

Exegetical Notes, Mark 6:45-56

“The Ghost!”

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Mark 6:45-56

Verse 45-46

Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

- After feeding the 5000 (see Mark 6:30-44) Jesus sent the twelve off without him to Bethsaida. He then dismissed the crowd.
- When he was alone, Jesus took the opportunity to spend time talking to the Father in prayer.

Verse 47-48a

When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them.

- As it grew dark, Jesus could see the disciples in the boat straining against the wind trying to row to the opposite shore.

Verse 48b-50a

About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified.

- The “fourth watch” was between 3 and 6 in the morning. This fact indicates two important facts. First, Jesus had been praying all night. He went up on the mountainside in the evening and prayed until at least 3 in the morning. Second, the disciples had been fighting the wind all night long. They would have been very tired and deeply troubled.
- Jesus, knowing their plight, came to the disciples in the boat by walking on the water.

- It was the middle of the night and dark. The disciples were tired. When they saw Jesus passing them walking on the water, they assumed that they were seeing a ghost and were frightened.
- It is important to note that all twelve of them saw Jesus walking on the water. While they did not understand what they were seeing, they all saw it together. In any court, the testimony of twelve eye witnesses would be impressive.

Verse 50b-52

Immediately, he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

- Seeing that they were afraid, because they did not understand what they saw, Jesus reassured them that it was he who had come to them.
- He got into the boat with them and the winds ceased to rage against them. Jesus brought peace to the tired, struggling group.
- Clearly in all this, God was at work using the wind and the struggle to prepare the disciples to see what they had previously not understood about who Jesus was and what Jesus could do.

Verse 53

When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went -- into villages, towns, or countryside -- they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

- People everywhere recognized Jesus and brought the sick to him. He saw their need and brought them healing. His fame spread over all of Judea.

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