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Stilling the Storm (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg talks about the story of Jesus stilling the storm in Mark chapter 4. He explains that this story is not just about Jesus being a miracle worker, but also about him being the Lord who stills the storms. Gregg draws parallels between this story and Psalm 107, which speaks of Jehovah stilling the storm. He further suggests that the disciples' fear during the storm may have arisen from underestimating Jesus' power as Messiah, and comments on the importance of faith when waiting for deliverance.

Transcript

Let's turn to Mark chapter 4, and we're going to take the last few verses in Mark chapter 4, and if we are on schedule, that is, if we cover as much as we're supposed to on the schedule, we'll also cover the story at the beginning of Mark chapter 5. The parallels to this are found in the 8th chapter of Matthew and the 8th chapter of Luke also. We've chosen the Mark material because it seems to be more complete, a fuller account, and gives some details that I specifically want to emphasize, but we will also look just at the proper times, at parallels in Matthew and Luke, just to see what other details may be given in those places that Mark himself omits. In Mark chapter 4, beginning at verse 35, And they awoke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Then he arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still.

And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. But he said unto them, Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey him? Then they came to the other side of the sea, and to the country of the Gadarenes. And when he had come out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs, and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces, neither could anyone tame him.

And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped him.

And he cried out with a loud voice and said, What have I to do with you, Jesus, son of the Most High God? I implore you by God that you do not torment me.

For he said to him, Come out of the man, unclean spirit. Then he asked him, What is your name? And he answered, Saying, My name is Legion, for we are many. Also he begged him earnestly that he would not send them out of the country.

Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged him, saying, Send us to the swine, that we may enter them. And at once Jesus gave them permission.

Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine. There were about two thousand. And the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea and drowned in the sea.

So those who fed the swine fled and told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. Then they came to Jesus and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the Legion sitting in clothes and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed and about the swine. Then they began to plead with him to depart from their region.

And when he got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged him that he might be with him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, Go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you and how he has had compassion on you. And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him and all marveled.

Now I do hope that we can cover both of these stories because they have something in common. Both of them have something in common. The first story of Jesus calming the storm is obviously the prelude to the second.

Jesus was in a boat going across the Sea of Galilee to get to the place where he would encounter this man. The storm encountered him and the disciples while at sea. He rebuked the storm and they came safely to the other side and then had this encounter with the demon-possessed man.

Or as Matthew tells us, men. There were two of them. Now, these stories are placed together because of course they follow each other chronologically.

But they occur together probably in reality because they illustrate two things. They both illustrate Jesus' authority. One illustrates Jesus' authority over the elements and the other over the demonic powers.

Now, there are a number of points that came to my mind as I was studying this in preparation for teaching today. And I hope I can bring them all out because there are so many things that I want to say. I'd like to take the first story piece by piece first and then I hope we'll have time to take the other as well.

If not, we'll have to take it next time. But it says in verse 35, on the same day. Now, the day in question is the day when all the parables were told in the parables discourse.

We've been mainly using Matthew 13 as our guide in this because Matthew has collected a number of parables about the kingdom. Many of which are not found elsewhere in the Gospels. But the few that are, are found in the context of this particular day we're reading about.

It is earlier in Mark chapter 4 that we read, for example, beginning of verse 3, the parable of the sower. And that launched us eventually into Matthew 13 and the parables that followed there. And we've just finished talking about them in our last session.

We now come to what happened that same day, as it says in verse 35. It says, when evening had come, he said to them, that is apparently to the disciples, let us cross over to the other side. Now, when they had left the multitude, they took him along in the boat as he was.

Now, they took him in the boat as he was, reminds us that he preached the parables discourse from a boat. That was stated, of course, in the opening verses of Mark chapter 4. A great multitude was gathering to him so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea. And the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.

So, the boat had become Jesus' pulpit there and the people were on the shore. So, Jesus was still in the boat after he sent the multitudes away. And instead of coming ashore, he said to the disciples, let's go to the other side of the sea.

