sup> Joh 5:19\* ... "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."  
Joh 5:30\* I can of mine own self do nothing: ....



for any writing to be scripture it must have eternal meaning, for scripture is God's word written, and God's word is eternal. The spiritual meaning must have as much value to you in your life, at this very moment. as it did when it was first understood, on that Lake in Galilee.

Paul warned us about how we must read the New Testament. Paul said:

*6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. (2 Corinthians 3:6, KJV).*

You might not have recognized that the core element of this story is God's question through Jesus "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that you have no faith". God is asking "What happened to your trust in God? "

As we begin to scrape, rub and cut this text, we might first turn to the parallel story in Matthew which was written later than the story in Mark, and was borrowed from Mark. Perhaps Matthew left some clues to the spiritual meaning of the story here.

*23 And when he was entered into a ship, <sup>2</sup> his **disciples** followed him. 24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was **covered with the waves**: but he was asleep. 25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: 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 But the men marvelled, saying, **What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!** (Matthew 8:23-27, KJV).*

There doesn't seem to be much more to learn from Matthew's story. But note that here the word *ship* is again used. There is a difference in sequence of the story which may be important; there are no *little ships*, and the word "they" in Mark refers apparently to disciples. The last line is identical.

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**SHIP** 4143. πλοιον ploion play'-on; from [4126](#); a sailer, i.e. vessel:-- ship(-ing). Here and in most every place that the greek word appears it means a sailing ship.

**BOAT(NIV)** 4142. πλοιαριον ploiarion play-ar'-ee-on; neuter of a presumed derivative of [4143](#); a boat:-- boat, little (small) ship.



In the margin of some Bibles and in some commentaries there is a reference to Psalm 107 23:32. This reference is missing from all the official KJV Bibles. It is in the Life Application KJV, and in the Navarre Bible. Lets look at this reference in the KJV and also in the NIV.

Here is the Hebrew source: Psalm 107 23-32

במצולה 23 יורדי הים באניות עשי מלאכה במים רבים  
סערה ותרוגם גליו 24 המה ראו מעשי יהוה ונפלאותיו  
ירדו תהומות נפשם ברעה תתמוגג 25 ויאמר ויעמר רוח  
יחגו וינועו כשכור וכל-חכמתם תתבלע 26 יעלו שמים  
27 ויצעקו אל-יהוה בצר להם ומצוקתיהם יוציאם  
אל-מחוז חפצם 29 יקם סערה לרממה ויחשו גליהם  
חסרו ונפלאותיו לבני אדם 30 וישמחו כי-ישתקו וינחם  
בקהל-עם ובמושב זקנים יהללוהו 31 יורו ליהוה  
107:23-32, BHS 315chars). שְׁמֵלֵאשֶׁף

And here is the KJV translation from the Hebrew.

### **Note that it is written not as history but is in the present tense**

*KJV 23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; 24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. 31 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to **the children of men!** 32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalms 107:23-32, KJV 714 chars).*

We should ask God: why do the disciples in both Mark and Matthew think that a *man* did this work, and not that God calmed the storm. And as we can read here in the Psalm, God is the first cause of the storm.

So we see that in the story in Mark and Matthew, God is making the disciples fearful because though His mighty works are all around for all to see, the disciples (and us) have forgotten Him who created them. God is troubling us all so that we will wake Jesus, who



will remind us about God. This is why Jesus has come to us, to remind us that God is with us, and that we must rebuild our trust in God.

Athanasius (who brought us the concept of the Trinity in Unity) said:

*The Lord of the sea, eliciting faith through temporal events, exhibited his awesome power in the storm*

*For interest here are the Septuagint (Greek OT) translations*

**Again we see that the English translation of the Septuagint by Sir Lancelot Brenton is in the Present tense**

*23 They that go down to the sea in ships, doing business in many waters; 24 these men have seen the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. 25 **He speaks**, and the stormy wind arises, and its waves are lifted up. 26 They go up to the heavens, and go down to the depths; their soul **melts** because of troubles. 27 They are troubled, they stagger as a drunkard, and all their wisdom is swallowed up. 28 Then they **cry** to the Lord in their affliction, and he brings them out of their distresses. 29 And **he commands** the storm, and it is calmed into a gentle breeze, and its waves are still. 30 And they are glad, because they are quiet; and he guides them to their desire haven. 31 Let them acknowledge to the Lord his mercies, and his wonderful works **to the children of men**. 32 Let them exalt him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the seat of the elders. (Psalms 107:23-32, 702 BLXX).*

**But the NIV translation is written as history in the Past Tense**

*NIV for comparison only [23 Others went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. 24 They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep. 25 For **he spoke** and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. 26 They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage **melted** away. 27 They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. 29 He **stilled** the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. 31 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds **for men**. 32 Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people*



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*and praise him in the council of the elders. (Psalms  
107:23-32, 671 NIV).*

## *The Understanding*

So what is this story all about? What is the message of the Spirit that God is wanting us to find?

