

# Jesus and Peter Walking on Water

📖 Matthew 14:22-36

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Charles C. Ryrie, best known for the Ryrie Study Bible, passed away on Tuesday, Feb 16<sup>th</sup>. He was just two weeks short of his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. A friend of mine, Tommy Ice, had spoken to him four days before and said he could barely talk and sounded almost dead. I want to mention several of Dr. Ryrie's contributions in the hope that you will avail yourself of some of the valuable things he has left the Church. First, those who knew him either personally or through his works all highlighted his ability to take difficult concepts and communicate them in an understandable way. Ryrie attributed this ability to years of teaching children. Second, Dr. Ryrie contributed a plethora of materials including 51 books, numerous articles and years of faithful exposition of the word in both the seminary and local church. Some of the more popular titles include his *Basic Theology*, *So Great Salvation* and *Balancing the Christian Life*. Third, Dr. Ryrie did more to promote dispensationalism than any living theologian in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His books *Dispensationalism Today* and the updated version *Dispensationalism* lay out clearly the three essentials of classic dispensationalism; consistent, literal hermeneutics, a distinction between God's program for Israel and the Church and the glory of God as the ultimate purpose of history. Fourth, the Ryrie Study Bible has over 10,000 explanatory notes which he wrote with the average layman in mind. Fifth, an emphasis that he made that stands out to me is his emphasis on balancing the Christian life. He always sought to give an interpretation and application that were balanced. These and his many other contributions are important reminders that when we use our spiritual gift of teaching to write and publish we can leave behind a legacy that continues to minister to those of us who remain. He will be greatly missed but we are joyful that he is now face to face with the Lord.

We pick up our study in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew where the King has been rejected by that generation of Israel and so the kingdom is no longer "at hand." Instead a period of postponement of the kingdom is now in the works and Jesus' focus is on preparing for His cross work and training the Twelve to minister during the coming age.

Last time we studied Matt 14:13-21. This was the feeding of the 25,000. This is a significant miracle because it is the only one, apart from the resurrection, that is recorded in all four gospels. The circumstances that led to the miracle are stated in 14:13. Jesus heard that Antipas had executed John. Since Jesus knew that Antipas' rage

would now be directed against Himself and it was not yet His time to die for the sins of the world He withdrew with His disciples in a boat to a secluded place near Bethsaida-Julias. This place was on the other side of the Jordan in the territory of Herod Philip II. Not only would this place serve as an escape from Antipas but it would also serve as a place for his disciples to share their ministry reports with Him and a place to get some rest in preparation for the next ministry outing. However, when the people heard they were going to this place they followed Him on foot from the various cities that dot the landscape of the northern shores of the Lake of Galilee; many of whom were probably passing through on their way to Jerusalem for Passover. In 14:14, the large crowds were already waiting for Him when He arrived. When He saw those negatively affected by the Fall He felt a compassion for them and began to heal the sick. The parallels in Mark, Luke and John also state that He began teaching them. They were not only physically sick but spiritually malnourished and He was feeding them spiritually. In 14:15, when evening came, the disciples were completely worn out from ministering. They wanted some down time. They argued that Jesus had neglected the people's need for food and that He should command them to go away into the villages that they might buy food for themselves. It was true that they needed food but the reality of it was that the disciples just wanted to get away from the constant inundation of people. In 14:16 Jesus said, "They do not need to go away." He saw that they were in great spiritual need. He then turned to His disciples and said, "You give them something to eat!" In 14:17 they thought He was referring to physical food but Jesus was really telling them to give them some spiritual food. In light of His command the parallels said they fetched a lad who had only five barley loaves and two fish. This was clearly not enough food for the large crowd. In 14:18 Jesus said, "Bring them here to Me." In 14:19 He ordered the people to sit down. The parallels say He ordered them to sit in groups of fifties and hundreds. He then took the five loaves and the two fish and looking toward heaven He blessed the food and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples and the disciples gave them to the crowds. In 14:20 they all ate and were satisfied. The disciples then circulated through the crowds and picked up twelve full baskets. Not only had Jesus supplied enough but He supplied more than enough. In 14:21 it is noted that there were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children so that the number may easily have been 25,000. The parallel in John says that when the people saw the sign they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." The miracle reminded them that the OT predicted one to come and this was the One; He was the Messiah.