And so, as he was there in the boat already, they just kind of launched toward the other side, rather than coming to shore, which would have been the thing they predicted would happen. And it says, when they were at the sea, when they were out at sea, it says, a great windstorm arose. And the waves beat into the boat so that it was already filling.

Apparently, the boat was in danger of sinking, at least that's what the disciples foresaw happening. They were probably bailing water already, but the boat was still filling. And it looked like they were losing ground against the storm and the boat was very much in danger of going down.

Now, commentators and travelers who've been to the Sea of Galilee point out that even in modern times, these gusty storms sweep in upon the Sea of Galilee suddenly. I must confess I've never been there, and I can't speak from experience, but from what I've

read from the commentators who have been there or described the situation, there are mountains around the edges on the east of the Sea of Galilee. And from the tops there, the wind comes down, and I guess the temperature drop from the top of the mountains to the lower regions is radical, and I wish I knew enough about meteorology to tell you what causes winds, but I think from what I understand, there's something with that change in temperature, those elevations causes great gusts to suddenly come up on the sea.

And many a traveler that I've read or talked to have testified that they were out on the Sea of Galilee on a tour or something on a boat, and it was a beautiful day, and then before noon, this huge storm had arisen because the winds come down quite suddenly. Therefore, commentators who have been there commonly make reference to that when talking about this passage, that these storms coming suddenly and unpredictably are fairly common on the Sea of Galilee. And so, while apparently the weather was not foreboding when they set out toward the other side of the lake, or the sea as it's called, it became quite turbulent and in fact so seriously and suddenly that they thought they were going to die.

As they say to him, he's asleep in verse 38 on a pillow, and they wake him up and say to him, Dear teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? That is to say, they really believed they were dying or soon to die. And he arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

And then he rebuked them because of their fear and their little faith. And then they feared more, it says in verse 41. They feared exceedingly.

Now, there's something that this story has in common with the story that follows. I mean, more than one thing, actually. But one of the things is that a fearful situation exists in the beginning of the story.

Jesus remedies the fearful situation, and people's fear is increased. The disciples were clearly fearful when the storm was upon them, and when they frantically woke Jesus up from his sleep, afraid to die. But as soon as the waters were calm at his command, it says they feared greatly, exceedingly.

It seems like their fear was greater after he brought safety. Likewise, in the case of the man of the tombs, the parallel accounts, especially in Luke, I think it is, talk about how the man of the tombs was a very fierce individual, and people wouldn't come near him. Obviously, he was a very scary kind of a guy.

But it's only after Jesus has cured him, in Mark chapter 5, verse 15, the people from town come and they see him, and the guy is sitting in clothes and in his right mind, it says, and they were afraid. Now, both of these stories have at least this in common, that Jesus remedies a very terrifying situation in both cases, but there's a greater fear, or at least a

more specific mention of fear of the observers, after the problem is over. And this calls, of course, to our attention the fact that there's more than one kind of fear.

And this has been observed by many people. C.S. Lewis writes about it from time to time in various works that he's done. The difference between the fear of actual danger and the fear of what a philosopher has called the fear of the numinous, which is that which is not particularly perceived as dangerous, but just eerie.

That which just kind of freaks you out. C.S. Lewis says it's the difference, for example, between being told that there is a tiger on the other side of this door, on the one hand, or that there's a ghost on the other side of the door. You would very possibly, if you believed the report, be somewhat afraid to open the door in either case.

In the one case, because of the tiger, you'd be afraid of actual danger. In the case of a ghost, if you believed in such, it would not be so much that you know or can picture any particular harm a ghost is going to do to you, it's just spooky. It's just creepy.

It's just something that makes your skin crawl or gives you goosebumps and causes chills to go up and down your back. That's a different kind of fear. And so this is the kind of fear that they had afterwards.

