

Matthew 8:23-27

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Jesus gets into the boat to go to the other side of the sea and His disciples follow Him. As they cross the sea, a great storm arises and threatens to sink their boat and drown them all. Jesus is fast asleep. The disciples wake Him and ask Him to save them. Jesus comments on the smallness of their faith and calms the storm with a rebuke. The disciples are amazed at this power.

The parallel accounts of this event are found in Mark 4:35-41 and Luke 8:22-25.

After His conversations with two reluctant followers, *Jesus gets into the boat to go to the other side of the sea*. That is, the eastern shore, home of the Decapolis City of Hippos, a Gentile city. We do not know if the two men who approached *Jesus got into the boat with Him* or if they decided to stay. Though we do not know how many, at least some *disciples followed Him*. A typical boat on the Sea of Galilee was relatively small. The freshwater *sea* is only about 13 miles long and 8 miles across. A fishing boat from the first century A.D. that was discovered on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee in 1986 was 27 feet long and 7.5 feet wide. It could have carried up to 15 men. *The boat that Jesus used to cross the sea* was probably around this size. And it would have been powered by a sail.

The journey to the *other side* would have normally taken a couple of hours. As they crossed, Matthew tells his readers that *a great storm suddenly arose on the sea*. He emphasizes this point with the exclamation *And behold*. The *storm* was so *great that the boat was being covered with the waves*. As water filled the hull, *Jesus was asleep*. He was likely tired from the long day of preaching, dealing with the crowds, healing, and casting out demons. He also had *faith* in His Father's protection even in the midst of a violent *storm upon the sea*.

The disciples, several of whom were experienced fishermen, were unable to bring the boat safely to shore and became fearful for their lives. With nowhere else to turn, *they came to Him and woke Jesus, saying "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!"* Matthew uses the Greek word typically translated "save." It is "sozo" (G4982).

Whenever "sozo" is used, it is important to ask three questions. 1.) **What** is being saved? 2.) What is it being saved **from**? 3.) What is it being saved **to**?

While it may seem obvious in this instance that *His disciples* were not asking *Jesus* to save their spirit from Hell to Heaven, whenever we encounter "sozo" or a similar "salvation" passages, it is important to always use the context to answer these three questions to make sure we are interpreting it correctly. If we assume every "sozo" means being saved from hell to heaven, we are liable to misread the Bible.

In this case, what is being saved is the disciples' physical lives. What they are being saved from is physical death, by drowning. What they are being saved to is more time to physically live on earth.

When *His disciples came to Jesus* fearful of the stormy sea, *He* asks them "*Why are you afraid?*" Then *He* calls them a name: "oligopistoi" meaning "little faiths." This moniker is translated here as *you men of little faith*. Jesus's rebuke of the disciples serves as a wakeup call to them. It hearkens back to what He told them recently in the Sermon on the Mount.

"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?"
(Matthew 6:25-27)

After this brief chastisement, *Jesus, then got up and rebuked the winds and the sea. Jesus spoke directly to the natural order of the elements and the weather. When He did, the wind, the waves, the sea, everything became perfectly calm.* The natural cosmos obeyed the voice of its Creator who spoke it into existence (Genesis 1, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16).

The men in the boat, who had previously witnessed Jesus heal lepers and all manners of diseases, and who saw Him cast out demons were amazed. They said among themselves What kind of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him? As Matthew is proving with his gospel, this *man* was God, the One who created *the wind and the waves* and all things. He was the Messiah, the King of Heaven and Earth. As we will see, the *men in the boat* didn't fully catch on to who Jesus was until after He rose from the dead.

Biblical Text

8:23-27 When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"