What was the primary point of this miracle? The primary point was to instruct His disciples for their ministry during the interadvent age. They would need to feed people spiritually with sound teaching from the word of God. They were inadequate for the task but if they would give what little that they had to Him then He would make it sufficient for all. Toussaint says, "Since He is training His disciples, when the crowd's need for food is brought before Him He tells the disciples, "You give them something to eat." Finally, He gave the food to the disciples who gave it to the multitudes. The Lord ministering through them in this way prepares them for their future work in His absence."<sup>1</sup> In other words, this foreshadows the fact that after His death, resurrection,

ascension and exaltation on the Day of Pentecost, He would give these gifted apostles, prophets and teachers to be the nucleus of the new organism, the Church (Eph 4:7-11).

Tonight in Matt 14:22 we come to another miracle designed to prepare His disciples for their ministry during the coming interadvent age. This is the miracle of Jesus and Peter walking on the water. The miracle conveys the important lesson of the continued exercise of faith as signified by Peter's need to continually keep his eyes focused on Jesus.

In 14:22 we find the circumstances which led to the setting up of this miracle. Matthew says, **Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.** Matthew does not tell us why He made **the disciples** get into the boat while He sent the crowds away but the parallel in John 6:14-15 sheds light on the situation. John says that when the people saw Him perform the sign of feeding so many from so little they concluded that "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." In other words, as we said before, they recognized that Jesus was the Messiah. John then says that "Jesus perceived that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king." Dr. Pentecost said, "...they desired to enthrone Christ."<sup>2</sup> However, this opportunity was no longer at hand. That generation's leadership had already rejected the offer. Pentecost went on to say, "Since the leaders of the nation had rejected Him, His kingdom had to be postponed until the nation would turn in faith to Him."<sup>3</sup> The period of postponement was already in the cards. So even though the people had a good response and recognized that Jesus was the King it was too late and it was not time for Him to take the throne. It certainly was not time for Him to take the throne by force. J. Vernon McGee reminds us, "He is King by right and title. He will not become King by any democratic process. He is not "elected" King by the will of the people. He is King by the will of God."<sup>4</sup> The will of God is that He will take the throne when the leadership of the nation Israel lead the people of Israel in repentant faith and call on Him to be saved. Since that offer was no longer on the table, their desire to "take Him by force to make Him King" had to be dampened. Further, it seems their intention was to invoke His disciples to help them apprehend Jesus. His disciples may have been moved by the crowd's Messianic aspirations. Because of this Matthew says that Jesus **Immediately made His disciples get into the boat.** The word **made** is *αναγκάζω* and means "forced" or "compelled." He literally forced them **to get into the boat** and leave the shore. At the same time Matthew says **He sent the crowds away.** The bottom line is that Jesus was separating the two groups because of the Messianic fervor that was rising.

In verse 23, **After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.** Because there are no mountains near the Lake of Galilee but instead sloped hillsides we need to translate this accordingly to have the correct picture. Jesus ascended one of the sloped hillsides somewhere near the multiplication of the loaves and fish around Bethsaida-Julias. Matthew notes His purpose was to go there **to pray.** Jesus frequently got away from all distractions in order to engage in focused prayer. We can pray in the midst of distractions but it is often much easier to focus in prayer when we get away. What Jesus prayed we don't know; perhaps for the

crowds, perhaps for His disciples, perhaps for strength to continue *en route* to the cross. Matthew's point was not to convey what He prayed but the fact that He went there **to pray** and this points up the important discipline of prayer.

