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Mark and Matthew Walking on the Water Comparison

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Mark 6:45 Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

6:47 When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. 49 But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." 51 Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Mark 6:45 Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray. 47 When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. **He intended to pass them by.** 49 But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Matthew 14:22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25 And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea.

26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

<p>51 Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased.</p> <p><i>And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.</i></p>	<p><i>28 Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."</i></p>
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[Words in **black** are similar or identical in both gospels. Words in *red* are significantly different! How? What are the differences in the two accounts?]

- Preceding the water walking episode in Mark, Jesus feeds 5000 "men" with only a handful of loaves and fishes (Mk 6:30-44). Neither the crowd nor the disciples offer any response to this miracle! But Mark does offer us his own take, belatedly, at the end of the water walking episode that follows the feeding story (Mk 6:52). In Mark, the disciples understand neither the feeding miracle nor the water walking episode.
- "He intended to pass them by." What could possibly be the reason for that? Hint: Might there be Old Testament echoes at work here? Moses? (Exodus 34:6) Elijah? (1 Kings 19:1-13)
- Note the disciples' unremitting terror and astonishment in Mark. Remember that when we turn to Matthew.
- Only in Matthew is Jesus joined by Peter in water walking. Jesus chides Peter (gently? Or sharply? What do you think?) for being a man of "little faith." How much understanding of Jesus do the disciples display in Mark? Again, see Mk 6:51b-52. Do the disciples behave any differently in Matthew before Peter hops out of the boat?
- In Matthew, once everyone is in the boat and the windstorm has ceased, how then do the disciples react? If the disciples were terrified before in Matthew, does any fear or bewilderment linger now? See Mt 14:33.
- Which of the two gospel accounts do you prefer? Why? Can you identify with one more easily than the other? Why, or why not?