

Why Jesus Calmed the Storm on the Sea of Galilee.mp4

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Transcript

Hi, and welcome to this week's episode of Reading the Gospels through Hebrew Eyes. When you hear about Jesus calming the storm on the sea at the end of Mark 4, how do you view this? What's kind of going on here?

Because I think most of the time when people hear this story, they think of it as sort of maybe a flex in the part of Jesus. He's showing his power by doing what he does. Well, I don't discount that.

There's a whole lot more going on here. That's what I would call an under reading of this particular gospel narrative. So what would be a full reading? Well, to get a full reading of what's happening in Mark 4, you've got to go back to the background.

You can't simply step in the New Testament without thinking about the Old Testament because the evangelists assume a certain amount of knowledge on our part. They're not going to put footnotes in their gospel with cross -references to Job 38 or to Psalm 107.

They simply expect us as their intended audience to have a certain knowledge of the biblical narratives and the prophets and the Psalms so that we can carry that knowledge into their writings and on the basis of this, read more fully exactly what's going on with Jesus when he's performing miracles, whatever those miracles might be, or whether he's in a certain location, the geographical pregnancy, if you will, of that location as we see it from the Old Testament.

All of this is what the evangelists assume that we are knowing as we're reading their writings. So when we study Mark 4, we're going to ask ourselves, OK, what might the evangelist have in mind that he expects us to think about when we're reading his recounting of these events?

All right, so that's a main. task that we're going to have here is look at the Old Testament background of the crossing of the sea and Jesus' calming of the storm. Let's begin with the opening couple of verses from Mark chapter 4 and a look at what archaeologists have found to be a first century fishing boat, very similar probably to the one that Jesus and his disciples were in.

This is from Mark 4, 35 to 36. On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, let's go across to the other side, that is from Capernaum. And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was.

That is, he'd already been sitting in the boat because he'd been teaching in all the verses leading up to this, as we see in Mark 4 verse 1. And there were other boats with him. Now this is a picture, that was a picture of the first century fishing boat that archaeologists have found.

This is another picture of that particular boat, another angle. As you can see, it's fairly well preserved. This was found in 1986 on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. It's about 27 feet long, seven and a half feet wide.

It's not that big of a boat, but it was probably similar to the one that Jesus and his disciples would have used as the common fishing vessel there on the Sea of Galilee. Speaking of the Sea of Galilee, this is an aerial view of that sea just to kind of put things in perspective because I think sometimes it's hard for us to kind of think of how small or how large this is.

So it's only 13 miles long and eight miles wide, a relatively small body of water. It would, for instance, take 26 of those, 26 seas of Galilee, to take up the same landmass as the Great Salt Lake in Utah, if that kind of gives you an idea as to how small it was.

Now it's also significantly 700 feet below sea level, and it's surrounded by hills, and so when there are sudden changes in wind and temperature, this creates the violent storms that we often see happening in the Gospels.

Now one more thing to kind of keep in mind as we go through this is that what's about to happen is a display on the part of Jesus showing his exousia, which is the Greek word for power or authority. Now we've seen this happen in a number of different ways already in the Gospel of Mark if you're reading those first four chapters leading up to this.

So we've seen Jesus displaying his exousia while he performs miracles of healing and he casts out demons. We're going to see it next the first time where he performs what's called a nature miracle. He's going to calm the sea, and then if you transition into chapter five of Mark, he's going to cast out all those demons from that man, the demons that call themselves legion.

That's 5:1 through 24. Following that, Jesus is going to display his exousia once more by healing a woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years. That's 25 to 34. And then finally, he's going to display his exousia by raising the daughter of Jairus back to life again.

That's 21 through 24 and 35 through 43. All of these are different ways that Jesus is revealing that he speaks and acts as one who has divine exousia, divine authority, divine power, and he's exercising that on behalf of other people.

That's an important point to keep in mind. Every miracle that Jesus performs is not for himself, but for others. So his miracles themselves are a display of divine power, but they're a display of this divine power that is displayed in mercy and compassion and love and protection for other people.

So God in Christ is showing his power, but he's not doing it for himself, but he's doing it for his disciples or for the women who are suffering, or for the demon possessed, or for the daughter of Jairus by raising her back to life.

