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JESUS WALKING ON THE SEA.

MATT. 14:22-33. – JULY 1.

"Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

OUR LAST LESSON, respecting the feeding of above five thousand persons with five barley loaves and two small fish, and the twelve haversacks of fragments gathered, and the illustration this afforded of divine ability to care for the Lord's people, and at the same time the propriety of frugality on their part, was followed that same night by another miracle and another lesson. After the multitudes had been fed, toward the close of the day, they evidently were loth to leave the company of one so able and willing to care for their necessities, and probably it was to expedite their dispersion that our Lord urged the apostles to start in their boat for Capernaum.

Our Lord, after dispersing the multitude, sought the solitude of the mountain in prayer. Tho he sometimes prayed with his disciples in their hearing, so that [R2649 : page 185] they recorded the words of his prayer, it is evident that he was not content with merely these opportunities, but frequently sought the Father alone, as he has counseled his disciples to do, saying, "Enter into thy closet [private apartment] and pray to thy Father in secret." (Matt. 6:6.) All Christians of experience have realized the value of such secret personal communion with the heavenly Father, nor are we surprised that our Lord Jesus felt the need of a similar communion. His knowledge of the Father, and his fellowship with him before the world was made, so far from satisfying him and rendering prayer unnecessary, rather stimulated his desire for further fellowship and communion, especially as he was alone in the world – even his beloved disciples, not having yet been begotten of the spirit (John 7:39), could not enter into fellowship with him in respect to spiritual things, nor appreciate the trials which came to him as a perfect man, in a way in which they do not come to fallen humanity. He needed such fellowship with the

heavenly Father for the refreshment of his own zeal, for the keeping warm of his own love and devotion, which was the basis of his consecration and his daily sacrificing of himself as a man, even unto death.

There is no intimation given that our Lord spent much time at prayer, morning and evening, yet we may [R2650 : page 185] reasonably suppose that he never neglected to seek the Father's face; but these brief seasons of worship and prayer daily were evidently supplemented by occasions like the one mentioned in this lesson, in which our Lord spent, apparently, considerable of the night in prayer and communion with the Father. There is a lesson in this for the Lord's people. The duties of life, pressing upon us daily, are not to be neglected; each is to feel, as our Lord expressed it, "I must be about my Father's business," and this would imply, ordinarily, short prayers, which our Lord commended, saying, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think they shall be heard for their *much* speaking. Be ye not therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." (Matt. 6:7,8.) And the example of a prayer, given his disciples, is brief. Nevertheless, in proportion as we feel the importance of the great work in which, by the Lord's favor, we are privileged to be co-laborers with him, our hearts should be and will be drawn to seasons of spiritual communion; – not necessarily a prayer in the sense of making *requests* of the Father, for much of such seasons will doubtless be devoted to thanksgiving for the mercies and favors already experienced, and for the gracious promises upon which we base our faith for the future, and communion with the Lord, in the sense of pondering his will respecting us, and how we may most acceptably serve and please him.

While our Lord was thus holding communion with the Father, the apostles rowing the boat were having difficulty to make headway, a strong head-wind having arisen, which made the lake very rough, boisterous, billowy. John, who was one of those in the boat, tells us

that they had only gotten about twenty-five or thirty furlongs (two and a half to three miles) from the shore, in the several hours they had been rowing. This was what is termed the fourth watch of the night, viz., between three and six o'clock in the morning. While thus rowing hard, worn and sleepy, they saw the figure of a man near them, walking on the water, and apparently intending to pass their boat. (Mark 6:48-50.) Some of them cried out in fear, thinking that they had seen a supernatural being, and that it foreboded some calamity, but it was Jesus who spoke to them, and set at rest their fears.

The boldness of Peter's faith was then most strikingly illustrated by his request that the Lord should bid him walk on the water; and having received the permission, his faith was so strong that he did walk for a few steps, until seemingly appalled by his own temerity and the boisterousness of the water, he began to sink, and cried to the Lord for help, which he received through touching the Lord's hand. If the miracle of the loaves attested the superhuman authority of our Lord, so likewise did this manifestation of his power attest the same; and if the former illustrated his power to protect his people from want and to supply all their necessities, this last manifested that divine power is unlimited and able to preserve his people in all the storms and difficulties and trials of life.

