

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide
Matthew 14: 22-32

History, Culture, & Context

In this section of Matthew, we read about the miracles on the Sea of Galilee, which is a large freshwater lake in the hills of northern Palestine (it is thirteen miles long and eight miles wide).

In vv. 22-24, Jesus just finished feeding the crowd of five thousand and then had His disciples board a boat and sail to the other side of Galilee. While the disciples were sailing, Jesus went into the hills alone to pray. All of the sudden, a disciples encountered a storm in the middle of their trip on the sea.



In vv. 25-27, the disciples noticed someone walking on the water and thought it was a ghost! “And early in the morning he (Jesus) came walking toward them on the sea.” According to the NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, “*early in the morning*: Literally the text speaks of the “fourth watch of the night,” based on the Roman division of the night into four parts; the fourth watch refers to the final hours before dawn. Jesus was approaching them from the east, which might make his approach more visible.” Then a voice said to them, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” They soon recognized that it was Jesus!

In vv. 28-32, Peter cries out “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Jesus replied “Come!” Peter then got out of the boat and proceeded to walk on the water toward Jesus. “But when he noticed a strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, ‘You of little faith, why did you doubt?’” They got to the boat and then the winds ceased. Everyone in the boat worshiped Jesus saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Questions to Consider

1. What encouragement to our faith can we get from Jesus calming the storm?
2. In what ways can you relate to Peter in this story? What do you think he was feeling after Jesus rescued him from sinking into the water?
3. How can we maintain our faith when situations are difficult (i.e. focus on Christ rather our inadequacies)?