

# Faith Canceled



Jesus and Peter Walked on top of the Sea of Galilee  
 The Disciples' Vacillation of Faith Could Not Cure Epilepsy  
 Thomas Doubted Jesus' Resurrection

## Jesus and Peter Walked on top of the Sea of Galilee

Jesus taught that believing without ever doubting was a necessary ingredient that made everything He wanted to happen come true. Without faith, both He and anyone else ultimately would fail, He used His unwavering faith in both His invisible Father and the Holy Spirit not only to attempt, but actually accomplish many things that would be considered impossible--like walking on top of water and raising the dead. In other words, Jesus constantly believed that supernatural could override physical laws. And, He said that we could manipulate and change things identically, by never vacillating in our faith in the "impossible." Otherwise, the physical would remain in control and lead to its inevitable consequences.

*"Now when evening came, (Jesus) sent the multitude away when (He) perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force and make Him king. He immediately made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side toward Capernum to Bethesda, while He went up on a mountain by Himself to pray.*

*Now He was alone there on the land but the boat was now in the middle of the sea tossed by the waves for the wind was contrary. Then He saw them struggling at rowing for the wind was against them and it was already dark and Jesus had not come to them. Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. So, when they had rowed three or four miles they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat about the fourth watch of the night.*

*He came to them walking on the sea and would have passed them by, and when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea they were troubled, afraid, they supposed it was a ghost. And, they all cried out for fear, for they all saw Him, saying, 'It is a ghost!'*

*But, immediately He talked with them and said to them, 'Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid!'*

*And, Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come*

*to You on the water!"*

*So He said, 'Come!', and when Peter had come down, out of the boat, he (too) walked on the water to get to Jesus, but when he saw that the wind was boisterous he was afraid.*

*And, beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!'*

*And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'*

*Then He went into the boat to them and they willingly received Him into the boat. And, when they got into the boat the wind ceased and they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure and marveled, for they had not understood about the loaves (and feeding the 5000+ people) because their heart was hardened.*

*Then those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God!', and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going." (Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:15-21)*

When Jesus perceived that 5000+ men He had just taught, healed, and miraculously fed were planning to force Him to become their earthly king, instead of acquiescing to the attention and adoration He avoided it. He even sent them all, including His disciples, away so that He could be alone with His Father to pray and renew His Own spirit for whatever lay ahead. Jesus sent His disciples before Him to another place across the Sea of Galilee without Him so that He could concentrate on His mission and collect His thoughts without any interruptions.

The night was dark (the fourth watch), the wind was great and hostile, and the sea was extremely rough even for seasoned sailors. The disciples had rowed three to four miles from shore before Jesus became aware of their predicament. It was not mentioned whether the storm was exclusively at sea, or if it had moved to the shore where He could feel the wind and rain for Himself. However, since the disciples were so far from shore, it was late at night, and Jesus had no binoculars God must have shown Him their plight through the Holy Spirit. It would have been impossible for Jesus' physical eyesight to spot them.

Jesus stopped praying and went towards them as soon as He learned about their situation. He had to stroll on top of the sea for at least several miles from shore when He caught up with the boat. He walked over the water under the same rough conditions that they were fighting in a boat. Jesus was not showing off. He was getting near enough to help His friends in the most efficient way possible, and evidently He considered that walking, not taking the time to find and borrow another vessel, was His fastest course of action.

If Jesus' disciples had not called out to Him He would have walked near enough to help but passed them by. It was their choice to ask for His aid or let Him just be around doing nothing. Jesus did not force anything on them no matter how dire their predicament. When they initially spotted (and recognized) Him, the men who lived, worked with, and watched Jesus every single day were afraid of Him because they thought He was a ghost. Apparently, even shortly after witnessing Him feed over 5000 people with only a few loaves of fish and some bread, Jesus' disciples did not even consider that He could transcend natural conditions in this particular manner.

Peter tested Jesus by saying, *'If it is You....'* after He already had spoken to the disciples to assuage their fear. Since the Scriptures declare that we are not to "test" God. (*Matthew 4:7*), Jesus did not have to prove Himself as He did and He showed great compassion on Peter by accepting his challenge. Peter yelled out a dare to see if the ghostly figure was indeed his Friend and He accepted it. Peter not only desired to make sure Whose body he was seeing, he apparently wanted to find out if Jesus was powerful enough to keep him safe out in the storm, too. Peter's rational could have been really foolish if he had been wrong. He was attempting to prove something by deliberately putting himself in further danger than he was already. If the figure had been Satan or one of his demons instead of Jesus, he would have lied and tried to duplicate how Jesus would react thus making Peter's dare even more hazardous

*"(The devil) was a murder from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."* (*John 8:44*)

*"Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light."* (*II Corinthians 11:14*)

Peter stepped out of the boat into a pre-existing situation of which he was quite aware. Even supposing that the wind and sea had been calm for most of the disciple's journey, they indeed were turbulent when Peter left the boat. As a skilled professional fisherman he understood those conditions, as well as the danger into which he chose to put himself. Jesus did not instruct him to do so until challenged. Walking on the water was Peter's idea. A completely normal and sinful human being actually walked on top of that sea just as Jesus did until he looked at the predicament surrounding and touching him and not at Jesus anymore. Before Peter wavered and let his faith in the supernatural fluctuate, he was doing fine even in those exceptional conditions.

