

Jesus Calms the Storm

Matthew 8:18, 23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25

DIG: Why were the talmidim afraid during the storm? What does this experience reveal about them? Why do you think Jesus calmed the storm? What were the Twelve's attitudes about Messiah after He calmed the storm?

REFLECT: Do you have the tendency to remain afraid rather than ask Yeshua for help? Why? In what ways can you identify with the fearful apostles? What is the purpose of "life storms" we experience? How have you reacted to one of the "life storms" you've experienced? Why? How has God proven Himself faithful to you during a difficult time? What does the passage teach you about Christ? How could you use this event from Jesus' life to encourage someone who is experiencing a troubling time?

Following the declaration of the new form of God's Kingdom program, a whole new set of miracles occurred. **The miracles will now serve as a training ground for His apostles.**

And that same evening, Messiah gave orders to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee to a less inhabited area (Matthew 8:18; Mark 4:35a). What a day it had been. It was a life-changing day for the Lord and mankind. First, He was accused of being demon possessed and rejected by the Great Sanhedrin (see Ek - **It is only by Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons, that This Fellow Drives Out Demons**). Secondly, the Meshiach pronounced a judgment on that particular Jewish generation (see Eo - **The Sign of Jonah**). Thirdly, the Good Shepherd began speaking to the people in parables (see Er - **That Same Day He Spoke To Them In Parables**). Fourthly, Christ's own family tried to come and take Him home by force (see Ey - **Jesus' Mother and Brothers**). And finally, as evening came, our Savior got into a boat to cross over to the other side of the Kinneret. What a day!

When evening came, Jesus said to His apostles: **Let us go over to the other side of the lake** (Mark 4:35b; Luke 8:22a). They were on the western shore of **the Sea of Galilee**, and a trip over to the eastern shore would be a delightful and refreshing change for the weary Rabbi from Galilee. He needed to escape and relax.

Jesus got into the boat just as He did previously, and His talmidim followed Him. The words, **just as He did**, refer back to Es - **The Public Parables of the Kingdom by the Sea**, and link Yeshua's teaching in a boat with His miracle-work in a boat here.⁷²⁷ The Lord needed to be alone with the Twelve to start their training. So leaving the daily pressure of the crowd behind, they set sail. The Greek word for boat is *plouon*, referring to a large fishing boat commonly used by fishermen such as Peter, James and John. **The Sea of**

Galilee was just over 600 feet below sea level, near the northern end of the Jordan River. Mount Hermon raises 9,200 feet to the north, and strong northerly winds often plummet down the upper Jordan valley with great force. When those **winds** meet the warmer air over **the Galilee** basin, the high hills and narrow valley act like wind tunnels causing **the water** beneath them to churn violently. The fact that **the winds** come so quickly and with little warning makes **the storms** all the more dangerous. **There were also other boats**, carrying those who wanted to remain **with Christ**, who tagged along behind (**Mattityahu 8:23; Mark 4:36; Luke 8:22b**)

After **His** exhausting day, **Jesus fell asleep in the stern of the boat on the cushion** (the Greek definite article is used: *proskephalaion*) **as they sailed**. Apparently, it was the only **cushion** on board, and **Messiah** used it as a pillow for **His** head. Interestingly enough, this is the only place in the Gospels where **Yeshua** is seen **sleeping**.⁷²⁸ **The Lord slept** in the position that any distinguished guest would have taken. There was a little seat in the back of **the boat** where a leather **cushion** was placed. The helmsman stood a little further forward on the deck, though near **the stern**, in order to have a better look ahead.⁷²⁹ Moonlight furnished all the visibility needed for sailing the vessel across the tranquil **lake**. So just before we see one of **His** most breathtaking displays of **Messiah's** deity, we see a touching picture of **His** humanity (**Mattityahu 8:24a; Mark 4:38a**).