We don't have any specific reference to the fear of danger in terms of saying they were afraid. We can see they were afraid, but it doesn't say they were afraid, and so they woke up Jesus. They were in a situation which clearly inspired fear.

But the notice of fear in both stories comes after there is no longer a danger, but it's more of a fear of the numinous. It's not a fear that something is going to go wrong now and we're all going to sink in the boat or this demon-possessed man is going to leap up and tear everyone's throats out. It's the supernatural.

It's the unexplainable. It's the eerie, the strange that they fear. It's not that they thought Jesus was going to do any harm now to them.

They weren't afraid of him because he rebuked them and they thought he was maybe going to hit them or something or knock them into the water. But they were afraid that they... It's the fear that dawns on someone when they realize that they're in the presence of somebody that they had underestimated perhaps. Not so much that they're afraid of the person, but it's just an irrational kind of a fear that comes on them.

You can see after Jesus stilled the storm that the disciples' response is, what kind of man is this? Now, they've known him for some time. They've traveled with him. They've seen him do miracles even.

But it's quite clear when he stilled the storm they perceived him differently. They got a clearer picture that he was somebody that they had not quite reckoned with. What kind

of man is this we've taken up with here? He even commands the wind and the waves and they obey him.

Now, I'd like to suggest to you that there was something about Jesus revealed in this story of the wind and the waves that was new to them. Now, they had seen Jesus cast out demons before this and they had also seen Jesus do other things like even raise the dead. The widow of Nain's son had already been raised at this time if we've got our chronology right.

And Jesus had healed all kinds of people, blind people and lame people. They certainly had occasion to see that Jesus operated in supernatural powers. But what was it so peculiar about him stilling the wind and the waves? Well, obviously, it's his lordship over the creation.

I think they realized that he was exerting prerogatives and powers that only God really has. And I think they kind of just got the revelation and with a chill as it were that, hey, this is God, this is not a man we're with. What kind of man is this? He's a God-man.

The elements of nature recognize him as their boss, as their Lord. Let me turn your attention back to a psalm. Psalm 107.

If you've ever encountered this psalm, you probably have thought about this story in the life of Jesus when you're reading it because there are so many clear parallels. In fact, a person I guess who... people who doubt the historicity of the Gospels might even suggest that the story was made up as an illustration of this psalm. Of course, there's no reason in the world to believe that except that there's such an interesting parallel.

In Psalm 107, beginning at verse 23, it says, Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they see the works of Jehovah and his wonders in the deep. For he commands and raises the stormy wind which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up in the heavens, excuse me, to the heavens.

They go down again to the depths. Their soul melts because of trouble. That's these people who are at sea.

Soul melting is a Hebraism that means they lose all courage. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man and are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to Jehovah in their trouble and he brings them out of their distresses.

He calms the storm so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet. So he guides them to their desired haven.

Oh, that men should give thanks to Jehovah for his goodness and for his wonderful work to the children of men. Let them exalt him also in the assembly of the people and praise him in the company of the elders. Now, the story, of course, or the example that the

psalmist gives of what God does and how those who go to sea see the works of God and they see his wonders in the deep, the example is exactly like the story we just read.

They go out to sea. A storm arises. They are swept by huge waves and so forth and they are at their wits' end.

They are terrified. They are staggering like drunken men and then they cry out to Jehovah and he calms the storm. Now, the thing that I would point out to you, of course, is there are many correspondences, but one thing that is distinctive about the way the psalm tells the story as opposed to the way that the gospel does is in the psalm about this, it is Jehovah to whom they call out and it is Jehovah who stills the storm.

In the gospel account, it is Jesus that they call out to and it is he who stills the storm. Now, the parallel could hardly have escaped the notice of the disciples that Jesus was essentially playing the role of Jehovah. He was doing the exact thing that the Bible says is Jehovah's works, the things that are his wonders, and that it is Jehovah who stills the storm and so forth.