This story was an excellent example of the power of faith versus doubt. When Peter focused his *full* attention on *Jesus* he felt secure and succeeded. However, when Peter began to consider the conditions around him, he faltered and started to sink. The circumstances never changed from what they were already when he decided to get out of the boat in the middle of the sea. The sky was just as dark, the wind just as frenzied, the sea just as stormy, the waves just as high.

Three things kept Peter progressing:

- (1) his faith in Jesus' ability and care,
- (2) his absolute attention on where Jesus wanted him to be, and
- (3) trust in Jesus' presence before him.

In like manner, Jesus accomplished exactly what Peter wished to emulate by using His Own faith in His Father's ability and care, His absolute attention on where His Father wanted Him to be, and trust in His Father's presence before Him. Jesus of Nazareth was not able to walk on top of water because He was God's Son. As demonstrated previously, He likewise had to employ His faith to do so, only unlike Peter He did it without ever doubting.

When Peter looked at the unrelenting situation where he was instead of where he and Jesus wanted him to be, Peter disconnected himself from Jesus momentarily. Just

like a plug removed from an electric socket his attachment with success was detached and he started to fail. As children of a God Who did not play favorites (*Galatians 2:6*), whenever any people whosoever allowed any circumstances whatsoever to distract them from God's Word they, too, allowed themselves to begin to fluctuate in their own lives. It never was God's desire for that to happen. By breaking away from His will for even an instant they, like Peter, would begin to falter at any task. According to the Bible they would continue in this undesirable state, until, and unless, they became re-connected to the Trinity.

Jesus likened this to a branch being cut off of a plant. The stem, not the individual branches, directly was attached to the roots from which the entire organism was fed and thrived. If the branches were trimmed away from their nourishment they most assuredly would begin to wither, and eventually die.

*"I am the true vine, and My Father the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away and every branch that bears fruit He purges that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the Word that I have spoken to you. Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abides in the vine no more can you except you abide in Me. Without Me you can do nothing. .... Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." (John 15:1-8)*

*"Every good tree brings forth good fruit but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit nor can an evil tree bring forth good fruit.... By their fruits you shall know them." (Matthew 7:17-20)*

Peter was one of Jesus' original disciples. Yet, he still was a human being with the frailties that everyone else possessed. In this story, people could observe not only Jesus' behavior but also the reactions of an average human being towards a bad "storm". Immediately after Peter cried out for help Jesus caught him and saved his life, just as He already had been planning to do for them *all* in the boat.

Jesus and Peter both had to have walked back to the boat. Why? Certainly, Jesus did not leave Peter alone in such dangerous surroundings, especially after He just had saved him from drowning. Jesus Himself still had to be walking and He never would have dragged Peter. Although Jesus may have carried Peter it was more consistent with other Scriptures for Him to have taught Peter to reject fear and reactivate his faith so that he could continue to walk for himself. When the two men got into the boat the wind ceased, the sea calmed, and they were at the other side right away. All of the disciples were safe as soon as they asked and permitted Jesus to help them.

What can we learn concerning our own predicaments nowadays? Never be afraid--God always is in control when we release the situation to his jurisdiction. Jesus is present even when it seems as if we are alone and in the midst of a really bad "storm". Additionally, not only do we have to ask God for help in our situations, we have to learn from His Son's earthly examples, and mimic them, too. If Jesus can use His faith for the ability actually to walk on water, then by imitating Him just as Peter did so can we if we ever really need to. Remember that Jesus Himself never did this until it

was absolutely necessary. Routinely, He used a boat, the same as anyone else.

Right before Peter actually stepped out of the boat in the middle of the sea, at night, in deep water, the dialogue among him and the other disciples may have been quite an interesting scene from God's viewpoint. After all, there were twelve of them and only one had the faith or determination even to try to reach Jesus. So, what were the others doing? Either being stupefied by the entire situation, merely considering doing it themselves, or else thinking that Peter's decision was sheer lunacy and even maybe attempting to dissuade him from following Jesus' command. And, all the while Jesus just stood there in the wind, all wet, waiting patiently.

## **The Disciples' Vacillation of Faith Could Not Cure Epilepsy**

*"Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain that a great multitude met Him.*

*When they had come to the multitude suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, 'Teacher, I implore You, look on my son for he is my only child! I have brought my son who has a mute spirit. Lord, have mercy on my son for he is an epileptic and suffers severely and whenever it seizes him it throws him down. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. It departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. So, I spoke to, and implored, (and} brought him to your disciples that they should cast it out, but they could not cure him.'*

*Then Jesus answered him and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.'*

*Then he brought him to Him, and as he was still coming when he saw Him immediately the spirit threw him down, and convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.*

*So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' and he said, 'From childhood, and often he has thrown him both into the fire and the water to destroy him, but if You can do anything have compassion on us and help us.'*

*Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.'*

*Immediately the father of the child cried out, 'Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief!'*