It says **He went up by Himself; and when it was evening, He was there alone**. The emphasis is on the fact that **He was alone**. He needed to get away from everyone because everyone had it in mind to do something related to Him becoming King. It is worth noting that the only way Matthew could have known He was alone was to ask Him later where He had been after He sent them away in the boat. The time when He was finally alone is stated to be **evening**. This Greek word is a general time period that refers to midafternoon, say 3 or 4 o'clock, until just after sunset. The people had probably been fed with the loaves and fish around 5 or 6pm. He then made His disciples get in the boat and sent the crowds away. He then went up on the hillside sometime around 7pm. From that time, He spent a significant amount of time in prayer.

In 14:24, **But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary**. The expression **a long distance** is *σταδίους πολλούς* and literally means "many stadia." A stadia was ~200 yards. Matthew says the boat was already "many stadia" from land. The parallel in John 6:19 says they had rowed "twenty-five to thirty stadia." This amounts to 2.8-3.4 miles. So they found themselves far out at sea in the midst of a storm. Such storms were common on the Lake of Galilee because the high hills sloping downward on the east and west allowed the winds to sweep over and stir up the waters. This one was bad but not as bad as the one that had them all terrified while Jesus slept on the boat. This one does not say that they were terrified by the storm but by something that came to them in the midst of the storm. Matthew says that **the boat** was being **battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary**, showing that whatever direction they were trying to sail the wind and waves were going in the opposite direction. Later in verse 34 we find that they were going to "Gennesaret." This name is a distortion of Chinneroth which was another name for the Lake of Galilee (Luke 5:1). Here it is either referring to the district or the town within the district, both which held the name Gennesaret. Though the town has not been identified it was located on the West or Northwest shore of the Lake of Galilee. Because they had been near Bethsaida-Julias they were sailing west to this destination but the winds and the waves were battering against them.

In 14:25 many hours had passed and it was **the fourth watch of the night** when Jesus **came to them**. The Jews historically divided the night into three watches (Judg 7:19; Lam 2:19). The Romans divided it into four. Matthew referred to the Roman division of watches. The fourth watch was from 3am-6am. Sometime during this **watch** Jesus **came to them**. He had presumably been praying for many hours and now taken a walk out **on the sea**. Few think to comment on the fact that He knew right where they were **on the sea** even though in a storm in the middle of the night they could not be seen. Or the fact that walking on a sea in the darkness has no reference points for determining where you are going. He **came to them** nonetheless. He came to them in the strangest fashion; **walking on the sea**. The **sea** in Jewish thought was considered unpredictable, unstable and chaotic. It

is for this reason that not many Jews sailed the seas. This makes Jonah's setting sail all the more unsightly in view of his natural aversion to sailing. Many of Jesus' disciples, on the other hand, were accustomed to sailing on this lake. But no one had ever come to them **walking on the sea**.<sup>5</sup> What Jesus was doing as the second Adam was fulfilling the dominion mandate that was given to the first Adam. Constable says, "God had ordained that man rule over the sea before the Fall (Gen. 1:28). Here Jesus was doing precisely that; He was fulfilling God's purpose for humankind. This action gave testimony to His being the Second Adam (cf. 8:27; Rom. 5:12-17), the man who succeeded where Adam had failed."<sup>6</sup>

In 14:26, **When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.** Again, they were not afraid of the storm but they were afraid of what came to them in the storm. They interpreted the figure walking toward them as **a ghost**. The word **ghost** is *φαντασμα* and means "an apparition." Many have argued that the disciples were obviously quite superstitious. J. Vernon McGee says, "Yes, there may have been a certain amount of superstition in them, but what would *you* think if a man came to you walking on the water?"<sup>7</sup> They thought the figure looked like a person but they did not know who it was and had to give an explanation. Dr. Pentecost suggested that they thought they were on the verge of dying in the storm and that "Those men who were expecting death thought that one had come from the world of the dead, perhaps to transport them to its recesses." This was some kind of spirit being in their estimation. In Luke 24:37 Jesus suddenly appeared among them after His resurrection. On that occasion it says they were startled and thought they were seeing "a spirit" (Gk. *πνευμα*). On both occasions they thought they were seeing some kind of spirit being. Matthew says as a result **they cried out in fear**. One can imagine this would be terrifying.

