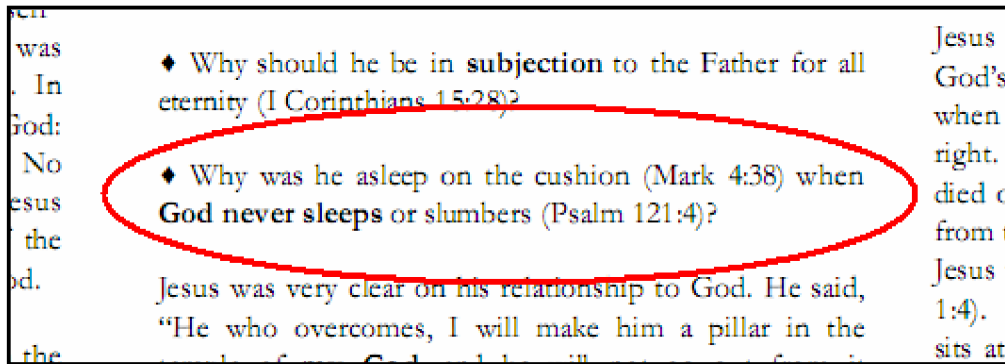


When Jesus Awoke and Calmed the Storm Did He Think He Was God?

The tract published by Living Hope International Ministries asks, “Why was he asleep on the cushion (Mark 4:38) when **God never sleeps** or slumbers?¹² I have a couple questions concerning this portion of the tract:



I think that it is appropriate that we quickly review Mark 4:38, to see how this passage was intended to relate to the divinity of Christ.

Mark 4:37-41

- (37) And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.
- (38) And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?
- (39) And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.
- (40) And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?
- (41) And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, **What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?**

Why is this recorded not once, but three times, such as in the gospel accounts of Matthew 8:23-27 and Luke 8:22-26? Could it be that this question is significant? I anticipate that some may argue that the disciples asked “what manner of *man* is this” and think that the nature of the question proves that Jesus was *only* a man.

Matthew 8:27

- (27) But the men marvelled, saying, **What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!**

¹ from Living Hope Ministries, “tract-jesus.pdf”
<http://www.kingdomready.org/resources.php>

² Boldfaced emphasis stands as printed in original.

Luke 8:25

(25) And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, **What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.**

I suggest that perhaps we should consult scripture for our answer, and consider that like many things Christ did, this particular miracle was performed for a pre-calculated effect. The Psalms are recognized for many scriptures pertaining to the Messiah, so I think it is not inappropriate that we find the answer to their question here.

How do the Scriptures Answer this Question?

Psalms 107:28-29

(28) **Then they cry unto the LORD** in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.
(29) **He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.**

It seems that the author of this tract, in his effort to attempt to prove that Jesus was not God, has missed the significance of the entire event! The disciples **cried unto Christ**, and waves and the storm obeyed the rebuke of **Jesus himself!**

Psalms 89:8-9

(8) **O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee?** or to thy faithfulness round about thee?
(9) **Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.**

Besides these two passages from the Psalms, I can think of another obvious example of the identity of the “Master of the Sea.” The human prophet could not rebuke the storm with a mere word, but when these men called upon the LORD (YHWH) the tempestuous sea was calmed.

Jonah 1:14-15

(14) **Wherefore they cried unto the LORD**, and said, We beseech thee, **O LORD**, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, **O LORD**, hast done as it pleased thee.
(15) So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: **and the sea ceased from her raging.**

The clear words of the Old Testament tell us that the ability to rebuke the sea and storm with a word is a power of the LORD. Jesus invoked this power without a second thought, and chided their lack of faith, and this is recorded for us in three separate gospels. It seems completely backwards to take a passage that identified Christ as our LORD of the Old Testament and spin it backwards to say that God would be unable to sleep through a storm!

God Never Sleeps or Slumbers

Regardless, I think that this tract does bring up an interesting point, because the same Psalms that identify Jesus as LORD also contain this passage concerning sleep and slumber.

Psalms 121:2-4

- (2) My help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.
- (3) He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee **will not slumber.**
- (4) Behold, he that keepeth Israel **shall neither slumber nor sleep.**

Would this indeed be a contradiction? Or was the author of this tract trying too hard to create evidence against the divinity of Christ? I think it is important to note that if we interpret this verse in the strictest manner, it also creates a quite a few contradictions within the text, many from within the same book of Psalms.

Psalms 35:23

- (23) Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, *even* unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

Psalms 59:5

- (5) Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.

Psalms 44:23

- (23) **Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?** arise, cast *us* not off for ever.

Psalms 78:65

- (65) Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, *and* like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.

Isaiah 51:9

- (9) Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. *Art* thou not it that hath cut Rahab, *and* wounded the dragon?

I would be interested in hearing an explanation from the author of “Did Jesus Think He Was God” concerning:

1. If Jesus did not think he was God, why did he rebuke the storm? What did he expect to happen? Was he “making himself God” (John 5:18, John 10:33) by exercising powers that could only identify the LORD? If he did not think of himself as God, then why did he take direct action, instead of retaining a clear head and praying for the storm to be lifted?

2. Alternatively, is it suggested that Jesus was ignorant of the Psalms, and did not realize the significance of what it would mean to calm the raging storm with a word? Or did he mean to confuse his disciples?
3. The disciples asked themselves “what manner of man is this?” Why would he not take the opportunity to answer their question and state “I am a fellow servant like you” or “I am a prophet of the LORD” or “I asked the LORD to calm the storm but it was not by my own power?”
4. Is it beyond God’s power to sleep through a storm? Is not our LORD God “omnipotent?” (See Revelation 19:6) Is it perhaps not more likely that Jesus knew the storm raged, even in his sleep, and slept *on purpose* so that his disciples would call upon him for help? (see Psalms 107:28)
5. How do you explain the other biblical contradictions that your interpretation creates, specifically Psalms 44:23, “Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?” which is in the specific context of keeping Israel?

If an answer is forthcoming, I may be reached marron_glaces@yahoo.com.

Epilogue

In my experience, lists of questions like these are seldom answered, but since I also have an interest in defending the integrity of the scriptures, I do not want to leave doubt lingering in the minds of any readers.

Psalms 121:2-4

- (2) My help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.
- (3) He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee **will not slumber.**
- (4) Behold, he that keepeth Israel **shall neither slumber nor sleep.**

I do not think that this passage would normally cause any confusion when read in its normal ordinary sense, because most people already understand the intended meaning. This is not limited to simple sleeplessness, because a stone does not sleep, and that is no comfort, and neither is this saying that God is a weary insomniac.

Plainly put, God is ever vigilant; he is not caught unawares, and will not abandon his people for ever. “Sleep” has a range of meaning used within these psalms, and it is not used to imply that God is comatose in heaven and unaware of the events on earth.

The gospel accounts say Jesus calmed the storm with a word, as God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16) while bearing our infirmities (Matthew 8:17) and we should take care that our interpretations do not wrest away the clear meanings of scripture (2 Peter 3:16.)