And I think they got their first glimpse here that they are not just dealing with a man who is the Messiah, they are dealing with not just a guy who has gotten blessings from God on him so that he can heal people like Elijah did and others and raise the dead even. Elijah did that too. But in commanding the wind and the waves and they obey him, he was operating with the prerogatives of Jehovah God himself.

And that, no doubt, is what caused them to say what kind of man is this? He does the things that only God can do. Now, it is important to note that Elijah prayed and controlled nature. Elijah prayed that the rain would not come and for three and a half years the rain did not come.

Then he prayed again and the rain came. But there is a difference between praying for something to happen, and God honoring your prayer on one hand, and giving the command to the elements themselves, as if you are their Lord, as if you are their owner, and they have to obey. And the fact that a person can give such a command to the elements and they do obey him speaks of something more than a man who is an effectual and fervent prayer, like Elijah was.

I mean, Elijah, after all, after three and a half years of drought, he had to pray seven distinct times before even a little cloud began to appear to get the rain to come back. He had to pray repeatedly. And he was obviously not given any commands about the thing.

He was begging God to send rain, and God honored him and sent rain after seven repeated times of prayer. Jesus, however, just gives a word and the rain stops, the wind stops, the sea stops, everything stops. And he does exactly the thing that the Psalms attribute to the works of Jehovah.

And I think this is what struck the disciples for the first time. You know, in the Old Testament there are a number of occasions when persons encountered a theophany, an appearance of God, and did not know initially that it was God they were with, and afterwards, when they realized it was, they were afraid, having had such an encounter with God. You know, in this case it was not a theophany, but Jacob, when he had his dream, and he saw God in the dream, he woke up and said he was greatly afraid.

He was terrified. He says, God is in this place and I didn't know it. He didn't realize he was in the presence of God until it was graphically made known to him through the dream, and it gave him the creeps.

And likewise, Manoah and his wife, the parents of Samson, you know, when the angel of the Lord appeared to them and then disappeared in the sacrifice, you know, the husband said, oh, you know, we're going to die because we've seen God. He was greatly afraid. Although his wife, you know, sounds like a modern story more than an ancient one.

She's more reasonable than her husband. And she says, oh, well, if God intended to kill us, he wouldn't have blessed us, and so forth and so forth. And so, anyway, the point is, though, it's the thing that happens when people know that they've seen God, even though they may not have been terrified when they first saw him because they didn't know who he was.

And, you know, Sarah, when she laughed in the tent, when her visitors said, your wife, speaking to Abram, your wife is going to have a baby in about, you know, a year from now. And she laughed, not knowing who it was who had made the statement. And then the visitor said, why did you laugh? Why did she laugh? Is anything too hard for Jehovah? And suddenly she was afraid.

And she, you know, tremblingly said, I didn't laugh, you know. But as soon as someone realizes that the person they're in the presence of is, in fact, God, it kind of causes a cold chill to go down your back. Now, I don't suppose any of us can testify to having had quite that kind of an encounter before.

You know, you hear stories about people seeing angels or picking up hitchhikers, and the hitchhiker tells them something cryptic and mysterious and then vanishes from the car. You know, people have these close encounters of the third kind with angels and stuff. But I don't know of anybody who's really seen Jesus and known they were in the presence of God.

The apostle Paul, or Saul, as he was at the time when he saw Jesus, fell to the ground trembling. When John on Patmos saw Jesus in his exalted form, he also fell on his face like one dead. Daniel had the same experience.

What's amazing to me is how many people there are, not a lot, but too many, who claim

that they've had visions of Jesus, and yet their reaction is nothing like that of the people in biblical times who encountered God in this close proximity. I mean, Kenneth Hagin, for example, claims that Jesus has appeared to him lots of times. And they have conversations that are just like you and I would have to each other.

In fact, Kenneth Hagin even claims that he argues with Jesus sometimes. When Jesus tells him something, he says, Jesus, I can't believe that until you give me a scripture reference for that. I mean, he's pretty casual with Jesus.