In 14:27 Jesus immediately put their fears to rest. **But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."** He did not wait to calm their fears but immediately tried to settle them. His words are a short chiasm. A chiasm is a literary pattern (from Greek letter X) where the first and last elements are similar in thought and the second and next to last elements are similar in thought and so forth and so on. Occasionally there is a central element that has no correspondence. If so, the central element is the main idea. In this chiasm there is a first and last element and one central element. The first element is **take courage**. The last element is similar, **do not be afraid**. The central element is **it is I**. This is the main idea. In the Greek the words are *εγω ειμι*. These words are to be translated "I AM." The name "I AM" is known to most Greek students to be Jesus' claim to divinity. It is a claim to deity because it is the Greek parallel to the Hebrew words uttered by the voice that spoke to Moses in the burning bush saying "I AM WHO I AM" (Exod 3:14). Jesus' disciples could **take courage** and **not be afraid** because the One who spoke to them on the water was the same one who spoke to Moses in the burning bush. He is the great I AM. This is the point of the chiasm, to emphasize the nature of the One who was with them as being God Himself. Since He was God then there no need for them to be afraid. This same title is used in the Great Commission when Jesus said, "And lo, I am with you to the end of the age." By application, only when we realize that He is always with us do we see that there is no need for us to ever be afraid. He is God Himself. God is with us. Whom then do you fear? This is a powerful truth.

In 14:28 we find the first extensive interaction with **Peter**. This is in keeping with Matthew's style of introducing someone for the first time and pointing out something about their character in order to carry that through the rest of his Gospel. Toussaint said, "This is the first time that Peter comes to the fore in Matthew's Gospel. The evangelist here presents Peter in all of his impetuosity mixed with his great devotion. In keeping with Matthew's style of writing, these traits, which are first mentioned here, characterize Peter throughout the remainder of the Gospel. More significant is the fact that the place of preeminence among the apostles which Peter here assumes is never lost in the rest of Matthew's Gospel."<sup>8</sup> Peter, of course, will go on to be the first among equals. It is common to assign too much to Peter as the Roman Catholic Church has done assigning him the first Pope as well as assigning too little to Peter as most Protestants have done. The important texts indicate that Peter was the first among equals. This concept means that officially he is on the same level as the other apostles but he has slightly more responsibility. This position is manifested in the Book of Acts when he offers the sermons on the Jewish, Samaritan and Gentile Pentecosts.

Here we read **Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."** This has often been read in the sense that Peter doubted that it was Him. However, the **if** with the indicative verb is a 1<sup>st</sup> class condition. What Peter said was **Lord, since it is You, command me to come to You on the water.** Peter had no doubt it was Him; He only wanted to be with Him. He is commonly seen trying to get to Him. Remember the other occasion where Peter was fishing and Jesus came on the shore and Peter put on his clothes, dove in and swam to be with Him? Peter was always going to Jesus. This is a characteristic of Peter; wanting to be with the Lord. However, he knew that the only way He could get to Him now was at His **command**. It is clear that Peter had no doubt that he could walk on water if Jesus merely gave the **command**. This means Peter believed that Jesus' word was above nature and controlled nature. He must have been the second Adam come to fulfill what the first Adam failed to fulfill. If he trusted in Him he too could fulfill the dominion mandate. Constable says, "He, too, in obedience to Jesus' command, was able to fulfill man's destiny by subduing the sea."<sup>9</sup>

In 14:29 Jesus gave the command, "**Come!**" One word was enough to suspend gravity so that another man could walk on the water. This one word was sufficient for Peter to get out of the boat. **And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.** Now what happened here in Peter's thinking is that Christ's word was considered more reliable and absolute than every experience Peter ever had on that lake. Peter had a lot of experience on that lake. He had cast nets into the water and dove into the water and pulled fish from the water. Every non-buoyant object that hit the surface of the water sank below the surface of the water. So for Peter to get out of that boat meant that he had confidence in Jesus' word as that which controlled his every experience. So he **got out** and it says he **walked on the water**. Each step was a suspension of gravity at that point and that point only. Barbieri says, "In all recorded history only two men ever **walked on ... water**, Jesus and Peter."<sup>10</sup> This event forever defines the nature of Jesus as the very God who created and sustains the universe, as the Word become flesh.