*When Jesus saw that the people came running together He rebuked the demon, unclean spirit, saying, 'Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you come out of him and enter him no more!'*

*Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and it came out of him, and he became as one dead so that many said, 'He is dead.'*

*But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose, and (He) gave him back to his father, and the child was cured from that very hour.*

*And, when He had come into the house, the disciples came to Jesus, asked Him privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it out?'*

*So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief. For assuredly I say to you if you have faith as a mustard seed you will say to this mountain, 'Move from*

*here to there' and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 17:14-21, Mark 9:17-29 & Luke 9:37-42)*

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A man whose son came to Jesus for help with his possessed son only after His disciples were not able to cure the child. Evidently, they indeed had been able to provide remedies for similar suffering previously for they did not understand why their attempts failed. When Jesus was able to cure an ailment that they could not they asked Him how and why His commands were different from theirs. He explained that they had not yet developed their faith to an extent to manage to sustain it when confronted with a situation that was as strong as that case was. They had not prayed and fasted sufficiently to be able to allow God's Spirit to work through them unimpeded by any doubts as He was within Jesus. Since Jesus indeed was able to cure the boy He had to have been fasting and praying enough to be equipped to allow the Holy Spirit work through Him completely unhindered by doubt or frustration.

Jesus purposely spoke to and healed the possessed boy in front of many witnesses. In fact, on this occasion He waited until He saw people running toward the scene where the boy's father was begging Him to relieve his son before He acted at all. Jesus directly addressed and rebuked the spirit of epilepsy that had afflicted the boy since he had been very young. Although it initially caused an extremely severe attack right in front of Him Jesus did not react in fear or unbelief. He simply commanded the spirit to leave and never return. His words carried so much weight and undiluted faith behind them that the spirit evidently was compelled to flee immediately. The boy became so still that the people present even thought that he was dead, instead of at peace. However, Jesus sensed that the spirit had left and calmly gave His hand to the boy and helped him stand up.

*"Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)*

Jesus clearly was frustrated at His disciple's lack of faith. Although by then they had traveled with, witnessed Him cure innumerable diseases, and assisted Him for an extended period of time, it was evident that they still had not yet grasped a major reason why He always was able to heal any and all kinds of ailments. Jesus explained that they still were letting unbelief in God's ability to overrule natural events undermine their faith by letting doubts arise in their hearts and words. Jesus told His men that even if their personal faith were as small as a tiny seed it would be enough to change something huge, like an entire mountain, if they were prepared properly to employ the power. Nothing at all was impossible for God to bring into being and when they fasted and prayed sufficiently to His Father the Holy Spirit would teach them to react exactly as Jesus did in front of a predicament. He later explained in more detail precisely how to address the "mountain" after they witness Him address and make a fig tree wither. )

## **Thomas Doubted Jesus' Resurrection**

*"Thomas, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord!'"*

*So he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' and after eight days His disciples were again inside and Thomas with them.*

*Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, 'Peace to you!'*

*Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands, and reach your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing,' and Thomas said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'*

*Jesus said to him, 'Thomas because you have seen Me you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen Me and believed'". (Mark 16:14 & John 20:26-29)*

One of Jesus intimate disciples adamantly refused to believe that He had risen from death even though the ten remaining ones testified and insisted that they had seen Him since His crucifixion. Thomas should have recalled that Jesus already had taught all of them not to rely merely on sense knowledge in order to receive information from Heaven when He asked them precisely who they thought He was and only Peter understood. (*Matthew 16:13-17*) After Thomas' denial and pronouncement that he would not believe in Jesus' resurrection until he had touched their Lord where He had been nailed to the cross and speared in His side, Jesus appeared and challenged him to see and feel what he had stated was necessary for him to have faith that Jesus indeed had risen from death. However, instead of doing precisely what Jesus invited him to do Thomas had a complete change of heart. Not only did he not feel the need to handle Jesus anymore, he was the first disciple actually to call Jesus his God instead of just Lord, Teacher, or Master--which were titles of respect that were used commonly.

Curiously, although the angel who told the women at Jesus' grave site to inform His disciples about His resurrection mentioned Peter by name (*Mark 16:7*), he did not refer to Thomas needing a special summons to be present. Jesus appeared to the rest of His men the first time without Thomas being at that location even though He easily could have chosen a time when he was with the group. Since Jesus always was deliberate about choosing His words and actions, this conduct had to have been methodical as well. Thomas' absence was conspicuous for this very reason.

Jesus had revealed to His men that He knew many things about how they were going to react to what was about to transpire before it actually took place. (*John 17:30-31*). He declared which of them would betray Him to His enemies. (*Matthew 26:21-23; Luke 22:21; John 13:21-30*) He informed Peter that he would deny Him (as well as when and how often). (*Matthew 26:33-34; John 13:37-38*) Jesus even disclosed the fact that He knew that the rest of them also would desert Him when He was arrested. (*Matthew 26:31*) However, Jesus never even alluded that Thomas would doubt in His rebirth from the dead/Dead although He had to have discerned this information, too. Once again, Jesus intentionally set up a situation wherein He could teach about the importance of faith.