It makes me wonder if he's really ever seen Jesus. Because when people really do, it definitely causes them to shudder. We're not told that he didn't shudder.

He may have. We know he had a time when Jesus stood by him in the temple, or revealed himself to him when he was praying in the temple. But we're not told.

Actually, Paul did argue with Jesus in the sense that he tried to reason with him. Jesus said, get out of Jerusalem. They're going to try to kill you.

And Paul said, but they know me here. Why would they try to kill me here? And Jesus said, get out. I'm calling you to the Gentiles.

There is a case where someone actually does respond to Jesus and sort of to get more information or to challenge the assumptions. But John of Patmos, who had been the beloved disciple, he fell as one dead at the feet of Jesus when he appeared to him. I think probably because, I'm not sure, but Jesus himself may have appeared to John, whereas Paul may have had a vision of Jesus.

Visions and personal appearances may not be exactly quite the same. I don't know. But I do know this.

The common thing for a person who suddenly realizes that they are in the presence, the immediate presence of a manifestation of God, especially if you've been with the person already not knowing it was them, and then later you realize it was, that's kind of a freaky thing. And I think that you see a lot of examples of that. That's, I think, what the disciples underwent here when they saw him still the storm.

They said, whoa. They were afraid, greatly, exceedingly afraid. They said, this guy is no ordinary human being.

This guy is from somewhere else. Anyway, that's the point I'd like to observe about this and the next story because the Gadarenes, the people who came and saw the man delivered from demons, because there was a very clear manifestation of something supernatural having happened, they were afraid, so afraid, in fact, they asked Jesus to go away. They certainly couldn't have been afraid that Jesus was going to do them any harm, but they just couldn't deal with it, so they asked him to go away.

Now, one question I'd like to raise about this story of the stilling of the storm is, is it just another miracle story that shows Jesus' power like so many other miracle stories, or does it have significance in the sense of having a symbolism about it? Now, I do not hold the view that all of Jesus' miracles have symbolic value. In some cases, well, it's possible that they all do. I mean, it's certainly not impossible that the symbolic meaning of certain miracles has eluded me.

I mean, it could be so that everything Jesus ever did had symbolic value. I don't know. We certainly know that it is the case with many of his miracles because John particularly limits himself to recording miracles of Jesus that do have something symbolic about them.

Jesus heals man who's born blind, and then that's connected with Jesus saying, I'm the light of the world, and he raises the dead in connection with his statement, I am the resurrection and the life. He feeds the multitudes in connection with his statement, I'm the bread of life, and so forth. In fact, John in his gospel records very few of these miracles and seems to be selective enough to only include ones that clearly have some symbolic bearing.

Perhaps all of them do. I don't know it to be the case. It's possible, for example, that whenever Jesus healed an individual, this may have been symbolic of the fact that the Messiah in the Old Testament was said to come and bring healing to the nation of Israel, but it's the nation corporately that was to be healed of their national woes and spiritual woes, but that could have been emblemized in the healing of physically sick people because in the Old Testament, Israel, the nation, is compared with a sick man that needs to be healed.

I don't know for sure, but I will say this. This particular miracle probably does have symbolic value. On the one hand, of course, it simply shows that Jesus is God.

It shows that Jesus does the thing that the Bible declares is God's prerogative to do, to command the elements, to still the storm, to respond to prayers in this way, and to give orders to the world and the elements to obey him. That is, at one level, the meaning of it, but I'd like to suggest the possibility that it may have additional symbolic meaning. This I cannot demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt, but I would call to witness some Old Testament things.

Let's turn to the Psalms, if you would. Psalm 46 is the first place I'd like you to look. Psalm 46 is a psalm about God's deliverance and protection of his people in crisis.

It says, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though its waters, the sea's waters, roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Let's skip down to verse 7. The Lord of hosts is

with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two.

He burns the chariot in the fire. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.

I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.

