

- I. Jesus proves His deity by walking on water
  - A. In this story of Jesus walking on water, John affirms the deity of Christ by showing Him doing things only God can do. But in telling this story, John gives us more to think about than the deity of Christ.
  - B. Pray
  - C. John 6:15 . . . So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.
    1. John makes two points that I think we ought to consider.
    2. First, Jesus, upon observing the way the crowd was acting, perceived or discerned what they were intending to do.
      - a. Now it is likely many of us would attribute His perceptive abilities to His deity, but I am confident that all of us are at least reasonably good at perceiving things about others from the way they are acting.
        - (1) For example, we perceive – from such things as the look on a person’s face, the tone of their voice, and their choice of words – that they have a bad attitude, or are angry, or are skeptical of what we are saying. We also perceive when a person is happy or sad, hopeful or discouraged, and confident or afraid.
        - (2) My point here is that Jesus is not the only one with perceptive abilities – and I am not saying this to diminish Jesus in any way, but rather to invite us to see something about ourselves.
      - b. For example, too many people are lax, or even lack interest in exercising their perceptive skills discern when they have a bad attitude, or when they are unnecessarily angry or coming across in a sinfully angry manner, or how their behavior will hurt or in some other way harm another person or group of people.
      - c. And it is this self-directed use of our perceptive skills that I want to encourage you to exercise in the same discerning way you use those skills on others.
        - (1) In other words, listen to your tone of voice and choice of words, consider the look on your face, and try to imagine the probable outcome of your behavior on those around you. In

this way you can perceive if your behavior will hurt or help, or in some other way harm or benefit someone else.

- (2) If you need help with this, ask God for discerning wisdom, call upon the Holy Spirit to speak truth to you, listen to your conscience, and ask those around you how they see you or feel about your behavior.
  - d. Of course, pointing your perceptive abilities at yourself is only the first step – though a very important step. The next step is to correct the wrong you perceive and strengthen the good so that you treat others as you want to be treated and love them as you want to be loved.
3. The second point John makes from vs 15 deals with our tendency, even as reasonably good Christians, to use God for our own purposes.
- a. Now I suspect most of us have mixed motives when it comes to our relationship with God.
    - (1) On the one hand we want to serve Him and fulfill His purposes for us. And on the other hand, we want Him to serve us by things for us that have nothing to do with His purposes, but rather our own.
    - (2) In other words, we want to serve Him according to His will and we want Him to serve us according to our will.
  - b. An example of this in my own life comes from the fact that for a number of years as a pastor, I worked at being godly and humble, while at the same time I desired to be well-known and regarded as someone worth listening to. In other words, I was motivated to obey and serve God while at the same time I was motivated to use God and church life to gain glory for myself.
  - c. You may not identify with my example, but it is possible you have asked God to get you an “A” on an exam you didn’t properly study for, or get you a promotion so you would have more money to spend on yourself, or to stop the rain so you could enjoy a family outing when the farmers in your area needed the rain.
4. Now I want to be clear that we can ask God for earthly benefits and temporal blessings – such as food, shelter, sufficient clothing, a better job, a dependable car, safe travel, healing, and the like.
- a. However, there is a significant difference between asking God for something we would like while being content regardless of what He decides, and using God to get what we want – here and now – without regard for what it will do to our spiritual growth, godly living, and relationship with God, now and for eternity.

- b. Jesus made it clear that loving Him with all our being, loving our neighbor as ourselves, the advancement of His kingdom, and a life lived according to His righteousness are to take priority over the pursuit, acquisition, and enjoyment of earthly benefits and temporal blessings.
    - c. And Jesus frees us to live this way by promising that when we seek God's kingdom and God's righteousness first, He will make sure we have all the temporal and earthly things we need (Matthew 6:23).
  - 5. This matter of using God may be something you haven't give much thought to and therefore do not see in yourself. In truth, it is a more subtle weakness in our humanity, but if we will look for it, and if it there, we will find it. And upon finding it, my encouragement to you is to take the action necessary to remove any traces of using God while feeding and strengthening your commitment to holding a "God-first" perspective and maintaining "God-first" priorities so that your earthly and temporal needs and interests always come after God, not before Him or in place of Him.
- D. John 6:16-19 . . . Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, [17] and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. [18] The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. [19] Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened.
  - 1. It is the "and they were frightened" part of these four verses that I want to focus on.
  - 2. Fear of what we do not know, fear of what might happen, and a sense of hopelessness or despair when the best outcome we can imagine is a bad one, are some of our biggest enemies when it comes to trusting God. And distrust of God is one of our biggest enemies when it comes to living according to God's word.
  - 3. Let me say that again while using the context of this story to give a clearer explanation.
    - a. Fear of what we do not know (*the disciples did not know who or what was walking toward them on the water*),
    - b. fear of what might happen (*the disciples did not know what would happen to them once whatever was walking toward them got to the boat*),

