

OLD SHIP ZION

By: David A. Sargent

Matthew 8:23-27, “And **when he was entered into a ship**, his disciples followed him. And, behold, **there arose a great tempest in the sea**, insomuch that **the ship was covered with the waves**: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, **Lord, save us: we perish**. And he saith unto them, **Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?** Then **he arose**, and **rebuked the winds and the sea**; and **there was a great calm**. But the men marvelled, saying, **What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!**”



Mark 4:36-41, “And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as **he was in the ship**. And there were also with him **other little ships**. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the **ship**, so that it was now full. 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? 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. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” Notice that he was in the hinder part of the ship and he was asleep on a pillow. This shows that he was inside in a chamber under the deck on a pillow and was dry. There were also other little ships which would mean that the ship he was on was larger; in retrospect: not a small ship.

This is an event that happened to show the Lord’s power. But what I want to look at is the ship itself. There are ships and then there are ships. This passage did not say boat, it said ship. A ship will lean outward on a turn while a boat will lean inward on a turn. Ships are usually much larger than boats and more than one level as well as much heavier than boats and take a crew to run. In the case of this passage many of the Apostles were fishermen and had experience on ships and

boats. In dealing with a ship we know in this passage there were at least 13 people



on board and possibly more if any other disciples were with them which it doesn't say so we can assume it was at least 13. On a boat this would be a bit crowded and if it were a boat it would be one level. A ship however would accommodate this many people and would also allow for the Lord to be asleep inside in a lower part of the ship and not be getting all wet from

the storm. Not sure how anyone could sleep in a storm where the waves were covering the ship. But in a lower part of the ship it would be dry and much more peaceful. At any rate this is my take on the passage and the usage of the term ship instead of boat.

It is important to point out that the term boat is also a generic term used for all sea going vessels and where it is defined as ship it is because it is a ship as in Acts 27:14-20, "But not long after there arose against

it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And **when the ship was caught**, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, **we had much work to come by the boat:**

Which when they had taken up, they used helps, **undergirding the ship**; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, **strake sail**, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day **they lightened the ship**; And the third day we cast out with our own hands **the tackling of the ship**. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away."



And as this continues this ship actually had a boat on board: Acts 27:21-34, "But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have

gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, **but of the ship**. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that **sail** with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall



be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the **shipmen** deemed that they drew near to some country; And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and

found it fifteen fathoms. Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they **cast four anchors** out of the **stern**, and wished for the day. And as the **shipmen** were about to flee out of the ship, **when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour** as though they would have cast **anchors out of the foreship**, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the **ship**, ye cannot be saved. Then **the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat**, and let her fall off. And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.”

A ship can carry a boat but a boat cannot carry a ship. So the Bible defines the word ship when it is used as a large sea going vessel that can carry many people and has rooms below deck and can carry a boat or boats.



Matthew 4:18-22, “And Jesus, **walking by the sea of Galilee**, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, **casting a net into the sea**: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his

brother, **in a ship with Zebedee their father**, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately **left the ship** and their father, and followed him.” (The same in Mark 1:16-20). So Peter and Andrew were fishers and were casting a net into the sea as Jesus was walking by the sea of Galilee. It did not say they were



on a boat or ship. So they were on the shore or in the shallows by the shore casting nets. While James and John and their father were mending nets on their SHIP! Zebedee was not a poor man if he had a ship and if it were a ship for fishing then it would have been a large enough ship for lodging below deck.

Ship shows up in many places where these vessels were used to get across the sea but were not small boats as depicted in most Bible movies where they were so crowded you could not more with Christ sleeping at the edge of the boat during the storm and water flying everywhere. It is totally unbelievable that this would be a boat of small proportions. On the other hand I am sure it was not one of the largest boats around like the ones that took Paul to Rome.

Matthew 9:1, “And **he entered into a ship**, and passed over, and came into his own city.” Notice he ENTERED INTO a ship. I know this could be going on the ship but the “entered” thing is still persuasive that he went inside.

