



### **WALKING ON THE WAVES OF THE SEA**

To kick things off today, I'd like to introduce you to a very remarkable animal: the Green Basilisk Lizard.

The Green Basilisk Lizard lives in the tropical rainforests of Central America. What is so remarkable about this creature? Simply put: it can run on water. How? A combination of speed, weight, long toes and flaps of skin which unfold as its feet meet the water. Those flaps create air-pockets between the lizard's feet and the water's surface, enabling it to sprint across a stream to escape its enemies. Some specimens have been capable of a jaw-dropping 5 feet per-second, to a distance of over 15 feet!

This unique ability has earned it a certain nickname: *Jesus Lizard*, or Jesus Lizard. Though as we'll see, what Jesus was able to do was far, far beyond what the Green Basilisk could ever achieve.

Let's take a look at:

#### **Matthew 14:22-33**

Jesus' disciples find themselves in a situation that is not uncommon on the Sea of Galilee, something they'd seen 100 times before (some of them were fishermen and most of them lived around the lake): a freak storm. But it seems from their reaction and the fact they've been battling this thing for hours that this storm is different.

To make matters even more terrifying, during the 4<sup>th</sup> watch of the night, a silhouette appears, walking towards them on the waves (the Romans divided the night into quarters, from 6pm to 6am, so this was between 3 and 6am, i.e. sunrise). And (spoiler alert), the figure is: Jesus (though the disciples don't know that yet).

Now you might not be a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, but I can guarantee that you will, at some point, face a storm (and I don't just mean the meteorological kind). What does this story tell us about Jesus? And about how to make it through the stormy times?

3 things:

**1) He meets us in our chaos.** The sea can be a scary place. It can change quickly, and one thing is certain: we do not control it. Hence many civilizations made gods of it: *Yam* in Canaan, *Nun* in Egypt, *Poseidon* in Greece.

Like the disciples, there can be times in our lives when it feels like our world is in turmoil: when we are not in control. It might be a physical issue, or a psychological issue; it might be a problem in your marriage or family, or a friendship that has turned toxic. It might be an issue at work or at school or even in your church (such things do happen). It might even be a habit that seems impossible to break. Maybe you're there at this moment.

The message of this story, like the parting of the Red Sea or *Yam Suph*, is that Jesus is in control. And we're not. We might like to think otherwise, but our control of things is illusory. But Jesus? He is very much in control.

And if it takes chaos to remind us of that, then chaos – *even* chaos – can be a part of God's plan for us.

**2) He meets us in our fear.** The disciples see Jesus approaching, and they are terrified. Why? Because they think it's a ghost, or a lake-demon. Which is why Jesus reassures them with "It is I" or *ego eimi* in Greek – "It's Me!" (though this could also be a claim to deity, as it is in the Septuagint or Greek translation of Isaiah chs41-48).

In response, Simon says: "Lord, if it's You then make me step out of the boat and walk on the water to You!" And Jesus does.

What do you fear? Animal; vegetable; mineral; something not of this world? Sometimes, fears can be rational and even sensible, other times, not so. But if you dig down deep enough, you'll find most fears amount to this: loss. Loss of safety, whether your own, or someone else's.

The message here – and in the rest of the Bible – is that ultimately, our lives, and our futures, are in God's hands. To be precise, they're in Jesus' hands. And while fear is understandable, faith in Jesus can enable us to overcome it. Not see it disappear, necessarily, but overcome it. Jesus is greater than whatever we might be afraid of.

And He calls us, not to play it safe, but to step out.

**3) He meets us in our doubt.** Jesus beckons Simon to exit the boat, and Simon does. He even walks on the water! But as he takes his eyes off Jesus and focuses on the waves, he begins to sink. At which point he cries out, and Jesus grabs him, holds him, carries him back to the boat, and asks him one simple question.

"Oh, you of little faith; why did you doubt?"

We're not told what Simon's answer was. But what we do know is this: Jesus doesn't berate Simon, doesn't reject Simon, doesn't change his mind about Simon. He simply carries him back to the boat, and the storm stops.

Like Simon Peter, we all have our doubts. Sometimes they can arise from unfaithfulness, other times, from faith-lessness. In Simon's case, I think he's simply saying, "Lord, I can't do this."

To which Jesus' answer is: "No, you can't. But I can."

And if you're going to overcome the storms of life, you need to focus on that truth. You can't. But He *can*.

### **Jesus Is Here**

So, they get back into the boat, and immediately, the storm stops. The inference being: because Jesus wants it to. And not surprisingly, the disciples fall at His feet and say, "You really *are* the Son of God." I.e. He's the Son of God, not just in the sense that the kings of Israel were, or the nation of Israel was. He's the Son of God in a unique sense – He is God in human form. Because only God has the power to walk on a sea, enable someone else to walk on a sea, and then stop a storm, simply by willing it. As it says in the book of Job (9:9): "He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea (or *Yam*, the Canaanite sea-god)."

Little wonder they hit the deck.

The point of this story is that we can sometimes feel as though Jesus has abandoned us, or that the storms of life are greater than Jesus can handle, because they're greater than *we* can handle. But Jesus demonstrates that this is not true: He is infinitely more powerful than the storms. He can walk on the waves of the sea; He can enable us to walk on the waves of the sea; and He can calm it (and by the way, that sea will calm. Perhaps immediately; perhaps over time. But it *will* calm).

In the meantime, will you trust Him? Enough to keep on rowing? Enough to get out of the boat? Enough to cry out to Him when you feel like you're sinking?

Will you trust Him?