But in 14:30 something happens, **seeing the wind, he became frightened**. Why did Peter become **frightened**? Because He took His eyes off Jesus and put them on his circumstances. This is exactly what happens to us when just for a moment we take our eyes off of Jesus and put them on our circumstances. Immediately the circumstances overwhelm us and we begin sinking. We are no longer trusting in Jesus. We become frightened. The circumstances of life, tossing to and fro like a sea of uncertainty, take control of us. We are now controlled by angst, anxiety, uncertainty and fear. This is what happened to Peter and this is what happens to us when we take our eyes off of Jesus. That is why the Book of Hebrews says "fixing our eyes upon Jesus." It means to keep our eyes focused on Him at all times and not on our circumstances. I don't know what your circumstances are but I do know that there is only one way to get through them victoriously - it is by keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus. This is another way of saying walking by faith through the difficulty. That is why our Sunday bulletin has this very powerful expression on it, "fixing our eyes upon Jesus." It is reminding us of what Peter was doing when he got out of that boat and began to walk by faith but then stopped and began to sink! Pentecost says, "He had begun the walk by faith. But the fact that he began his walk by exercising faith did not mean that he could stop walking by faith. When Peter ceased to walk by faith, even though in the will of God and in the presence of Christ, he began to sink."<sup>11</sup> Are you fixing your eyes on Jesus or are you fixing your eyes on your circumstances? That is the difference between walking by faith and not.

This is the entire message of the miracle. This miracle was done to train Peter and the others in the boat that the only way to live in the coming age is by faith, continually keeping our eyes fixed upon Jesus. At the moment we take our eyes off of Him we begin to sink and need to call on Him for rescue and restoration.

As Peter began to sink the end of 14:30 says **he cried out, "Lord, save me"** This is the shortest prayer in the Bible. It is a believer praying for rescue. J. Vernon McGee said, "If Simon Peter had prayed this prayer like some of us preachers pray, "Lord, Thou who are omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent..." Peter would have been twenty-nine feet under water before he would have gotten to his request."<sup>12</sup> It is a truth that when we are in dire circumstances and need an answer right away we need to get right to the point. We don't need any lengthy introductions. We just need to tell the Lord what we need right then and there.

And note in 14:31 that **Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him**. This is the third time the word **immediately** has been used in this pericope (v 22, 27 and 31). It is interesting to observe the immediacy of some of Jesus' actions. In verse 22 He **immediately** separated His disciples from the crowds to dampen Messianic aspirations. In verse 27 He **immediately** calmed their fears. And here in verse 31 He **immediately** answered Peter's prayer. The Lord has some business that He needs to take care of **immediately** and He does, without delay. Rarely pointed out is that Peter's request was that a man standing on the water save a man sinking in it. He did not try to swim back to the boat. There was probably no use trying and no real help there. He turned to the only One who could help. This is a wonderful picture of Christ's salvation for those who are already His own. Peter needed help. Jesus extended it. When we fail to live by faith we immediately need His

salvation. When we pray to Him to rescue us He immediately answers. Peter never went under the water but Jonah did. Jonah went deep, deep and was drowning before he called on the Lord to be saved. Jesus rescued Peter immediately when he prayed. He did the same for Jonah with the great fish but he almost drowned because he waited to pray. How long do you wait to pray when you start looking at your circumstances rather than Jesus Christ?

Notice that Jesus alone was the one who saved Peter. It says **Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him**. Peter did not take hold of Jesus. Salvation is not a joint effort. Salvation is the effort of Jesus Christ alone! This word **took hold** is a powerful word that means to grasp onto something firmly so as to make it your own. Jesus Christ was a powerful man and He took hold of Peter. He can take hold of you when you are sinking too, if only you will call on Him.

