

Mark 6:45-52; Matthew 14:22-33

“Yeshua Walks on the Water and is Worshipped”

“Immediately Yeshua made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray. When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, ‘Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.’ Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves*, but their heart was hardened” (Mark 6:45-52).

“Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out in fear. But immediately Yeshua spoke to them, saying, ‘Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.’ Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ And He said, ‘Come!’ And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Yeshua. But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’ Immediately Yeshua stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, ‘You of little faith, why did you doubt?’ When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, ‘You are certainly God’s Son!’” (Matthew 14:22-33).

The scene of Yeshua walking on water, for advocates of either a high Christology of Yeshua being God, or a low Christology of Yeshua being a created agent of God, obviously indicate that Yeshua possesses significant supernatural power. When the Disciples had gone off on a boat journey across the Sea of Galilee, their Teacher had gone off to pray. The boat was being tossed to and fro, and as the Messiah walked on the water to His Disciples, they thought that they were seeing a ghost or *phantasma* (φάντασμα; Mark 6:49; Matthew 14:26). Yeshua assured them that it is, in fact, Him (Mark 6:50; Matthew 14:27). Peter beckoned to Yeshua, actually getting out of the boat to meet Him, but then started sinking due to his doubt (Matthew 14:28-30). The wind stopped when Yeshua got into the boat, and the water was calmed (Mark 6:51; Matthew 14:32). While having hard hearts (Mark 6:52), not fully recognizing or processing everything, their reaction was one of veneration toward their Master (Matthew 14:33).

Yeshua walking on water is important for Christological evaluation because (1) of the obvious miracle witnessed in Yeshua walking on water, (2) of Yeshua’s identification of Himself to the Disciples in the boat, and (3) the Disciples’ response in venerating Yeshua.

That God has supreme power, over the sea and the waves, is testified by Psalm 77:16-20:

“The waters saw You, O God; the waters saw You, they were in anguish; the deeps also trembled. The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth a sound; Your arrows flashed here and there. The sound of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; the lightnings lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook. Your way was in the sea and Your paths in the mighty waters, and Your footprints may not be known. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.”

It may indeed be that the sentiment of the Psalmist, “Your way was through the sea, Your path, through the mighty waters; Your tracks could not be seen” (Psalm 77:20, NJPS), could be applied to the ability of Yeshua to walk on the water. Peter, notably, was unable to walk on the water himself, without asking the Messiah to command him to come meet Him (Matthew 14:28). Isaiah 51:9 attests, “Was it not You who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a pathway for the redeemed to cross over?” Yeshua, concurrent with this, walked on the water and had the ability to stop the waters.

More theological attention is notably given to the self-identification statements of the Messiah in Mark 6:50 and Matthew 14:27, which a version like the NASU has as, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” Significant discussions abound, as the source text has *egō eimi* (ἐγώ εἰμι), more literally “I am,” and whether or not Yeshua’s self-identification of “I am” is to be associated with the self-identification of the LORD or YHWH in the Tanach, in some key places where the Septuagint Greek translation of the Hebrew has notably employed *egō eimi* or “I am”:

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14).

“‘You are My witnesses,’ declares the LORD, ‘And My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me. It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, and there was no strange *god* among you; so you are My witnesses,’ declares the LORD, ‘And I am God. Even from eternity I am He, and there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?’” (Isaiah 43:10-13).

In the theophany of the burning bush, the Hebrew *ehyeh asher ehyeh* (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה), in Exodus 3:14, was translated by the Septuagint as *egō eimi ho ōn* (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὄν). In the oracle of Isaiah 43:10-13, where the God of Israel declares Himself to be the One True God and Savior, the Hebrew clause *ki-ani hu* (כִּי־אֲנִי הוּא), “that I am He,” was translated by the Septuagint as *hoti egō eimi* (ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι). It should hardly be surprising that when the source text of the Mark 6:50 and Matthew 14:27, incorporate *egō eimi* into Yeshua’s dialogue, examiners recognize that there might be a connection with Tanach or Old Testament passages such as Exodus 3:14 and Isaiah 43:10-13—and the self-identification of the LORD or YHWH. And, Yeshua speaking “I am” in Mark 6:50 and Matthew 14:27 is hardly isolated; Yeshua speaking “I am” is associated with His walking on water and calming the waves.

Commentators on both the Gospels of Mark¹⁰⁸ and Matthew have tended to positively weigh some kind of a connection between *egō eimi* and statements of self-identification appearing in the Tanach or Old Testament. Yet, not all English readers tend to detect *egō eimi* as being “I am.”

There is a variance of perspectives witnessed among English versions of Mark 6:50: *thareite, egō eimi mē phobeisthe* (θαρσεῖτε, ἐγώ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε), with some having “I am,” and others having “it is I”:

- “Take heart, it is I; have no fear” (RSV).
- “Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid” (NIV).
- “Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid” (HCSB).
- “Take heart! I AM! Stop being alarmed and afraid [Exod. 3:14.]” (The Amplified Bible).

