



# Jesus Has Power Over Nature

## 2

### Key Theme

- Jesus has authority over His creation.

### Key Passages

- Matthew 14:22–33; Luke 5:1–11; Colossians 1:15–18

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Connect Jesus's role as Creator to His power over nature.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

Students will review the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

- Write on the board, "Are there any miracles in the Bible that you don't believe?"
- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



### Studying God's Word

Jesus did miracles to show that He could control nature. He calmed a storm, walked on water, and caused Simon to catch a net-breaking, boat-sinking load of fish! How could Jesus do those things? Scripture is clear: Jesus is the Creator. Jesus IS God.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



### Activity: Accepting Miracles

The students will examine the refusal of many to accept miracles and the inconsistency of those Christians who accept some miracles and not others, especially the miracle of creation.

- Print one Accepting Miracles Teacher Guide from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.
- Print one Accepting Miracles worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.
- Pencils



# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords, began his ministry with an ordinary bunch of disciples. Many had been fishermen, and there was a tax collector, a political zealot, and others that we don't know a lot about. At the beginning of Jesus's ministry, He began to perform public miracles in the presence of His disciples. All these miracles pointed to Him as the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus did not heal the sick and raise the dead for the sole purpose of removing suffering but to demonstrate who He was and that His message was true.

In John 10, Jesus stated, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (John 10:37–38). The works of Jesus were to reveal that He was in the Father and the Father in Him—that He was God in the flesh.

In the book of Colossians, Paul gave one of the most complete statements that exists anywhere in Scripture of Jesus's deity.

He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:15–20).

Jesus is the Creator of all that is. Jesus is the Sustainer of the entire universe. As Creator and Sustainer, Jesus has authority over His creation—over every atom. It is no problem for Him to change water into wine (John 2:1–11) or to multiply bread and fish (John 6:1–14).

In this lesson, we look at two of Jesus's miracles

over nature that reveal Jesus is God: the miraculous catch of fish and the calming of the storm.

Luke 5 records an event early in Jesus's ministry when He called His first disciples. Simon Peter had been fishing all night long . . . but had caught nothing. In the morning, after using Simon's boat as a pulpit, Jesus told him to let his nets down into deep water. At first Simon complained, but then he obeyed. What happened next was amazing: the catch of fish was so great that the net began to break. Another boat was called in to help, and there were so many fish that the boats began to sink. Only the Lord of creation could do such a thing. Peter, recognizing that he was in the presence of no mere man, fell at Jesus's feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8). Who can control fish, except the one who controls all things—the holy, omnipotent God?

As the disciples witnessed Jesus's miracles, they began to get a better understanding of who this man was in their midst. A defining moment for Jesus's disciples, and particularly for Peter, was the calming of the storm, recorded in Matthew 14.

After many days of teaching and ministry, Jesus sent His disciples by boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. He remained behind for some much needed time with His Father. In the middle of the night, the disciples were facing a storm on the sea—strong winds and tossing waves. During "the fourth watch of the night" (3–6 a.m.), Jesus came to His disciples, walking on the water. The disciples were afraid and thought Jesus was a ghost. But Jesus calmed their fears, reassuring them that it was He. It was then that impetuous, bold Peter showed his faith. He said to Jesus, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water" (Matthew 14:28). Jesus commanded Peter to come, and Peter proceeded to walk on the water. Wow! What faith! Peter is often derided for his lack of faith that caused him to sink, but none of the other disciples got out of the boat.

At the end of this episode, Jesus got into the boat and commanded the storm to be still—and it obeyed its Creator. The disciples were astonished. The account finishes by telling us that "those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God'" (Matthew 14:33).

Yes, truly Jesus is the Son of God—God in the flesh—the Creator of all that exists. He has power over nature. He walked on the water! He calmed the sea! He produced an overwhelming catch of fish. These things, and so much more, He did so we would KNOW that He is the Son of God. He alone deserves all our

worship and praise! And He has all power to do whatever He wills in heaven and on earth.

## HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) record about 35 separate miracles Jesus performed. These were not the only ones He did, but these specific ones the writers picked out, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to represent Jesus's power and to show us who He is.

The most important thing about the miracles of Jesus recorded in the New Testament is what they teach us about Jesus Himself. Jesus's miracles authenticate His claim to deity. They demonstrate the following: God was with Jesus (John 3:2; Acts 10:38); Jesus was from God (John 3:2, 9:32–33); God had sent Jesus (John 5:36); Jesus had authority on earth to forgive sins (Mark 2:10–11; Matthew 9:6–7; Luke 5:24–25); Jesus was approved by God (Acts 2:22); the Father was in Jesus and Jesus was in the Father (John 10:37–38, 14:11); in Jesus the kingdom of God had come (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20); and Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God (Matthew 11:1–6, 14:25–33; John 10:24–25).