Now, I don't know how many things in those verses I read you may have caught that might have some bearing on our understanding of the miracle of calming a storm. But it's clear that the psalmist, when he talks about dangers and so forth, he's not talking about storms of water. He's using apocalyptic language when he says in verse 2, even though the earth be removed and the mountains are carried in the midst of the sea, though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling.

This is apocalyptic imagery such as you find in Daniel or Revelation and some other places in the Bible that use this kind of imagery, but it's symbolic. Certainly the psalmist doesn't expect the earth to be removed, or if he does, that's not really what he's talking about on this occasion. He's talking about the shaking up of all the foundations of Israel's security.

And that is usually a thing that was brought on by invasions of Gentiles, of nations and so forth, and that seems to be what he has in mind here when he says in verse 8 and 9, Come, behold, the works of the Lord who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two.

He burns the chariot in fire. Obviously this is a wartime psalm. It is a psalm about God giving victory over enemies at wartime.

He brings an end to the war. He delivers his people. He's the refuge and the fortress for his people in times when they are under attack from their enemies.

And this is compared with the mountains being removed and the waters of the great sea being in turmoil and so forth. Now, the most clear thing I could find between this psalm and the story we're reading is verse 10, which is a very well-known verse. Be still and know that I am God.

Jesus' words to the wind and the waves were, Be still. He didn't say, And know that I am God. But it's likely that his disciples came to know that he was God as a result of his giving this command and the wind and the waves obeying it.

And notice how he goes on. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.

Now, Jesus was exalted among the waves of the sea. But God says, Be still. I will be exalted among the nations.

Now, the nations were the enemies of Israel. The nations were the Gentiles. They were the ones who made war against Israel.

But God, speaking to the turbulent warlike nations, says, Be still. And they are stilled, it is apparently the case. And he says again that the Lord is our refuge and our place of safety.

The turbulence that God stills with his command in Psalm 46.10 is the turbulent nations, the wars and the armies of the enemies. And he will be exalted among the nations and above the nations as he gives his command that they be still, that he quiets their turbulence. That is, he puts down the enemies of Israel.

Now, I believe that this is intentional. I believe that what Jesus said to the storm is a picture of that. The wind and the waves of the sea, which Jesus gave his command to instill, and where the disciples said, Wow, who is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him.

If you'll look with me at Daniel chapter 7, you may see what the wind and the sea represent. That is, at times when they represent anything. There are times in the Gospels when the wind is just the wind and the sea is just the sea.

But when symbolic meaning does attach to them, there is a very clear meaning established elsewhere in the Scripture. In Daniel 7, verse 2, Daniel spoke, saying, I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of the great heaven were stirring upon the great sea. The wind and the sea.

And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. Then, of course, he talks about the rise of Babylon like a lion, and of Medo-Persia like a bear, and Alexander the Great, Greece, like a leopard, and then the Roman Empire. Now, the point that is hard to miss here is that these Gentile empires arose out of what is called the great sea.

To the Jews, Israel was the land and the Gentiles were the sea. Why? Because land is stable, the sea is turbulent. The sea is unstable, the sea is rootless, it's foundationless.

As Jacob said about Reuben in his blessing, if we could call it that, on his deathbed of Reuben, he said, Reuben is as unstable as water. The nations did not have the laws of God, they didn't have covenant with God, they were unstable, they were like the foaming sea. Isaiah says the wicked are like the raging waves of the sea.

So, to the Jews, the sea represented the Gentile world, and the land, in contrast, represented Israel. Whenever you find the expression the land without any modifier, it

almost always in the Bible will mean Israel, the land of Israel. The sea, whenever it is representative of anything other than the actual sea itself, is representative of the Gentile lands or the Gentile world.

Now, here in this symbolic vision of Daniel, the sea is churned up by the four winds, and as a result of this churning up, which must be wars and turbulence, because that's the climate out of which Babylon arose and Persia arose, these great beasts arose out of the turbulence of the sea. As nations were in conflict against nations, like waves of the sea, certain nations would arise to prominence, one after another. And the rise of the Babylonian Empire and the Persian Empire and the Greek Empire and the Roman Empire, all are a result of this churning up and this turbulence and this agitating of the sea by the winds.