Jesus alone pulled him out of the water **and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"** Jesus didn't expect an answer. Jesus expected Peter to think about the question. The answer is what? Why did Peter doubt? Why do you doubt? It is always the same answer? Because you took your eyes off of Jesus Christ. The moment you do that your circumstances overwhelm you, you begin to function on the basis of fear, anxiety, angst and uncertainty. That is why you begin to sink. The first expression **You of little faith**, is, of course, a rebuke. It is not good to be **of little faith**, meaning able to only exercise faith over a very small area of life and it easily fails. We need to enlarge our faith so that it does not fail easily. How do we do this? By continuing to take in the word of God, "For faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). I know that most Christians who fail are Christians who are not taking in the word of God. I see it all the time. They used to be taking in the word of God but then they became too busy. I see them failing in their life. The only reason they are failing is because they are not taking in the word of God. That is why they are not able to keep their eyes focused on Jesus. That is why they **doubt**. That is why they are now sinking. If that is you simply call out to Him, "Lord, save me!" Many never say this short prayer. They plunge right to the bottom. They will never return. They have a dead faith. It is useless. It benefits no one. This is a great tragedy and it is more common than not.

It is important to point out that faith and doubt are set in opposition to one another in this verse. I have heard too many sermons that say it is okay to doubt. Friend, it is not okay to doubt. Doubt is the absence of faith. James says the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. Paul says, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin!" I don't know why this stupid idea keeps impressing people but I know the one who first planted the seed of doubt. Who was it who said to Eve, "Did God say?" Satan. And I would venture to say that such a sermon that says doubt is okay is of the devil. Jesus rebukes having little faith. Jesus rebukes doubt. It is sin plain and simple. I wish people would not tell others it is okay for them to have their doubts. It's not healthy.

In 14:32 **When they got into the boat, the wind stopped**. Why did the **wind** suddenly **stop**? Because the lesson was over. The entire storm was designed to give the setting for this important lesson. What is the lesson?



That His disciples needed to continually exercise faith in the coming interadvent age, that is the only way they could finish their mission, for without faith it is impossible to please God!

In verse 33 something important happens. **And those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"** No doubt this expression of **worship** and declaration of Him to be **God's Son** signifies an increased apprehension and appreciation of His Person. Kingsbury highlights this advance in apprehension and appreciation when he says, "Retrospectively, the disciples, in making this confession, are giving answer to the earlier question they had raised in an equally perilous situation at sea: 'What sort of man is this, that even wind and sea obey him?' (8:27)."<sup>13</sup> Now they state that the sort of man He is is a son of God. There are two different interpretations of what they concluded here. One view is that the expression **God's Son** is different from the title Son of God. Toussaint says, "Though they adore Him as God's Son, they do not yet recognize him as the Son of God. Plummer succinctly writes, "They are sure that He is more than human; but perhaps even yet they are not sure that He is the Messiah." A second view is that the expression **God's Son** is the same as the title Son of God. This would mean they recognize Him for who He truly is? No doubt that by Matt 16 Peter declares that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, recognizing Him for who He truly is. Another element to consider is that it says they **worshipped Him**. The word *προσκυβειν* can mean merely to bow down out of respect. However, more than that seems in view here in light of the miracle they had just seen of both Jesus and Peter walking on the water. In my estimation they **worshipped Him** in the full sense of the term even though later they vacillate on their resolve. Most importantly Jesus accepted their worship. He did not tell them to stop it, that He was a mere man like them. This indicates He was more than human. Since the Jews knew well that only God was to be worshipped and they worshipped Jesus they must have had a concept that God would take human form. The OT certainly teaches this concept. They saw this as fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