The miracles we read about in the pages of the Gospels are examples of the power that belonged to Jesus; they validated His message and demonstrated that He was God in the flesh. Jesus had one dominating purpose in life—to fulfill His Father's will. This is brought out clearly in John's Gospel (see John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38). Jesus did not regard any of His works as His own; they were the Father's works (John 5:19, 9:3–4). And the final work of God—the final act of obedience of the Son to the Father—was the death of Jesus on the Cross. He willingly became the perfect substitute, taking God's wrath against sin, and giving His righteousness to all who will come to Him in repentance and faith.

At the end of John's Gospel, he writes that there were many other signs Jesus did in the presence of His disciples, which are not written. But the things that are recorded are there "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

During the past several hundred years, scholars have tried to deny the miracles of Jesus. A major attack against the Bible was the "higher criticism" that

arose in Germany around the end of the 17th century, continuing into the 20th century. The promoters of higher criticism, such as Bultmann, Graff, Eichhorn, and Wellhausen, insisted that the Bible was a human product, brought about by the church to express what individual men had to say about God. These critics had been affected by European rationalism—the belief that human reason, unaided by divine revelation, is adequate for attaining all truth. They did not approach the Bible from a believer's standpoint, one of trusting in the authority and accuracy of God's Word. No, instead they put the Bible under the microscope of a rational, skeptical point of view—a point of view biased heavily by a faith in atheism. These critics had decided that miracles were impossible, and therefore, any miracles in the Bible were either natural phenomena wrongly interpreted by the biblical writers or were inserted later by men who wanted to "beef up" the resumé of Jesus, to present Him as more than He really was.

Thankfully, God raised up conservative, evangelical scholars, such as Hodge, Warfield, Machen, and Allis, to take these critics head-on. They demonstrated the historical accuracy of the Bible and the reliable textual history of the New Testament, and they defended the biblical worldview—a world where God is very much alive and involved in the affairs of men.

Praise God that He has inspired and preserved the true account of Jesus. We can trust God's written Word, and we can trust God's living Word—our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



## BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear Jesus, blessed be your name! You are infinite, almighty, Creator God. It is so interesting to study your miracles and understand the purpose behind them. Each moment of your life was purposeful—each act and every word. You were the Word who became flesh. Help me to receive your words, treasure your commands, and apply my heart to understanding all the days of my life. Use this lesson for your honor and glory. Impart understanding to my students, that they, too, will glorify your name with their lives.

## Review

We are continuing our look at the earthly ministry of Jesus. Last week we examined the mission of Jesus.

? Who can summarize for us what we learned about the mission of Jesus from the passages last week? *Jesus came into the world so that sinners might be saved through Him (John 3:17).*

In fulfilling that mission, Jesus also glorified the Father in all that He did. He perfectly obeyed all that the Father had sent Him to do and all of the Law. His obedience was so complete that He was willing to offer His life as a sacrifice for sinners, taking the wrath of the Father for the sins of the world

so that all those who believe in Him can have eternal life.

As He prayed before His trials, and when He hung on the Cross, He announced that His work was finished. He completed the mission the Father had sent Him on. In all of this He glorified the Father, and the Father was pleased to glorify the Son. We can be partakers in that glory that will be revealed in its fullness at Christ's return (1 Peter 5:1).

Today we get to look at an amazing aspect of the ministry of Jesus: His power over nature.



► Write on the board, "Are there any miracles in the Bible that you don't believe?"



## Studying God's Word

### READ THE WORD

Let's read Matthew 14:22–33 together, looking for an example of Jesus's power over nature. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

### EXAMINE THE WORD

#### Observe the Text

- ? **Where did this event take place in the ministry of Jesus?** *The event right before this was the feeding of the 5,000. This event is also recorded in John 6:14–21, and John 6:4 is likely the third Passover. This puts the event in early AD 32 about one year before the Crucifixion. Refer to the New Testament History Poster for perspective. We also know this is after the death of John the Baptist recorded in Matthew 14:9–12.*
- ? **Where did Jesus send His disciples?** *He sent them to the other side in a boat. This must be referring to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In the Mark 6 and John 6 accounts, the cities of Capernaum and Bethsaida are referred to, making the location certain. Verse 34 also says they went to the land of Gennesaret which is on the Sea of Galilee.*
- ? **Who are the multitudes Jesus was sending away?** *These were the 5,000 men plus women and children He had been talking to and had just fed (14:19–21).*
- ? **Where did Jesus go after sending the disciples and the multitudes away?** *He went up on the mountain.*