¹⁰⁸ France, *Mark*, 273 fn#71 is one who notably takes a negative view of any association of *egō eimi* in Mark 6:50 with various Tanach statements of the LORD’s or YHWH’s self-identification.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

- “Have courage. I AM! Do not fear” (LITV).
- “Take courage! I am. Do not be afraid” (TLV).

The variance of approaches for *thareite, egō eimi mē phobeisthe* is even witnessed in various interlinear resources, as Mounce and Mounce has, “Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid!”¹⁰⁹ but with Brown and Comfort having, “Have courage, I am; do not be afraid.”¹¹⁰ A selection of commentators on the Gospel of Mark, in evaluating the usage of *egō eimi* in Mark 6:50, have associated it with either the burning bush theophany of Exodus 3:14 or various other statements of the LORD’s or YHWH’s self-identification in the Tanach:

- C.E.B. Cranfield: “ἐγὼ εἰμι: the ordinary Greek for ‘it is I’. It is conceivable that Mark intends his readers to be reminded of the O.T. use of the expression in Exod. iii. 14; Isa. xli. 4, xliii. 10, liii. 6.”¹¹¹
- R. Alan Cole: “[I]n answering with the words *It is I*, Jesus may have been deliberately using the name of God (Ex. 3:14). This would have only increased the awe of the disciples, although it could also have given them a clue as to the true nature of Jesus, if their hearts had not been hardened (verse 50).”¹¹²
- Larry W. Hurtado: “**It is I**: The Greek phrase used here can function simply as a self-identification. But it is used in the OT (e.g., Isa 43:25; 48:12; 51:12;) with special force as a formula for self-description by God, resembling the phrasing in Exod. 3:14 where God first reveals himself to Moses. Note especially how the whole passage in Isa. 51:9-16 is a most interesting background for the sea miracle account here. In Mark the phrase reappears on the lips of Jesus in the trial scene (14:62), and there, also, is probably intended as an allusion to these OT passages.”¹¹³
- William L. Lane: “For Mark the event is a theophany, a manifestation of the transcendent Lord who will ‘pass by’ as God did at Sinai before Moses (Ex. 33:19, 22) or on Horeb before Elijah (I Kings 19:11)...The emphatic ‘I’ in verse 50 is ambiguous. It can be understood as a normal statement of identity (‘it is I, Jesus’), but it can also possess deeper significance as the recognized formula of self-revelation which rests ultimately on the ‘I am that I am’ of Ex. 3:14. Not only the immediate context of the walking upon the water but the words with which the emphatic ‘I’ is framed favor the theophanic interpretation. The admonitions to ‘take heart’ and to ‘have no fear’ which introduce and conclude the ‘I am he’ are an integral part of the divine formula of self-revelation (e.g. Ps. 115:9ff.; 118:5f.; Isa. 41:4ff., 13ff.; 43:1ff.; 51:9ff.).”¹¹⁴

There is a similar variance of perspectives witnessed among English versions of Matthew 14:27: *thareite, egō eimi mē phobeisthe* (θαρσεῖτε, ἐγὼ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε), with some having “I am,” and others having “it is I”:

- “Take heart, it is I; have no fear” (RSV).
- “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” (NIV).
- “Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” (HCSB).
- “Take courage! I AM! Stop being afraid! [Exod. 3:14.]” (The Amplified Bible).
- “Be comforted! I AM! Do not fear” (LITV).

¹⁰⁹ Mounce and Mounce, 156.

¹¹⁰ Brown and Comfort, 144.

¹¹¹ Cranfield, *Mark*, 227.

¹¹² Cole, *Mark*, 180.

¹¹³ Larry W. Hurtado, *New International Biblical Commentary: Mark* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 106.

¹¹⁴ Lane, *Mark*, 237.

- “Take courage! I am. Don’t be afraid” (TLV).

The variance of approaches for *thareite, egō eimi mē phobeisthe* is also witnessed in various interlinear resources, as Mounce and Mounce has, “Take courage, it is I! Do not be afraid.”¹¹⁵ and with Brown and Comfort having, “Have courage, I am [here]. Do not be afraid.”¹¹⁶ A selection of commentators on the Gospel of Matthew, in evaluating the usage of *egō eimi* in Matthew 14:27, just as with Mark 6:50, have associated it with either the burning bush theophany of Exodus 3:14 or various other statements of the LORD’s or YHWH’s self-identification in the Tanach:

- Donald A. Hagner: “ἐγώ εἰμι, ‘It is I,’ probably had a deeper meaning to Matthew and his readers than the simple self-identification of Jesus that it is to the disciples. In a theophany-like context such as this, the words allude to the definition of the name Yahweh (ἐγώ εἰμι=I AM) given in the LXX of Exod 3:14 (cf. Matt 22:32; John 8:58; Mark 14:62) and Isa 43:10; 51:12. God is present uniquely in Jesus.”¹¹⁷
- Leon Morris: “In all three Gospels Jesus identifies himself with the words ‘it is I,’ employing the emphatic pronoun commonly used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament where God is the speaker. The expression is sometimes used in the Old Testament where God is revealing himself, such as ‘I am who I am’ (Exod. 3:14). Its use on the lips of Jesus at this point might perhaps be said to be natural under the circumstances. The disciples were scared and in need of reassurance; it was important that they should know right away that the one they were seeing was no ghost, so Jesus identifies himself. But the expression has overtones of deity, and who but God could walk on the stormy waters?”¹¹⁸
- Michael J. Wilkins: “The disciples may be thinking that some evil spirit is attempting to deceive them. Jesus gives them immediate assurance that he is no deceptive evil spirit but truly their Master: ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.’ The expression ‘It is I’ (lit. ‘I am’) may allude to the voice of Yahweh from the burning bush (Ex. 3:14) and the voice of assurance to Israel of the Lord’s identity and presence as their Savior (Isa. 43:10-13). Throughout this section Jesus continues to reveal his true nature to the disciples, and this powerful statement accords with his miraculous calming of the storm.”¹¹⁹

While He was walking on the water, and as He spoke forth “I am,” it is doubtful that the fearful Disciples understood everything that was going on. Only in retrospect of the encounter of Yeshua walking on water, and calming the waves, would they have been able to fully process what they experienced. In his commentary on Matthew, Nolland actually takes the approach that it is sufficient for *egō eimi*, for the identification of Yeshua to His Disciples, to serve as “It is I.” However, Nolland also concludes that *egō eimi* does likely involve some Tanach or Old Testament identification of God, given how the Disciples thought that they were witnessing a ghost:

“While an echo of the divine self-naming of the OT is possible, in the context of the emphatic ἐγώ (‘I’) in ἐγώ εἰμι (lit. ‘I am’) is sufficiently accounted for by the need for Jesus to identify himself as himself, over against the possibility that the disciples are encountering a parodying spirit (but perhaps ἐγώ εἰμι takes both roles simultaneously).”¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Mounce and Mounce, 58.

¹¹⁶ Brown and Comfort, 56.

¹¹⁷ Donald A. Hagner. *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*, Vol 33b (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 423.

¹¹⁸ Morris, *Matthew*, 382.

¹¹⁹ Michael J. Wilkins, *NIV Application Commentary: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 516.

¹²⁰ Nolland, *Matthew*, 601.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

In their book *Putting Jesus in His Place*, Bowman and Komoszewski assert that there are explicit connections intended between the scene of the Messiah walking on water, and the Lord God operating in the parting of the Red Sea for the Ancient Israelites in the Book of Exodus:

“As various scholars, both conservative and liberal, have observed, the Gospel accounts of Jesus walking on the sea allude rather clearly to the account in Exodus 14-15 of the Israelites’ crossing of the Red Sea. The Israelites walked in ‘the midst of the sea’ (Exod. 14:16, 22, 27, 29 NASB) and crossed to the other side (Exod. 15:16). Likewise, the disciples’ boat was ‘in the middle of the sea’ (Mark 6:47 NASB) and they also ‘crossed over’ the sea (Mark 6:53). A strong wind from the east blew across the Red Sea and, close to daybreak, the Egyptians found it increasingly difficult to drive their chariots as they attempted to follow the Israelites (Exod. 14:21, 24-25). Likewise, an adverse wind blew across the Sea of Galilee and, based on the geography, it also would have been blowing from the east; this wind also blew close to daybreak and made it difficult for the disciples to row their boat (Mark 6:48). According to Mark, the disciples had the same problem as the Egyptians: their hearts were hardened (Exod. 14:4, 8, 17; Mark 6:52).

“...Jesus appears...to fulfill the role of a greater Moses and of Yahweh. Jesus’ response to his disciples’ fear encompasses both roles. Moses had told the Israelites ‘Take heart!’ (*tharseite*, Exod. 14:13 LXX) and Jesus told the disciples the same thing: ‘Take heart!’ (*tharseite*, Matt. 14:27; Mark 6:50). But then Jesus added, ‘It is I [*egō eimi*]; do not be afraid!’ (Matt. 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 6:20). This statement echoes statements by the Lord God in Isaiah, where he speaks of a kind of ‘new Exodus’ when the Jews would be restored to their land...[quoting Isaiah 43:1-2, 5, 10, 15-16]...”¹²¹

Bowman and Komoszewski further associate the activity of the Lord God in the Tanach, with Yeshua the Messiah walking on the water, noting the response of worship to the Son of God, on behalf of the Disciples:

“The most striking aspect of the account, is, of course, Jesus’ actually walking on the sea. In the historical Exodus miracle, the Israelites crossed through the sea but on dry land. In later poetic reflection on this defining moment in Israel’s history, biblical authors pictured God walking on the sea...[quoting Psalm 77:16-20]...