In 14:34, **When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.** This was their intended destination and upon the storm stopping they were able to make it there. It was on the W or NW shores of the Lake of Galilee. In 14:35, **And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent word into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; and they implored Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were cured.** The point of this short addendum is to contrast the disciple's apprehension of Him with that of the average Israeli. The average Israeli recognized Him as one who could do mighty miracles whereas the disciples recognized Him as the Son of God. The reason they had greater apprehension was because of the miracle of walking on the water they had just seen. This is not to downplay the miracles recorded here of healing all who were sick. We need to emphasize that he did heal them all. McGee says, "...let me call your attention to the multitudes that were healed in that day. We have a detailed record of only a few healings, but thousands were made whole by the Lord."<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion, in 14:23 Jesus immediately forced His disciples to get into the boat while he sent the crowds away because the crowds had recognized that Jesus was the Messiah and were planning to invoke His disciples to

help them take Him by force and make Him King. In 14:24, after dampening the Messianic aspirations He went up on the sloped hillside by Himself to pray. It was probably about 7pm and He was all alone. In 14:24 the boat had already made it about three miles from the land and was battered by the waves for the wind was against them. In 14:25, between 3 and 6am, He came to them on the lake, walking on the water. In 14:26, when the disciples saw Him walking on the water they were terrified thinking that they were about to die and this one came to welcome them into the afterlife, saying, "it is a ghost" and they cried out in fear. In 14:27 Jesus immediately set them at ease saying, in chiasm, "Take courage, I AM; do not be afraid. Because Jesus was the great I AM they had nothing to fear. In 14:28, Peter is introduced along with all his impetuosity and devotion saying, "Lord, since it is You, command me to come to you on the water." Peter knew it was the Lord and wanted to go to Him but knew it would require His word. In 14:29 He said the word "Come" and Peter, in a remarkable act of faith, got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But in 14:30, seeing the wind, he became frightened and began to sink. Peter had taken his eyes off of Jesus, he was no longer walking by faith. As he sunk he cried out "Lord, save me!" and in 14:31 the Lord immediately stretched out His hand and took hold of Peter. It was the Lord alone who saved Peter. Peter was entirely at His mercy. He then said to Peter, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" There really was no reason to doubt the one who was walking on the water and felt none of the effects of the storm. In 14:32 they got into the boat and the wind stopped because the lesson was over. In 14:33 those who were in the boat worshiped Him and said to Him "You are certainly the Son of God!" They recognized Him for who He truly was even if it was only a momentary fleeting realization. Jesus accepted their worship. The event served to give them a greater apprehension and appreciation of His Person than they had ever had. In 14:34-36 Matthew shows that others in the region had an appreciation of Him but it was not on par with that of His disciples.

What's the lesson? Jesus is training His disciples to continually exercise faith in the coming interadvent age as signified by Peter's need to continually keep his eyes focused on Jesus. They would face difficulties and trials but if they kept their eyes on Him they would not become fearful and sink under the pressure. By application what can we learn? God often surrounds us with stormy circumstances, not to cause us to fail, but to test us to see whether we will keep our eyes focused on Him. When we keep our eyes focused on Him we make our way through the stormy circumstances just as Peter was walking on the water. When we take our eyes off of Him we begin to sink into our stormy circumstances. What do we need to do at that point? We need to cry out for Him to save us like Peter. When we do He will answer us immediately and restore us, bringing us back to the surface. This is the same concept as being restored to fellowship.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 190.

<sup>2</sup> Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 233.

<sup>3</sup> Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 234.

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<sup>4</sup>J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary: The Gospels (Matthew 14-28)*, electronic ed., vol. 35 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 28.

<sup>5</sup>Obviously people don't walk on the sea but sink in the sea. Many liberal commentators deny this because it contradicts so-called natural law. This is the reason they reject all the miracles. However, the biblical view is that Jesus is the creator and sustainer of what is called 'natural law.' There is nothing 'natural' about it.

<sup>6</sup>Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 14:25.

<sup>7</sup>J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary: The Gospels (Matthew 14-28)*, electronic ed., vol. 35 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 29.

<sup>8</sup>Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 191.

<sup>9</sup>Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 14:29.

<sup>10</sup>Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 54.

<sup>11</sup>J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 235.

<sup>12</sup>J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary: The Gospels (Matthew 14-28)*, electronic ed., vol. 35 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 30.

<sup>13</sup>Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 14:32.

<sup>14</sup>J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary: The Gospels (Matthew 14-28)*, electronic ed., vol. 35 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 32.