- ? **What was His purpose of going to the mountain?** *He went there to pray alone.*
- ? **When did Jesus begin praying?** *He was praying in the evening, so near sundown.*
- ? **Where were the disciples at this time?** *They were in the middle of the sea.*
- ? **What circumstances did the disciples find themselves in?** *They were in the midst of a storm with the boat being tossed by the waves and the wind blowing them in the direction they had come from (contrary to where they were headed).*
- ? **What time marker is given in verse 25?** *The fourth watch of the night is mentioned.*
- ? **What does this phrase mean?** *Some students may find an explanatory note in their Bibles that describes this as the period between 3 and 6 a.m. The period from evening to morning was divided into four, three-hour periods.*
- ? **How did Jesus get to where the disciples were?** *He went to them walking on the sea.*
- ? **How did the disciples react to seeing Jesus walking on the water?** *They were troubled and afraid, thinking He was a ghost.*
- ? **How did Jesus respond to the disciples' fearful remarks?** *Jesus told them to not fear for it is Him.*
- ? **What two ideas were present in Peter's response?** *He did not seem sure that it really was Jesus ("Lord, if it is You"), and he asked Jesus to call him out on the water.*
- ? **What does this response demonstrate about Peter?** *While there seemed to be a glimmer of doubt, he trusted that Jesus could accomplish this miracle. He demonstrated faith in what Jesus can do.*
- ? **What did Peter do when Jesus told Him to come to Him?** *He walked on the water toward Jesus.*
- ? **When did Peter begin to sink?** *He began to sink when he noticed the rough waves around him.*
- ? **How did Peter respond to sinking?** *He called out to Jesus for help.*
- ? **What does Jesus's response reveal about Peter's faith?** *It was a small faith that still had doubts, even in the presence of Jesus.*
- ? **What happened as the two got into the boat?** *The wind ceased which would have caused the waves to cease.*
- ? **How did the others in the boat respond?** *They worshipped Jesus and acknowledged He was the Son of God.*
- ? **What were they responding to?** *They were responding to both walking on the water and the calming of the storm.*
- ? **Is this the first time they had witnessed Jesus calming a storm?** *No, Matthew 8:23–27 records the previous account of Jesus calming a storm.*
- ? **How does the response in Matthew 8 differ from this response?** *The earlier response is one of wondering who He was while the latter instance has them clearly identifying Him as the Son of God.*

Matthew 8:23–27

## Colossians 1:13–18

? In what ways did Jesus demonstrate His power over nature? *He walked on the water, as did Peter at His command, and He caused the wind to stop blowing in an instant.*

We know that Jesus clearly exercised power over the storm, but let's try to make sense of why this was possible for Him.

? Why was Jesus able to exercise such power over nature? *He is the Creator and has the authority over His creation.*

? What passages of Scripture teach us that Jesus is the Creator? *John 1 and Hebrews 1 both point to this truth, but Colossians 1:13–18 gives one of the clearest statements. Have someone read the passage aloud. If time allows, you can draw some specific points out of the passage.*

### Discover the Truth

SOVEREIGN

INFINITE

OMNIPOTENT

From that passage in Colossians 1, it is abundantly clear that Jesus is the Creator—He created all things and in Him all things consist. As Hebrews 1:2–3 confirms, Jesus holds the universe together by His powerful word. He is able to command nature because He is the Creator.

? What attributes of God are evident in Jesus's control over nature? *Sovereign as He demonstrated His complete control over nature; Infinite in that He has created all things so He must exist beyond His creation (this is also referred to as His transcendence); Omnipotent in exercising power over everything. Refer to Attributes of God Poster.*

When we talk about the “laws of nature,” we are typically referring to the natural laws that God has put in place to govern the normal operation of the universe. These are a reflection of how God normally upholds the universe. Here on earth, a storm is part of the natural order as air molecules interact with one another. Those molecules are interacting in ways that are predictable. This predictability comes from the fact that God has created them to behave in an orderly way, and that is the way that God upholds His universe. Based on our observations, we have been able to uncover how those molecules interact and have developed descriptions of those interactions. That is what we mean by a law of nature.

? What laws of nature was Jesus “breaking” when He was walking on the water? *The law of gravity and the laws of density (gravity should pull a more dense object, His body, down through the less dense liquid water) were being “broken” as He walked on the water.*

? What law of nature was He demonstrating His authority over when He calmed the storm? *The laws that govern the movements of gases, causing the wind to blow (fluid dynamics). This would be the scientific field of meteorology.*

The Creator of the physical universe certainly has power over His creation, whether that is the power to create new matter according to His own will, as in the feeding of the 5,000, changing matter according to His will, as in turning water into wine, or bringing a person back to life. God is not confined by what we happen to refer to as the laws of nature. They are laws that govern the physical universe; they do not govern God Himself.