So the miracles themselves, yes, they display divine power, but more than that, they display divine compassion. Okay, let's pick up the account and mark where we left off. This is verses 37 through 39.

A great windstorm arose and the waves were breaking into the boat so the boat was already filling. But he, that is Jesus, was in the stern asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, teacher, don't you care that we are perishing?

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm."

Now the reason I've called this from mega storm to mega calm is because if you look at that phrase great windstorm and great calm in the Greek, the Greek adjective that's used in both those cases to describe the windstorm and the calm is *megale*, which is a form of *mega* from which we get our English word mega.

So the great storm begins and then the great calm ends this particular section. Now as I've already said, one of the things that the evangelists want us to ask ourselves is what in the Old Testament might we connect us with?

Where are there storm stories? Where are there actions of Yahweh that are in some way similar to what's happening with Jesus and his disciples? Now one of the first ones that probably comes to mind because there's a number of parallels here is that of Jonah.

Now if you go to Jonah chapter 1 verses 4 through 6, notice all the parallels thematic and language parallels that you have happening between Mark 4 and Jonah 1. God hurls a great wind upon the sea or a mighty tempest on the sea, just like now a storm has fallen upon the Sea of Galilee.

The ship threatened to break up in the case of Jonah and of course you have a danger to the ship in Mark 4. The Mariners were afraid and Jonah won the disciples are afraid in Mark 4. Jonah was fast asleep.

Jesus was also fast asleep. And so the captain wakes him up and says, what do you mean, you sleeper? And he tells him to get up and call in his God. The disciples go to Jesus and say, teacher, don't you get that we're perishing?

And then Jesus gets up and he doesn't pray, but instead he is going to speak divine authoritative words. So Jonah obviously comes to mind as one background here. But I think that when Mark wrote this particular story, if there's one section in the Old Testament that was kind of circling through his mind as he penned these words, it wasn't from the Torah.

It wasn't from Job. It wasn't from Jonah. Instead, it was from one of the hymns of Israel, Psalm 107. Now, if you're very carefully constructed, you have four different episodes. Dealing with people in different kinds of jeopardy who call upon the Lord and the Lord answers them now One of these describes sailors who are in jeopardy now listen to the language of Psalm 107 and see how it parallels Provides kind of the the verbal background for what's happening in Mark 4.

This is verses 23 through 32 I won't read the whole thing. Just highlight certain sections Some went down to the sea and ships. So we're dealing here with sailors What happens God commands and raises up a stormy wind?

The sailors their courage melts away in the midst of this So what do they do they cry out to the Lord in their trouble? And what does he do he delivers them from their distress? He made the storm be still so that the waves of the sea were hushed and then he brought them to their Desired Haven if you look at the entire context of those verses in Psalm 107, it's almost a Prophecy if you will of what's happening in Mark chapter 4 you have these guys who are sailors are caught in a storm They're in trouble.

They're in jeopardy. So they cry out to God and God answers them Now, of course in Psalm 107, it's Yahweh who answers them He's one who delivers them and of course as we'll see it's Yahweh himself Yahweh incarnate in Christ Jesus who?

rescues the disciples Now those Jonah in Psalm 107 are two examples But there's more and what help us to understand these more examples is the particular language that's used to describe Jesus Rebuke of the wind.

So if you look in Mark 4 39 The Greek verb that's used there is epitom. Oh Jesus woke and rebuked he epitom. Oh the wind Now if you go back to the Old Testament Greek translation the Septuagint You'll see that most of the time when epitom Was used in the Septuagint.

It's translating the Hebrew verb God are So in the Old Testament whether you're reading it in its original Hebrew or in its Greek translation, epitomao, or gaar, those are the technical words for divine rebuke over the world's forces of evil and chaos and ruin.

There's a number of examples that we can look at. I just want to focus on two. Psalm 106 .9 says that Yahweh rebukes the Red Sea. This is a poetic reflection upon what happened in Exodus. So Yahweh rebukes.

He gaars, or epitomahos, the Red Sea. And in Namm 1 .4, Yahweh rebukes seas or rivers in general. So we might ask ourselves, where else do we have the language of divine rebuke associated with waters of some sort?