The disciples in the story are a metaphor <sup>3</sup> for this congregation. The ship is a metaphor for where we sit right now.<sup>4</sup>

In some of you sitting here in this ship, Jesus is asleep. How can you tell?

If you are worrying about anything at all, then Jesus is asleep in you – wake Him up, and He will calm your troubles.

Augustine, the “Doctor of the Church” said:

*The words that Jesus uses here (V 40) teach us a perennial truth: faith conquers fear; if we have [the] faith of Jesus, nothing can disturb our peace: “Christian, Christ is asleep in your boat. Wake him up. and he will calm the storm and your fears {...} You are afraid because your faith is asleep. Your faith is asleep means you have forgotten your faith, to recall what you believe. Remember your faith; wake Christ within you. Your faith will immediately still the frightening winds and waves of those who tempt you to do evil.”<sup>5</sup>*

*Amid our temptation we may awaken the sleeping Christ in us.*

Athanasius, <sup>6</sup> the Church Father of the 4th. cent. who brought to the Church’s attention the understanding of the Trinity in Unity said this:

*Even while He was asleep on the pillow, the Lord was testing His disciples, <sup>7</sup> when a miracle was wrought that was calculated especially to put even the wicked to contrition. For when He arose and rebuked the sea, and silenced the storm, He plainly disclosed two things: that the storm of the sea was not simply from winds, but from the fear of the*

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<sup>3</sup> a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable : “I had fallen through a trapdoor of depression,” said Mark, who was fond of theatrical metaphors

<sup>4</sup> You have heard of “the ship of State; ship of fools; traditional churches are built like an upside down ship to remind you of where you are - in the ship with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Sermones, 361,7, *St. Augustine d. 604 AD*

<sup>6</sup> *Athanasius d. 373*

<sup>7</sup> Mk 4:37-41



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*Lord who walked upon it,<sup>8</sup> and that the Lord who rebuked it was not a creature, but rather its creator.<sup>9</sup>*

Origen of the 3rd. cent, the greatest teacher of the gospel, who wrote some 6,000 manuscripts about God said this;

*For as many as are in the little ship of faith are sailing with the Lord; as many as are in the bark of holy church will voyage with the Lord across the wave-tossed life; though the Lord himself may sleep in holy quiet, his is but watching your patience and endurance: looking forward to the repentance, and to the conversion of those who have sinned. Come then to him eagerly, instant in prayer.<sup>10</sup>*

*His sleep had the purpose of maturing their faith.*

Cyril of Alexandria said:

*And so He sleeps, leaving them in fear, in which their senses would be sharpened to perceive the significance of what was to come. For no feels what takes in another's body as acutely as that which happens in his own.<sup>11</sup>*

### *The search for spiritual truth in the scriptures brings happiness.*

Now it took some effort to find this understanding. But Jesus taught that we are to search for the truth. *The search for truth is the cause of happiness*, and joy comes from finding it. He explained this in the story of the lost coin, the treasure in the field, and the pearl of great price. It is clearly stated when He was celebrating with the publican and sinners and told the story of the lost sheep, in which owning the 99 sheep is not the cause for celebration, but rather the happiness of the search, and the joy of discovery that causes friends to celebrate. Once the sheep is back in the fold, the happiness dies. Once the coin is found and you put it back in the purse, happiness dies.

You may have wondered why the shepherd left his 99 sheep alone. Because he was not attached to them. His happiness did not come from his possessions – He had lost something and his happiness came when he began searching for that which was lost.

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<sup>8</sup> cf Mt 14:26; Mk 6:48; Jn 6:19

<sup>9</sup> Letter 29 NPNF 2 4:550; PG 26:1435

<sup>10</sup> Fragments on Matthew 3.3 *Origen d. 253 AD*

<sup>11</sup> Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 8.5.22 *Cyril of Alexandria d. 444 AD*