

THOU SHALT WORSHIP...  
Read Matthew 14:23-33 and Psalm 107:23-30

The disciples had seen Jesus heal “all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases...” (Matthew 4:24). But it is not until Jesus delivers them from the raging seas in Matthew 14:23-33 that they respond with the appropriate reverence—they worship Jesus. Their reverence is duplicated by various individuals throughout Matthew’s book. However, when Jesus is tempted in the wilderness to worship Satan, He replies, “Go Satan! For it is written, ‘Thou shalt *worship the LORD your God, and serve Him only*’” (Mt. 4:10). Why, then, would the disciples give to Jesus that which is due exclusively to God?

To further emphasize the matter, in Matthew’s gospel we find the worship of Jesus presented in brackets placed around the outer boundaries of the gospel. The magi’s worship of Jesus was positioned by Matthew near the start of his book. In order to frame the gospel, Matthew informs the reader at the conclusion of his book that Jesus’ followers worshipped Him (28:9 and 17). This framing device is for a purpose and is called “bracketing.” The author uses these brackets in order to highlight a theme that will pop-up throughout the book of Matthew—that Jesus is worthy to be worshipped.

Brackets tell us that we must read a story, psalm, or book in light of the material revealed between them. An illustration of the technique of bracketing (which is the second key to a dynamic Bible study) is the set of brackets that surround the whole Bible. The first two chapters of the entire Bible, Genesis 1 and 2, relate the creation of the first heavens and earth. The final two chapters, found in Revelation 21 and 22, report the creation of the new heaven and earth. Since God is the maker of the first heavens and earth, as well as the new heavens and earth, then it follows that He is sovereign over all things. And that is what the material within the brackets (the entire Bible) reveals.

Since the brackets around Matthew have to do with the worship of Jesus, we should not be surprised that Matthew includes a story of the disciples worshipping Him. In addition, the timing of their worship toward Jesus—when Jesus calms the seas—may help us identify why they worship Jesus at this miracle. This question is important especially since Jesus Himself dictated that only God was to receive worship.

Jesus had gone “up on the mountain by Himself to pray,” but He had instructed His disciples to “get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side” (Mt. 14:22, 23). The storm that arose that evening unsettles these men who had made their living by fishing on the Sea of Galilee. They were “a long distance from the land” and their boat was being “battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary” (v. 24). Suddenly, Jesus comes to them, walking on the tempestuous seas. Because “they were terrified” and thought He was a ghost, Jesus encourages them saying, “It is I; do not be afraid.” With his usual impulsiveness, Peter asks for and receives permission to walk on the seas. So turbulent was the wind, Peter “became frightened.” But when Jesus “stretched out His hand and took hold of Peter,” they got into the boat and “the wind stopped” (v. 31). It was at this moment that the ones in the boat “worshipped Him” (v. 33). It may be that the disciples’ knowledge of the Psalms has contributed to their decision to worship Jesus on this occasion.

Psalm 107:23-30 portrays the life of fishermen. They “go down to the sea in ships” and “do business on great waters” (v. 23). The psalmist then describes a storm on the

sea. The waves of the sea “rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths” (v. 26). So perilous is the storm that the fishermen “reeled and staggered like a drunken man” and they were “at their wits end.” But they cried “to the LORD in their trouble” and this cry prompted the LORD to bring them “out of their distresses” by causing the storm “to be still, so that the waves of the sea were hushed and quiet” (vv. 28-29).

This psalm parallels the story of Jesus calming the sea. Now we can understand why the disciples worship Jesus! The ability to “still the roaring of the seas” and “the roaring of their waves” is limited to God (as in Psalm 65:7). The disciples recognize that Jesus can restrain that which God restrains. Thus, they worship Him. And, since Jesus Himself declares to Satan that God alone should receive worship, there can be only one reason Jesus accepts the worship of the disciples: Jesus is God.