But this peaceful scene changed suddenly. The northeasterly breeze stiffened and along the horizon of **the lake** to the north and east the clouds thickened. The sky rapidly grew darker and darker and **without warning a furious storm came up on the Sea of Galilee**. All **they** could do was quickly adjust **their** sails and seek to weather the gale. With every moment, however, **the storm** became so great that **the waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped**. The verb is in the imperfect tense, meaning that **the waves** were repeatedly breaking **over the boat**. **The storm** was so strong that **Matthew** uses an unusual word normally associated with an earthquake (Greek *seismos*) to describe it. Again and again **the boat** was buried amid the foam of the breakers. **The boat** was filling up with water faster than **they** could bail it out. **They were in great danger**; nevertheless, our **Savior** lay **asleep** in back of **the boat**. (**Matthew 8:24b; Mark 4:37; Luke 8:23**). **Yeshua** was still **Master** of nature even if **He** were **sleeping**.⁷³⁰

Christ slept so soundly that not even the tossing of **the boat**, the noise of **the wind**, nor **the Twelve** could wake **Him**. **The Lord** was probably soaked to the skin while lying on the hard planks with only **a cushion** for **His** head.⁷³¹ **The** panic-stricken **apostles went and woke Him**, saying: **Teacher, save us!** Though **they** called **Him Teacher**, **they** did not yet understand **His** teaching. **We're going to drown** (**Mattityahu 8:25; Mark 4:38b; Luke 8:24**)! Yet **their** urgent cry revealed a lack of **faith** in some sense. These expert **fishermen** were afraid they were **going to drown** and the fact that it was at night made it all the

more frightening. But we cannot be too critical of **them**. At least **they** got into the boat with **Yeshua** and followed **His** calling, which is more than most people are willing to do. Thus, the purpose of the storm was to bring **them** to dependence on the Lord.

The twelve Jewish apostles knew the Psalms. Many times **they** had heard and repeated the words of Ethan the Ezrahite, "ADONAI Elohei-Tzva'ot! Who is as mighty as You, Yah? Your faithfulness surrounds you. You control the raging sea; when its waves rear up, you calm them" (Psalm 89:8-9 CJB). They had sung: God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we are unafraid, even if the mountains tumble into the depths of the sea, even if its waters rage and foam, and mountains shake at its turbulence (Psalm 46:1-3 CJB).

They knew all too well the regal and reassuring words of the psalmist. Those who go down to the sea in ships, plying their trade on the great ocean, saw the works of ADONAI, His wonders in the deep. For at His word the storm-wind arose, lifting up towering waves. The sailors were raised up to the sky, then plunged into the depths. At the danger, their courage failed them, they reeled and staggered like drunk men, and all their skill was swallowed up. In their trouble they cried to ADONAI, and He rescued them from their distress. He silenced the storm and stilled its waves, and they rejoiced as the sea grew calm. Then He brought them safely to their desired port (Psalm 107:23-30 CJB). It was a literal fulfillment of those verses that the miracle-working Rabbi was about to accomplish on **the Sea of Galilee**.

He got up, rebuked, or muzzled, the wind and said to the raging waves: **Quiet! Be still**. The Greek word *phimoo*, or **be still**, means to close the mouth with a muzzle, and is used of muzzling an ox and of Jesus silencing (muzzling) the Pharisees. The verb is a perfect imperative, in other words it was if He was saying, "Be muzzled and stay that way."

Then the storm subsided and it was completely calm (Matthew 8:26b; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24b). Two miracles had taken place; the wind ceased and the sea was completely calm. Even with the wind stopping immediately, such a large body of water, as **the Sea of Galilee** would not become completely calm in an instant unless it was a miracle of God. He said to His apostles: **Why are you afraid? So little trust you have** (Matthew 8:26a CJB; Mark 4:40; Luke 8:25a)? It was as if Jesus was saying, "Haven't you seen enough of My power and experienced enough of My love to know that you are perfectly safe with Me?" Nevertheless, it was a teachable moment for the growing apostles, as they are reminded that He is the miracle-working Messiah. They were to have **faith** in Him instead of being in subjection to **the prince of this world** (John 12:31). Jesus was able to muzzle **him**!

