

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Matthew 14:22-36

New Revised Standard Version

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, December 28, 2014

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, December 28, 2014**, is from **Matthew 14:22-36**. Please Note: Some churches will only study **Matthew 14:22-33**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers and students discusses the questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [*International Bible Lessons Commentary*](#) website. The short weekly *International Bible Lesson*, which teachers can read to their students as part of their class, is also available on the [*International Bible Lessons Commentary*](#) website.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Matthew 14:22-36

(Matthew 14:22) Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

Jesus chose to do by himself many difficult challenges. After a long day, His exhausted disciples might not have dispersed the crowds with the compassion and gentleness that the needy sheep craved who came to Him as their good the Shepherd. When the crowds wanted to make Jesus their King, with probably only a political and selfish motivation, Jesus often chose to withdraw from them (John 6:15).

(Matthew 14:23) And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,

Jesus often went up into the mountains to pray to God, His Father. Some of the crowd probably tried to follow Him, so Jesus probably kept climbing until the most determined of His followers went home exhausted. Jesus went up the mountain to spend precious time with His Father before another busy day. Before Him, Moses had gone up the mountain of God for the law of God and guidance to help God's people. Grace and truth came from Jesus Christ, and His devoted prayer life demonstrated that God, His heavenly Father, worked together with Him to teach saving truth and lead multitudes to saving faith in Him.

(Matthew 14:24) but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them.

Because Jesus, the Son of God, is fully divine and fully human, Jesus could have called upon the angels to carry Him up and down the mountain and across the sea to His disciples. He could have looked out upon the sea before He ever left the mountain and stilled the storm that battered the boat of His disciples. When Jesus does not do what we think He could or should, it is because He always has better reasons than ours for doing what He does. If Jesus had called upon the angels to help Him or His disciples, the angels would have received all of the glory and the disciples might not have known why the storm ceased. Instead, Jesus proved to His disciples (and to Gospel readers) that He is the all-powerful and divine Son of God. Today, whenever angels help God's people, God's people glorify God and Jesus, Who sends them as ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:14). Instead of calling upon angels, Jesus walked up and down the mountain, where He must have felt the cold wind blow and His human legs ache. If Jesus had calmed the howling wind before he left the mountain top, His disciples might have exclaimed with praise, "Thank you, Lord," without learning how much Jesus was their Savior, Lord, and God, Who loved them and could be trusted in every situation.

(Matthew 14:25) And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea.

The disciples must have fought the stormy waves and wind that were against them all night while Jesus prayed. Jesus walked against the storm that was against both Him and His disciples, and His walking against the storm showed His disciples that nothing could overpower Him. Jesus was stronger than the storm, and for Him walking on and through the high waves was as walking on solid ground. Jesus did not quiet the power of the storm until He stepped into the boat with Peter.

(Matthew 14:26) But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear.

The disciples were terrified because they knew that flesh and blood people cannot walk on water. From all the “ghost stories” they had heard, they jumped to the conclusion that they must be seeing a ghost. With all of the sea spray around Jesus and them, they did not recognize Him and He must have had a “ghostly” appearance.

(Matthew 14:27) But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

When they expressed their terror and fear, Jesus immediately comforted them with words of truth. Jesus

gave them a command, “Take heart,” which His followers have learned to do in all storms of life. However, His command was not simply “positive thinking advice.” Jesus gave them the assurance that He was there; He was with them; He was in control; therefore, everything would be fine and with Him they were safe. For these reasons among others, Jesus could also command them “do not be afraid.”

(Matthew 14:28) Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

Perhaps without thinking, impetuous Peter could not think of a better way to verify that Jesus was not a ghost than to ask Jesus to help him walk on the water too. Notice: Peter did not call Jesus “Teacher,” but “Lord,” and Jesus would soon prove that He was Lord of the waves and the wind. Peter really asked for an outlandish opportunity, but perhaps the Holy Spirit inspired his request to show that with Jesus all things are possible to those who believe in Him and entrust their lives to Him.

(Matthew 14:29) He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus.

