

Matthew 8:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

Analysis

And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. This dramatic scene reveals both Christ's true humanity and divine authority over creation. The Greek word *seismos* (σεισμός, "tempest") literally means earthquake or violent shaking—the same word used for earthquakes. This wasn't ordinary weather but a violent, potentially deadly storm that covered (*kalyptesthai*, καλύπτεσθαι) the boat with waves, suggesting it was being swamped and in danger of sinking.

The Sea of Galilee, situated 700 feet below sea level and surrounded by hills, is notorious for sudden, violent storms as cold air masses descend rapidly through the valleys, creating treacherous conditions. These experienced fishermen-disciples recognized mortal danger, yet Jesus remained asleep (*ekatheuden*, ἐκάθευδεν), demonstrating genuine human exhaustion from ministry demands and complete trust in the Father's sovereign care.

This scene prefigures Jesus' greater "sleep" in death and subsequent awakening in resurrection. The storm-tossed disciples represent the church threatened by persecution, heresy, and tribulation, while Christ appears to sleep. Yet He remains present in the boat, and His awakening will bring deliverance. The contrast between raging chaos and Christ's peaceful rest reveals that true peace comes not from circumstances but from relationship with the Prince of Peace.

Historical Context

This event occurs early in Jesus' Galilean ministry, likely AD 28-29, as He crosses the Sea of Galilee (approximately 8 miles wide, 13 miles long) from the western to eastern shore. The disciples' boats were probably typical first-century fishing vessels—around 25-30 feet long, powered by oars and sail. Archaeological discoveries have recovered first-century boats from the Sea of Galilee's mud, confirming biblical descriptions.

The Sea of Galilee's storms were legendary and feared by fishermen. The lake's geographical position creates a funnel effect, channeling winds down from Mount Hermon and surrounding mountains. Sudden storms could transform calm waters into deadly tempests within minutes. Several disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—were professional fishermen who had survived such storms before, making their terror here especially significant.

This miracle echoes Old Testament accounts of God's sovereignty over seas and storms (Psalm 89:9, 107:23-30). By calming the storm with a word, Jesus demonstrates the creative authority described in Genesis 1 and claimed in Psalm 29. Early Christians facing persecution would have found comfort in this account, trusting that though Christ seems to sleep during their trials, He remains present and powerful to deliver at the proper time.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' sleeping during the storm reveal His genuine humanity while His calming it demonstrates His deity?
2. What does this account teach us about faith during times when God seems absent or asleep to our desperate circumstances?

3. In what ways does the storm-tossed boat represent the church's experience throughout history?
4. How should Christ's peace amid chaos challenge our anxiety-driven, circumstance-dependent pursuit of security?
5. What does Jesus' presence in the boat, even while sleeping, teach us about Emmanuel (God with us) during life's storms?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἰδού,	σεισμὸς	μέγας	ἐγένετο	ἐν	τῇ	θαλάσῃ
And	behold	tempest	a great	there arose	in	^{G3588}	the sea
G2532	G2400	G4578	G3173	G1096	G1722		G2281
ὥστε	τὸ	πλοῖον	καλύπτεσθαι	ὑπὸ	τῶν	κυμάτων	
insomuch that	^{G3588}	the ship	was covered	with	^{G3588}	the waves	
G5620		G4143	G2572	G5259		G2949	
αὐτὸς	δὲ	ἐκάθευδεν					
he	but	was asleep					
G846	G1161	G2518					

Additional Cross-References

Luke 8:23 (Parallel theme): But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.