At the age of twenty-seven, the famous painter Rembrandt painted the seascape *Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee* based on these passages. With its distinctive contrast of light and shadow, Rembrandt's painting shows a small **boat** threatened with destruction in a furious **storm**. As **the apostles** struggle against the wind and waves, **the Lord** is undisturbed. The most unusual aspect, however, is the presence in **the boat** of a thirteenth passenger who art experts say resembles Rembrandt himself. We could also put ourselves in this story and discover, just as **Yeshua's apostles** did, that to each person who trusts in **Jesus Christ**, **He** reveals **His** presence, compassion, and control in every **storm** of life.⁷³²

The men were both terrified and amazed at the same time. Although **they** had experienced the healing and teaching ministry of **Yeshua**, **the apostles** were shocked and **they asked** each other: **Who is this person? Even the winds and the waves obey Him (Mattityahu 8:27; Mark 4:41; Luke 8:25b)!** Of course the real answer is that this would not be the work of any mere man or even a gifted rabbi. Once again, **Yeshua** unveiled **His** eternal power to confirm **He** is the promised **Messiah** sent from the Father. **The apostles**, meanwhile, learned yet another valuable lesson. Undoubtedly, **their** faith grew in new ways from having gone through **the storm** with **Jesus**.⁷³³

We can't be too hard on **the talmidim** since all believers can relate from their own experience that knowing **ADONAI's** power and love . . . yet trusting them in times of crisis do not always go hand-in-hand. Our sin nature and weaknesses are so much a part of us that even after we have seen **the Lord** doing marvelous things in our lives, we still fall into doubt. **Faith** needs strengthening, as **the talmidim** ultimately came to understand. **"Increase our faith," they pleaded of Yeshua (Luke 17:5)**. And sometimes we cry out with **the father of the boy with a demon**, saying: **I do believe; I want to believe. Please help me overcome my unbelief (Mark 9:24)**.⁷³⁴

In 1915 Pastor William Barton started to publish a series articles. Using the archaic language of an ancient storyteller, he wrote his parables under the pen name of Safed the Sage. And for the next fifteen years he shared the wisdom of Safed and his enduring spouse Keturah. It was a genre he enjoyed. By the early 1920s, Safed was said to have a following of at least three million. Turning an ordinary event into an illustration of a spiritual truth was always a keynote of Barton's ministry.

Now, on a morning I entered my Study, and I sat me down to read a book by a Learned Man on The Uniformity of Nature. And I thought much about the Reasons Why the Heat that Burneth a person on one day doth not Freeze him on the next, and why the Sun which Riseth in the East a part of the Time doth not Rise in the West the Remainder of the Time, and why the Law of Gravitation which sometimes pulleth the Apple Down doth not sometimes Hurl it Up.

And these Studies prove a Weariness to the Flesh, so that I opened my window for Fresh Air. And immediately there flew in a Woodpecker. And no sooner was he in than he wished to be out. And he circled Twice and Thrice about my Ceiling, and then flew swiftly toward another Window that was not open, and Struck it with all his Force, so that he Fell to the floor and lay there as if he were Dead. And I Rose and Stood, and looked down at him. And I touched him not, but it was revealed to me that in his Aching Red Head he was thinking thoughts like these:

Behold, hitherto have I flown wherever there was Transparent Space, and have Struck Nothing. But I have been Knocked Down and well-nigh Killed while flying through Space in which I would see plainly. Yea, and beyond were Trees and the Free Air of Spring. Never again shall I trust in the Uniformity of Nature; and the ways of **the Lord** are not equal.

Then I left him, and I opened my windows from the top downward and he rose and flew straight at one of them, and was gone.

And I, who am but very little wiser than he, meditated concerning those I have known who suddenly come Up Against a new experience that they are unable to Catalogue among their Theories of Life, where something which they see not, riseth up before them and layeth low, so that they cry out in their anguish that **the Lord** hath forgotten to be Gracious, and that **His Mercy** is clean gone forever. For I have heard them think aloud even as I heard the woodpecker with the Aching Red Head.

Now the Uniformity of Nature is the Reality of **God**. Yet hath **God's** ways that are not as the ways of **His** creatures. So I besought my **God** that **He** would give me Grace to **Trust Him** when I fly through what seemeth Clear Space and come Up against Something.⁷³⁵