Jesus immediately granted Peter his request, and probably without thinking further Peter immediately stepped out of the boat and “onto” not “into” the water. Peter began to

walk, and he began to walk toward Jesus keeping his eyes steadily upon Him. For the moment, all the troubles and trials of this world were erased from his mind, and he saw Jesus only. The love of Jesus drew him safely toward Him.

(Matthew 14:30) But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

However, the moment Peter turned his eyes once again toward the world with all of its frightening prospects and away from Jesus [for we cannot focus our attention on the things of this world and also keep the focus of our attention on Jesus] Peter became frightened and began to sink toward a certain death apart from Jesus. Peter did the only thing he knew to do. In desperation, he called out to Jesus as his Lord and shouted “save me!” Peter knew that only Jesus could save him from perishing, and he had no time to think through that fact: he knew about the power of Jesus by his many experiences with Him. Jesus was his only hope.

(Matthew 14:31) Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Peter learned by experience, by personal experience that he would later preach to thousands, and what millions have also learned by personal experience: “There is

salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus is the only One who can save from eternal death all who trust in Him and call upon His name. Peter had only a “little faith,” but a “little faith” was all he needed for Jesus to save him from destruction. Later, after more time with Jesus, Peter would become an apostle with great faith. His faith would grow as from a tiny mustard seed into a great tree that would bless thousands of people with its message of shelter in Jesus. Over time, as Peter learned more about Jesus and as the Holy Spirit filled him, he ceased to ever doubt Jesus again, and he became a man of great faith. Even Jesus’ and Peter’s enemies recognized the difference Jesus made in him: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

(Matthew 14:32) When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

The true church of Jesus Christ has sometimes been represented as a boat or a ship. Perhaps the symbol indicates the safety Jesus alone can give us, eternal safety. Perhaps the symbol shows that we need not remain alone and fearful in the world when we can live with Jesus and His people in the church. Jesus can quiet the storms of life

within us and without, and we can find comfort living and worshiping Him together as His people.

(Matthew 14:33) And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

From the disciples’ amazing experience they came to believe what Jesus had been saying about himself and also demonstrating to the crowds in their midst: “Truly you are the Son of God.” Only one with divine power could save Himself and save those who trusted in Him from death and dying in the waves and the storm. Later, Peter would be the first to proclaim: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus is more than a mere man or angel. Jesus, the Son of God, deserved their worship and ours.

(Matthew 14:34) When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.

At least once before, Jesus stood on the shore of this land and sea. When He taught there, the crowds had pressed so close to Him that He had to ask Peter for help to borrow his boat so He could teach the people from the water’s edge (see Luke 5:1-3). Now, Peter and Jesus’ disciples have returned after Peter’s harrowing experiences, and Peter had an amazing story to tell everyone who sought Jesus’ help. Peter’s story would encourage everyone who came to Jesus to be saved and healed.

(Matthew 14:35) After the people of that place recognized him, they sent word throughout the region and brought all who were sick to him,

Those Jesus had healed previously He did not need to heal again. These people knew of others, family and friends, who needed healing; so they went forth and spread the good news that Jesus had returned. Jesus with His divine power calmed storms and saved others from sinking to their deaths and healed all who were sick.

(Matthew 14:36) and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Jesus' divine power extended beyond Himself to the very clothes He wore. On this and other occasions Jesus inspired such faith in Himself that those who were sick only needed to touch the very bottom fringe of His cloak to be healed. Obviously, so many people needed to be healed that He could not possibly touch each and every one as quickly as they wanted to be healed. So, by His grace, He healed all who reached out to touch Him, even touch only a part of His clothing. Jesus demonstrated this truth: **"Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away"** (John 6:37).

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think Jesus sent the disciples on ahead in a boat when He knew that the wind and the waves would fight against them all night?
2. If you were one of Jesus' disciples in the boat, what might you have said if another one of the disciples began to complain about their troubles in the storm while Jesus remained safely on the seashore?
3. When did Peter begin to sink in the sea?
4. How much faith in Jesus did Peter need for Jesus to save him? How much faith do some people have in Jesus when they first trust in Him to save them from sin and death?
5. What did the disciples do after Jesus saved Peter and calmed the storm?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

— © Copyright 2014 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.