Well, there's several different places. For instance, this is the background. We've already seen this in Psalm 106, but this is the background of what's happening in those two famous chapters, Exodus 14 and 15, when Israel crosses the Red Sea.

So The particular language it's used there is not of rebuke but rebuke is how this narrative and how the the poem of Moses which follows it how that was interpreted Because notice what God is doing God this is from Exodus 14.

God drives the sea back by a strong east wind all night He made the sea dry land. So this is God actively Using his divine authority to make the sea do his bidding and of course Israel passes through on dry ground Dry ground now in the song of Moses which follows that Exodus 15 We have the description of God's right hand his mighty power.

And what is he doing? He's overthrowing the adversary and Notice the language here This is verse 7 or 8 of Exodus 15 at the blast of your nostrils The waters piled up the flood stood up in a heap the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea So this is God using his divine exousia He's divine authority or power to do what to make creation do his bidding So that his people might go through safely onto dry ground and for the same time then he's going to use these same waters to crush the heads of Israel's enemies So Exodus 14 to 15 are the background here as well But there's more if you look at Job and the Psalms we see some more examples of this So Psalm 65 7 Yahweh steals the roaring of the seas the roaring of the waves the tumult of the people's Psalm 89 Describes God as ruling the raging of the sea and when its waters rise he crushes them in fact, he crushes Rahab, which is a mythological sea monster like a carcass and scatters the enemies with his mighty arm and then Job 38 Which in some traditions is going to be the Old Testament reading for this coming Sunday.

We have God shutting the sea in with doors, he's making the clouds, it's garment, and he's saying how far the sea can go and no further. So this is God's rebuke of Job in which he's displaying his divine power by having full control over the sea.

And then at the very bottom of this slide, it's fascinating. If you look at examples of the noun for rebuke, which is formed from Ga 'ar, the noun is Ga 'ara. Look at 2 Samuel 22 16, Psalm 76 6 and Psalm 104 7 because all those examples of where once more God is rebuking the waters.

Now all of this is going to be then the background of what happens in Mark chapter 4. So Jesus as Yahweh rebukes the sea of Galilee, rebukes the winds, rebukes the storm. And this then... The culmination of all these various things happening from the Old Testament from the crossing of the Red Sea And we might add the crossing of the Jordan To Jonah asleep on the boat during the storm to Yahweh's rule of the sea and Job and Psalms to the sailors in the storm And Psalm 107 all of this is the background for what Jesus does when he stands up He's awake and he opens his mouth in order to speak with divine

Exousia and bring calm where before there had been a storm to bring peace where before there was chaos Now let's wrap it up with the closing verses this is from Mark 4 40 and 41 Jesus said to them why are you so afraid?

Have you still no faith and they were filled with great fear and said to one another who then is this? That even the wind and the sea obey him Well, who is this? This is first of all the prophet who's greater than Jonah because he doesn't need to call upon God because he himself Speaks authoritative word because he himself is God Who is this?

He's the incarnate word by whom the winds and the waters were created and who still obey his creative voice and He's Yahweh himself who rebuked the Red Sea for the 12 tribes of Israel to pass over and now Rebukes the Sea of Galilee for his 12 disciples to pass over to the other side so mark chapter 4 is a narrative display of how Jesus as Yahweh incarnate uses his exousia his power his authority To bring calm limits to chaos to bring serenity in the midst of a storm in Order that he might do this for his disciples and in doing this for his disciples reveal who he is and also who he is For them they are the new Israel And Yahweh, as with them, is now going to bring them safely to the other side, just like He brought Israel safely to the other side in the crossing of the Red Sea.

So in just a few verses, you have sections from Exodus 14 and 15, echoes of creation in Genesis 1, Job 38, Psalm 107, and all those other Psalms and prophets which describe God's rebuke of the elements of nature in order to do good for His people.

All of that is then compressed into these few lines from Mark 4 to reveal that Jesus is both our Lord and our God. He is Yahweh in the flesh, the Yahweh who has done great things for His people and who continues to do great things for His church.

As always, I hope that this particular interpretation and this journey from the Old Testament to the New Testament was helpful to you. If it is, please share this with your friends. I pray that you all are doing well, and I pray the Lord's peace.

and mercy be yours in abundance. We'll see you next week.