“By walking out to the disciples’ boat on the sea, Jesus demonstrated a mastery over the forces of nature unparalleled among human beings. Moses was merely the human agent through whom the Lord led the Israelites across the dry bed of the Red Sea. Jesus walked across the raging waters of the Sea of Galilee and spoke divine words of assurance and sovereign control to his disciples. No wonder, according to Matthew, the disciples responded by worshipping Jesus and affirming that he was God’s Son (Matt. 14:33).”¹²²

In the scene of Yeshua walking on the water, theologians, examiners, and readers who conclude that Yeshua is God, do not make this conclusion only on the basis of the Messiah walking on water as the Lord God is portrayed as being superior to the elements, or the Messiah just speaking “I am.” The response of the Disciples to what took place, is recorded in Matthew 14:33: *hoi de en tō ploiō prosekunēsan autō* (οἱ δὲ ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ), “And those in the boat worshiped Him” (TLV). While Matthew 14:33 includes a definite employment of the verb *proskuneō* (προσκυνέω) or “worship,” various versions which are employed in either Messianic Judaism and/or the Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, indicate that their translators or publishers, are unsure about the kind of veneration issued by the Disciples to Yeshua:

- “The men in the boat fell down before him” (CJB/CJSB).
- “And those in the boat paid homage to Him” (Power New Testament).

¹²¹ Bowman and Komoszewski, pp 204-205.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp 205-206.

- “And those in the boat came and did bow to Him” (ISR Scriptures-2009).
- “Those who were in the boat came and bowed down before him” (The Messianic Writings).

While it is lexically acceptable to render *proskuneō* in Matthew 14:33 as “bow down,” is it theologically acceptable? The honor displayed by the Disciples to Yeshua—in spite of them not fully processing all of the events—is **religious veneration**. Nolland broadly states, “There are those who discover, in their experience of being rescued by Jesus, that in Jesus they encounter God, worship God, and Jesus as the Son of God.”¹²³ Morris is more assertive, concluding, “The experiences of seeing Jesus walk on the water and then of seeing him call Peter to walk there and of delivering that disciple when his faith failed made a profound impression; as a result they *worshipped Jesus*...It betokens the worship that should be offered to deity and thus shows us the effect the incident had had on those who saw it all.”¹²⁴

As obvious as it might be, upon Yeshua getting into the boat and the waves being calmed, the Disciples could have all simply quieted themselves and wondered. Or they could have actually been said to have remembered their Israelite ancestors crossing the Red Sea. *Instead, they worshipped Yeshua*. And how serious is this? If Yeshua is not God, the One who identifies Himself as the “I am,” then to worship Yeshua would be to commit idolatry against the God of Israel. Wellum properly notes how “when Jesus was on earth, he received the praise and worship given to him without ever rebuking the persons who acted in this way (Matt. 14:33; 21:15-16; 28:9, 17; John 20:28; cf. 5:22-23).”¹²⁵ *Yeshua did not refuse the Disciples’ worship of Him*. In his book *Jesus and the God of Israel*, Richard Bauckham concurs,

“Matthew’s consistent use of the word *proskunein*, and his emphasis on the point, show that he intends a kind of reverence which, paid to any other human being, he would have regarded as idolatrous. This is reinforced by the fact that his unparalleled uses tend to be in epiphanic contexts (Matt. 2:2, 8, 11; 14:33; 28:9, 17). Combined with his emphasis on the presence of the exalted Christ among his people (18:20; 28:20), Matthew’s use must reflect the practice of the worship of Jesus in the [First Century] church.”¹²⁶

The scene of Yeshua walking on the water, Yeshua declaring Himself to be “I am,” and Yeshua subsequently being worshipped by His Disciples—are together all strong signs of His Divinity. Many people throughout religious history, who have concluded that Yeshua the Messiah is God, integrated into the Divine Identity, have not just made this conclusion on the basis of blind religious dogma. If Yeshua were just a created supernatural agent, we would not expect Him to just say “I am” as God at the burning bush, or permit Himself to be worshipped.

Matthew 15:29-31

“God is Glorified by Yeshua’s Miracles”

“Departing from there, Yeshua went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there. And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them. So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.”

Various proponents of a low Christology, witnessing how Yeshua was healing various people with significant needs—“great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the

¹²³ Nolland, *Matthew*, 603.

¹²⁴ Morris, *Matthew*, 384.

¹²⁵ Wellum, “The Deity of Christ in the Apostolic Witness,” in *The Deity of Christ*, 142.

¹²⁶ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 131.