Now, look over at Revelation chapter 7 and verse 1. Revelation chapter 7 and verse 1, we have the imagery from Daniel 7 brought over into kind of a new situation, but obviously having similar meaning. Revelation 7, verse 1 says, And after these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth or the sea or on any tree. Now, in Daniel, the four winds blew upon the sea, on the great sea, and caused turbulence, which was representative of war and conflict, out of which rose the great beasts.

Here, at least for the moment in Revelation, the four angels are holding back the four winds, preventing them from blowing on the sea or the earth or the trees. Until something happens. In this case, it happens to be the sealing of the 144,000.

In other words, none of this warfare that is described in Revelation can really take place until God has identified his own people and set them apart for safety. But the point here is, we have the same imagery. The four winds, when they are released on the great sea, it brings war and turbulence and so forth, and the rise and fall of empires.

Now, the wind and the sea, therefore, at least in Daniel and Revelation, and we don't know whether this is true in other parts of the Bible, all the time, they represent the turbulent nations. And particularly, the danger to the disciples, I think, of this wind and the sea, can be seen as emblematic of the problems they will have among the nations. Jesus said in other places, very directly, you should be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

And your name will be cast out among all nations as evil, and so forth. And they were, of course, eventually to experience turbulence in their lives because of conflict with the nations, just as Israel had, so the church would, and does still. Now, if you look at Psalm 44, verses 9 and 10, it says, but you have cast us off.

In the psalm earlier, the psalmist complains, God, we've heard about all the great things you did for our ancestors and delivered them from Egypt and stuff, but how come you're

not delivering us? We've got enemies now, they're overwhelming us, you seem to be paying no attention, you're not coming to our rescue. Verse 9, you have cast us off and put us to shame, and you do not go out with our armies. You make us turn our back from the enemy, and those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.

So we can see the picture here. The problem is that nations have come against Israel, God's people, and they are inundated by these attacking nations. Now, in verse 23 and 24 of the same psalm, it says, Awake! Why do you sleep, O Lord? Sounds just like the disciples in the boat.

Lord, don't you care that we're perishing? Wake up! So the psalmist also went in a situation where the nations, their enemies are threatening Israel. He says, Awake! Why do you sleep, O Lord? But arise, do not cast us off forever. Why do you hide your face and forget the affliction of our oppression? There is quite an obvious parallel between this cry of the psalmist and the cry of the disciples in the boat.

I don't do this kind of thing very often. I don't very often make spiritualized connections to mere stories in the Bible. I know people who do that, they find types and shadows in virtually everything that happens.

I'm not inclined in that direction, but as I was reading this, I couldn't help but see all the parallels between this story and various psalms and other images in the Bible, and it made me wonder, why is this story told here? Why did this even happen? Jesus could have, of course, had it revealed to him by the Father that there was going to be a storm at sea and waited until the storm passed before setting across the sea. It's obvious that he gave his instructions in order that this event might happen. Is it only to convey to the disciples, listen, you don't have to worry about the weather? Or is there something else that they have more to worry about that they need to have communicated to them that they don't have to worry about? I'd like to suggest to you that the weather has seldom been a serious problem to the church.

Whether it's in Siberia or Montana or Arizona or the tropics or whatever, the weather and the climate doesn't generally threaten the church in a big way. Now, some people, individuals are exposed to dangerous weather. I've been in airplanes that were batted around by the wind a fair amount before and thought about God having control over the elements and so forth.

But to the church, a far more important lesson for them to learn than simply that Jesus is in control of the weather is that Jesus is in control of their enemies. Jesus is in control of the storms that the church will face at the hands of the turbulent nations that threaten to sink the church. And the disciples in the boat in the sea, I believe, were in a situation that's analogous to what they would face and all generations of Christians would face big time in a hostile world, in a world where the four winds do strive upon the great sea.