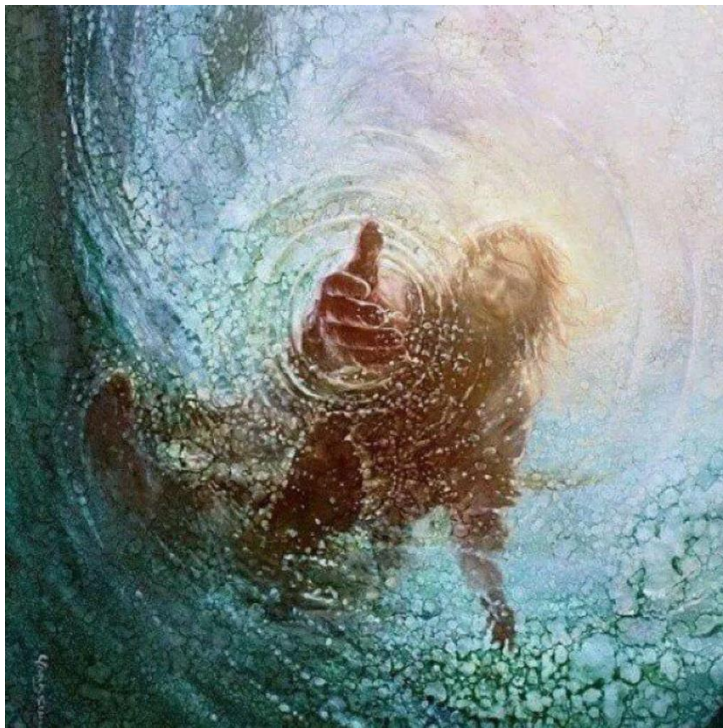
Matthew 13:2, “And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that **he went into a ship**, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.” Here he went into



a ship and was able to teach people on the shore so he was ON the ship and notice this does not say “entered” as in Matthew 9:1. So he went into the ship; but was ON the ship’s deck. (See also Mark 4:1)

Matthew 14:13, “When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.” If Jesus departed by ship, and into a desert place it would stand to reason that the desert place was on the other side of water. The people followed him on foot suggest that they walked across the water right? NO, the people heard he was in the desert and followed him to the desert.

Matthew 14:22-33, “And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples **to get into a ship**, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But **the ship was now in the midst of the sea**, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And **in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea**. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It



is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And **when Peter was come down out of the ship**, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, **Lord, save me**. And **immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him**,

and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when **they were come into the ship**, the wind ceased. Then they that were **in the ship came** and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.” When they came into the ship the ship was so big that they that were in the ship had to come to where they had boarded.

Mark 3:9, “And he spake to his disciples, that a **small ship** should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.” So is a small ship a boat or is a boat a small ship?

Luke 5:1-7, “And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw **two ships** standing by the lake: but the **fishermen were gone out of them**, and were **washing their nets**.

And **he entered into one of the ships**, which was **Simon's**, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people **out of the ship**. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let



down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in **the other ship**, that they should come and help them. And they came, and **filled both the ships**, so that they began to sink.” Sink two ships! That’s a lot of fish!



Luke 8:22-25, “Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a **ship** with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. But as they **sailed** he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and **they were filled with water**, and were in jeopardy. And **they came to him**, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a

calm. 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.” Here again we visit the sleeping

Christ in the ship; and so where was He sleeping? They had to COME to where He was. Perhaps it was a SHIP and not just a boat!

John 6:15-21, “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, And **entered into a ship**, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see **Jesus walking on the sea**, and **drawing nigh unto the ship**: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then **they willingly received him into the ship**: and **immediately the ship was at the land** whither they went.” Here we are revisiting Jesus walking



on water and it seems that it is told differently but it only adds to the previous information. John does not give the account of Peter going out and meeting the Lord; but here it does not say that he didn't do that. Nevertheless a vindication of the Bible is necessary for the Bible Believer so that the information especially in the Gospels where events show up in more than one and don't seem to line up then you add the information together to see what happened more clearly.