- c. and a sense of hopelessness or despair when the best outcome we can imagine is a bad one (*the disciples were imagining the worst*), are some of our biggest enemies when it comes to trusting God and to living according to God's word.
4. So what makes this kind of fear, hopelessness, and despair such a threat to trusting God and living a godly life?
  - a. In my opinion their biggest threat is to the way we think when in these kinds of situations.
  - b. All too often, fear, hopelessness, and despair promote irrational thinking that stands in the way of making sensible choices in response to such situations.
  - c. In other words, when we are frightened like the disciples were, we tend to misinterpret reality and project doom, which in turn feeds hopelessness and despair, which in turn promotes distrust of God and self-devised efforts to save ourselves.
5. This does not mean we won't experience fearful situations where we cannot imagine a good outcome from a human, earthly perspective.
  - a. And yet, regardless of how fearful a situation may seem, the wisest, most sensible, most rational thing we can do is to remain immovable in God's hands and trust Him to take care of us.
  - b. After all, God is our strength, our rock, our fortress, and our deliverer. He is the only worthy God in whom to take refuge, for He is a shield, a stronghold, the horn of our salvation, and the only one who can and will save us (Psalm 18:1-3).
6. Now keep in mind that just hours before the disciples saw Jesus walking toward them on the water, they had seen Jesus do the impossible by feeding 5000+ people from a single lunch of five loaves and two fish. Yet their first thought was not that He could also do the impossible by walking on water, and so upon seeing Jesus walking toward them they imagined He was a ghost or a threatening spirit.
7. So what is my point? Beware of fearing what you do not know or fearing what might happen. And by all means, fight hopelessness and despair. You have the Bible, which has numerous stories telling how the power and wisdom of God overcame impossible situations, even when death was the outcome – as with the martyrs. And I suspect most of us have personal experiences with God's provision and protection in situations where the only outcome we could imagine was a bad one.
8. Therefore, when you are tempted to give way to fear, choose to trust God and to continue trusting Him into the future. In this way, you

will honor God, show His will to be good and acceptable and perfect, strengthen your faith, build your hope, maintain rational thinking, and make sensible choices.

- E. John 6:20-21 . . . But [Jesus] said to them, "It is I (*Greek: "I am"*); do not be afraid." [21] So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.
1. As I have pointed out a number of times before, John uses the first eleven chapters to present stories that verify that Jesus is God in human flesh. In this story, there are two miracles that authenticate Jesus' deity.
    - a. First, He walked on water. Who else but God can do that!?!
    - b. Second, once He got into the boat, it immediately got to where they were going.
  2. In addition to these two miracles, Jesus used a phrase to confirm His deity, and that phrase is, "It is I (*NASB*)." In the Greek, this phrase is made up of two words that are usually translated "I am." In other words, Jesus identified Himself as "I am."
    - a. According to the scriptures, "I am" was first used to identify God when He talked to Moses out of the burning bush. We read in Exodus 3:14-15, that God told Moses, "I AM WHO I AM, therefore, tell the sons of Israel, I AM has sent you." Then God went on to say that "I AM" is His name forever, and it is His memorial name to all generations.
    - b. Though in the Gospel of John, this is the first time Jesus identifies Himself as "I am," He went on to use this identifying phrase in John 8:58, where He said, "Before Abraham was born, I am,"
    - c. The point here is that Jesus identified Himself to His disciples with a phrase that identified Him with God and as God.
- F. John 6:22-24 . . . The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone. [23] There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. [24] So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus.
1. The way John wrote this part is a bit confusing, so let me explain. On the day that Jesus fed the 5000, part of the crowd went back to

where they came from, and part stayed overnight on the side of the lake where they were fed.

2. Those who stayed, saw the disciples leave in the only small boat left on that side of the Lake. They also saw that Jesus did not leave with His disciples. In the morning they could see that there were no other boats available to take Jesus back across the Lake, so they assumed He was still on their side.
  3. However, after looking for Him and not finding Him, they concluded He was not there. In the meantime, a number of small boats came from the other side – and the inference is that they came to ferry the people back to the side they came from. After the crowd of people returned to their side of the lake, they again began looking for Jesus – and that is what John is telling us in vs 22-24.
- G. John 6:25 . . . When they found [Jesus] on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"
1. Upon finding Jesus, they asked what they thought was the most obvious question to ask: "When did You get here?"
  2. It is probable they not only wanted to know "when Jesus got there," but also "how" Jesus got there.
  3. This question sets up the next section where we see Jesus exposing their true interest in Him.
- H. John 6:26 . . . Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.
1. The first thing I want to point out is that Jesus did not answer their question. Instead, He used their question as an opening to talk about their true intentions in pursuing Him, and He told them truths, that if they would believe those truths, they could be saved from their foolish thinking, their fleshly desires, and their sin.
    - a. As you may recall, Jesus used this same tactic with Nicodemus. Why? Because there are times when it is wise to respond to a question with something other than a direct answer.
    - b. For example, there is wisdom in using this tactic with those who are belligerent, or argumentative, or with those who are using an endless stream of questions to wear you down in order to get what they want or to steer you away from the real issue. And of course, there are those who simply want to know what they don't need to know because it is none of their business.

- c. However, since we are always to remain within the boundaries of godliness, it is vital that when we choose to respond in a way other than with a direct answer, we remain respectful, gracious, and careful not to needlessly offend.
  - (1) There is no guarantee that we will not offend the person or persons to whom we are responding, but giving an offense ought to be the result of speaking the truth in love but being heard as if we are the enemy and our message a lie.
  - (2) In other words, if offense is taken it ought to be because we stopped being godly and in so doing gave them a legitimate reason to be offended, but because they do not want to hear what we or the Word of God has to say, and they do not want to do what is right, wise, and good.
- d. And so I am urging you, continue studying God's word, learn as much as you can about God's ways, and pray for godly wisdom so that when it is time for you to respond to questions with something other than a direct answer you are prepared to speak truths that can save the one you are talking to from his or her foolish thinking, fleshly desires, and sin.
  - (1) They may not listen, but ours is to sow the seed, not make it take root and bring forth good fruit.
  - (2) That is up to God and the one in whom the seed is sown.

## II. Conclusion

- A. In conclusion, I want to remind you to use your perceptive abilities on yourself, just as you use them on others. Guard against trying to use God for your own purposes. Make Him the supreme being and you His servant. Beware of fearing what you do not know or fearing what might happen. And fight against hopelessness and despair. And finally, there are times when it is best to answer a direct question with an indirect answer. But when that time comes, do so with love, respect, grace, and humility.