And where out of that there arise beasts and there are great dangers to the church. And there are times when the boat appears to be filling up and sinking, by the way. This is actually one of those times, although the church is at somewhat peace at a certain level in our country, it is filling up from the world, it seems.

It's taking on a great deal of water, if the water represents paganism. But the point is, the church is taking on water, as the boat was, and at times appears to be in danger of sinking. However, Jesus rebuked the disciples for thinking that they possibly could sink in the boat.

Now, I used to read a story and think Jesus was a little unreasonable with these guys. I mean, Jesus was asleep. The boat, for all they knew, was not incapable of sinking.

They could have died. Now, maybe they should have had so much faith as to say, well, even if we die, we're going to heaven. But Jesus had never taught anything about heaven up to this point.

In fact, Jesus had said very little about eternal life up to this point. I mean, there were a few times, I guess, talking to Nicodemus, maybe a few other times he made some veiled reference to eternal life, or some straightforward one, but it's not as if Jesus had given them a clear teaching about going to heaven when you die. I think he was rebuking them because they thought he was going to let the boat go down.

And how could the boat go down with Jesus in the boat? I mean, if they were alone in the boat, I don't know, maybe that would be a different story. But did they not believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah? Hadn't they confessed that to be their position? Hadn't they recognized that he was the man of destiny that God had sent? And if that was so, and he had not fulfilled his destiny, how in the world could anyone out there ever think he was going to die at sea? How could the boat go down with him in it? If he had a prophesied destiny, which they professed to believe in, they professed that he was the Messiah. And if he was the Messiah, then he had a lot of unfinished work to do.

How could this day of him taking a nap in the boat be the end of his life? Or theirs who was with him? Now, this is why I think their fears were totally unfounded, and they just weren't thinking straight. The boat was taken on water, but could they really believe that the purposes of God would be thwarted as long as Jesus was in the boat? Is it conceivable that with unfulfilled prophecies and promises to be fulfilled through Christ that he would come to this kind of an end prior to their fulfillment? Now, to believe that that was possible simply is forgetting that God has a purpose. They forgot momentarily that God had a purpose for Jesus, and there was no way that the boat that he was in was going to go down and everyone drown in it.

One of the problems that they had in their faith was that they didn't believe he cared. Do you notice their words? It doesn't quite work that way in the other Gospels, but here in

verse 38 they say, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Why would they think he didn't care? Well, he was asleep. He wasn't paying attention.

But then again, if he really was asleep, which I believe was the case, how could his inattention to what was going on be a sign that he didn't care? Was it that they felt like he should have never put them in this danger? Does anyone have to see it this time? That showed a callousness or a lack of concern for their safety? It's hard to know, but one thing is clear. When things seem dangerous and Jesus doesn't seem to be immediately responding, the first thing that crosses our minds is, does he even care? Is there still someone caring for me right now? I mean, I prayed, but he didn't awake to my deliverance. He didn't come to our rescue yet.

Maybe he doesn't care. Well, that certainly is a negative faith statement to be rebuked. To suggest that because Jesus isn't responding immediately in the way that we think he should, coming immediately to our rescue at the moment when we think it's the last possible moment for him to act, and to think, no, that's proof that he doesn't care, is really to lose faith in God.

And this is a very important thing, too. This is something that I don't mean to more than, here's the second time I hop on these people I don't mean to, but one thing about the word of faith people that I have problems with is to them faith is only an operation if they get delivered from their problems. And the quicker they get delivered, the surer a sign it is of faith.

If they get an instant healing, instant deliverance from whatever the problem is, that's the proof of their faith. If deliverance doesn't come quickly, then they're going to have to throw up more faith because they apparently have too little. It's never a question of God's timing.

It's never a question of even whether God wants to deliver them. It's just a matter of, you know, their faith, they only believe God when he does deliver, and the sooner the better. Whereas true faith is supposed to be operational even if there's no...