This is a good lesson for us to apply individually, realizing, as we all must, that our Lord has supernaturally fed us with spiritual food, and that during the darkness of the night-time which precedes the Millennial dawn and sunlight there will be storms and difficulties arising which would overwhelm us without the Lord's aid. We are to remember that not only the natural winds and waves obey his power and command, but that all the storms and billows of trouble and persecution which may impede and weary us are amenable to his control. The more we are able to realize this, the more of joy and peace we will experience, because the stronger will be our faith in him who is able to succor us and who has promised eventually to do so, and that

meantime all things shall be overruled for our highest welfare, if we abide in him.

But the boat and the twelve toiling rowers, and the storm and darkness of the night, all picture still more perfectly the experiences of the Lord's people as a whole – not the experiences of a sectarian church, but the experiences of the one true Church, of which the Lord is the Head, the "Church of the First-born, whose [R2650 : page 186] names are written in heaven." (Heb. 12:23.) This true Church has indeed had a stormy time since parting with her Lord who ascended to the Father. The darkness came down upon them – darkness of error and superstition; and the great Adversary, through the Antichrist and many less antichrists, has aroused all through this Gospel age a great storm against the Lord's faithful few. The difficulties of their position have caused them to bend every effort to make progress against such fearful opposition, of which one of the apostles declares, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood [merely], but against principalities, and against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against wicked spirits in high positions." (Eph. 6:12.) This battle against adverse influences has continued throughout the night-time of this Gospel age, and yet the Church has not reached the harbor nor has the storm abated.

As our Lord came to the disciples in the midst of the storm, in the fourth watch of the night (that is, in the early morning), so his second coming in the Millennial dawn is to the Church and to "help her," rescue her from her toil and weariness and peril, as the Prophet says, "The Lord shall help her early in the morning." (Psa. 46:5.) And as the manner of our Lord's coming to his disciples was different from that they had expected, so the manner of his second advent differs from what has been expected, and Peter would seem to represent a class living now, in the end of the age, who being fully convinced of the Lord's presence are privileged to walk to him by faith. But as Peter's faith was unequal to the occasion, except as the Lord came to his rescue, so all of the faithful now will need the Master's hand stretched

to their relief, otherwise they would sink in discouragement, because of the lack of faith.

Is there not a good lesson here for all who have been faithfully laboring in self-control, and in the Lord's service, to bring all their thoughts and words and doings into full accord with the will of God in Christ, and who experience from the world and the flesh and the Adversary serious opposition as the Lord's people? The lesson here, in harmony with its presentations elsewhere in the Scriptures, is that little progress can be made by the Lord's people until the Master himself shall join them; and that then their blessedness and privileges will be proportioned to the measure of their faith. How strongly this speaks to us, then, of continued faithfulness and of growth in faith, not in ourselves but in the Lord, and of his ultimate deliverance of all who put their trust in him.

In John's account we learn that as soon as the Lord and Peter got into the boat, immediately the wind and storm ceased and the ship was at the harbor. So it will be with the Lord's people, the "little flock;" so soon as their faith has been fully tested at the Lord's second presence, he will join their number, and immediately the trials and storms, difficulties and oppositions will be at an end, and the desired haven of heavenly condition will have been reached, the Kingdom will have come. Courage, then, dear brother-mariners on the sea of experience, seeking to make your calling and election sure! Let us note carefully the Master's words to Peter as especially applicable to ourselves, viz., that all that will hinder us from walking out to meet the Lord is lack of faith. "O thou of little faith: wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Let us learn to trust the Lord, not only in the matters which pertain to his Church and all of its interests and affairs, but also in all of the matters and interests of ourselves and families. The lessons will be profitable to us, and prepare us for larger measures of divine favor, and for the joys of the Kingdom. And all this faith is based upon a clear realization of our Golden Text, viz., that our Lord Jesus is truly

the Son of God. If the Son of God, he is true, and if he is true then all the exceeding great and precious promises which he left for us may be relied upon, built upon, anchored into; and such reliance in them will give us the faith requisite for the overcoming of all the difficulties and obstacles of life, that we may come off more than conquerors through him who loved us and who bought us with his own precious blood.