John 21:2-14, “There were together **Simon Peter**, and **Thomas** called Didymus, and **Nathanael** of Cana in Galilee, and the **sons of Zebedee**, and **two other of his disciples**. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They

went forth, and **entered into a ship immediately**; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the

disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, **Cast the net on the right side of the ship**, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. **And the other disciples came in a little ship**; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) **dragging the net with fishes**. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, **Bring of the fish which ye have now caught**. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, **Come and dine**. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? **knowing that it was the Lord**. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now **the third time** that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that **he was risen from the dead**.”



So we have at least seven disciples in the passage entering into a ship but when they came to land they came in a little ship. Where did this little ship come from? It was NOT the original ship they were in. It is called little in direct opposition to the ship that they took up the fishes in and the Peter jumped out of. Simon Peter evidently beat them to shore as he was swimming in the water and the other

disciples had to lower a little ship down from the main ship and come to shore.



Meanwhile Peter had gotten there on shore and waited for them to haul the net full of fishes.

Paul sailed on many ships in Acts; and so as not to be burdensome with listing all of the references it is important of note that the ships Paul sailed on were large ships and some were mentioned by name. Acts 27:2, "...a ship of Adramyttium..." and Acts 27:6, "...a ship of Alexandria..." and another time in Acts 28:11, "...a ship of Alexandria..." and also "...whose sign was Castor and Pollux."

There is a lot about ships in the Bible, and I am sure they were much older versions of ships than even these old ships of old. But something that has been a question in my mind is that of the Ark. Noah was told to build an Ark; not a boat or a ship. Some things notable about the Ark was that there were no sails and no ores and no rudder and no helm. It was a big box like an Ark. Another Ark shows up in the Bible that Moses was put in as a baby. It also had no sails or ores and no rudder and so this seems to be the issue with it NOT being a boat or a ship. Then Moses was commanded to make an Ark of the Covenant which was a box, but this Ark was not put in water; and when the priests carried the Ark over the waters they parted. So all three of the arks are neither boats nor ships and that is why they are not called boats or ships but arks.



Now a few things about the plural of ship: ships. One place where this shows up in particular in James 3:4-6, "Behold also **the ships**, which though **they be so great**, and are **driven of fierce winds**, yet are **they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth**. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it

defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.” So here James references ships saying about them “...though they be so great...” in direct opposition to their very small helm that turns them. So a few things here and first is that ships are great in size; and they have a helm which means they have a rudder; and they have sails for the wind to catch. It is so great to see how the Bible is so self-interpreting and self-defining.



Now for some hymns that have to do with our Old Ship Zion:

The Old Ship of Zion (Hymn)

Words: M. J. Cartwright, 1889.

Music: Daniel B. Towner

I was drifting away on life's pitiless sea,
And the angry waves threatened my ruin to be,
When away at my side, there I dimly descried,
A stately old vessel, and loudly I cried:

“Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!”
And loudly I cried: “Ship ahoy!”

'Twas the “old ship of Zion,” thus sailing along,
All aboard her seemed joyous, I heard their sweet song;
And the Captain's kind ear, ever ready to hear,
Caught my wail of distress, as I cried out in fear:

“Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!”
As I cried out in fear: “Ship ahoy!”

The good Captain commanded a boat to be low'red,
And with tender compassion He took me on board;
And I'm happy today, all my sins washed away
In the blood of my Savior, and now I can say:

“Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord!”

From my soul I can say: “Bless the Lord!”

O soul, sinking down 'neath sin's merciless wave,
The strong arm of our Captain is mighty to save;
Then trust Him today, no longer delay,

Board the old ship of Zion, and shout on your way:

“Jesus saves! Jesus saves!”

Shout and sing on your way: “Jesus saves!”



What a wonderful hymn that is. I so enjoy this song because it is about going home and how YOU can go home with us that are on the Old Ship Zion.

2 Chronicles 13:12a, “And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain...”

Mark 4:41b, “...What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”













THE END
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