In all of these actions, Jesus demonstrated His absolute authority over all of creation. The actions were miracles that were used to authenticate His claims to deity. In His demonstrations, the disciples knew that He was the Son of God, and they offered Him the worship due to Him. This use of the miraculous will be something we see multiple times as we study Jesus's life.



## READ THE WORD

Let's look at another situation on the same sea where Jesus demonstrated His power over nature. It is recorded in Luke 5:1–11. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Luke 5:1–11

## EXAMINE THE WORD

### Observe the Text

- ? **Where did these events take place?** *The Lake of Gennesaret, which is another name for the Sea of Galilee. It is also referred to as the Sea of Tiberius in John 6:1. Remember that in Matthew 14:34 they had crossed the sea to the land of Gennesaret.*
- ? **What was Jesus doing at this time?** *He was teaching the word of God to the people in Galilee. This occurred after the first Passover and corresponds to the calling of the disciples from the boats as was discussed in Lesson 12 from the first quarter (Matthew 4:18).*
- ? **Whose boat was Jesus in while He was teaching?** *Simon's, or Peter's.*
- ? **What did Jesus tell Simon to do?** *He told him to launch out to the deep and let his nets out for a catch.*
- ? **What did Simon think of the command?** *He seemed to think the request was odd, but said He would obey the command. The men typically fished at night while the fish were in the shallow water and easier to catch. The previous night's work was fruitless, so going out to the deep to fish in the day was not normal.*
- ? **What happened as Simon obeyed Jesus?** *They caught so many fish that they called for help from James and John and their boat. Andrew, Simon's brother, and his father may have been on the boat with them though; the text is not clear.*
- ? **What did Simon do after seeing the catch?** *He fell at Jesus's knees and acknowledged his unworthiness and sinfulness, asking Jesus to leave his presence.*
- ? **Was this catch of fish a miracle or a coincidence?** *This is clearly a miraculous event.*
- ? **What did this miracle accomplish?** *It was a clear sign of Jesus's authority as a teacher of God's words.*
- ? **What were the disciples willing to do after having seen this miracle?** *They were willing to abandon their lives as fishermen to follow Jesus.*
- ? **What comparison did Jesus make to the catching of the fish?** *He told Simon that he would likewise catch men in the future.*

## Discover the Truth

Just as Jesus had demonstrated His power over the wind and over the effects of gravity, He demonstrated His power over the creatures in the sea. While the text does not explicitly say so, we cannot help but conclude that Jesus caused the fish to swim into the nets to fill them to bursting. His performing of the miracle authenticated His ministry, and the disciples recognized it as such. Following His guidance in the future, these men would be witnesses of the miracle of the salvation of men as they cast the net of the good news of the gospel!



## Accepting Miracles

### MATERIALS

- Accepting Miracles Teacher Guide
- Accepting Miracles worksheet for each student
- Pencils

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Pass out one Accepting Miracles worksheet to each student. Use the Accepting Miracles Teacher Guide to teach this part of the lesson.*



## Applying God's Word

### WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Jesus is not only our Savior, He is also our Creator. Knowing this should help us to understand how He was able to exercise control over nature while He was walking the earth as the God-man. In fact, He has always been in control of the weather, nature, the fish in the sea, and every atom in the universe. He established the laws by which nature operates, and we can see the consistency of His character reflected in those laws. Jesus is God, and God has power over nature.

We serve a God of order, not chaos. But He is free to act as He pleases. If He chooses to act outside of those laws as we understand them, He can. Because we trust that He is God, we trust that He can walk on water, command the wind and waves, and direct the paths of His creatures. In fact, it was observing His power over nature that caused many to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. Peter demonstrated this faith as He stepped out of the boat, and the other disciples did so as they offered Him the worship due to Him. How can we respond any differently? Let us look to Christ and offer Him worship for creating us and saving us from our sins.

## GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **How has connecting the role of Jesus as Creator to His power over nature helped you understand these miracles more fully?** *Discuss various answers, pointing to the fact that the Creator has the right to operate outside of the laws He has established for His creation.*
- ? **How does the inclusion of miracles like the ones we discussed today help you to trust more fully in the truthfulness of the Bible?** *The authors of Scripture used these miracles as confirming evidence that Jesus is God. Only God could do the things Jesus did, and knowing those things have been recorded, even in the face of opposition to such views, should encourage us. The writers were telling us exactly what they experienced and not trying to cover up anything that was not "believable."*
- ? **As you talk to unbelievers, what role does the existence of miracles play in explaining the truths of Scripture?** *Discuss various answers, encouraging the students to not shy away from acknowledging that they accept the miracles by faith, knowing the God that is able to do all things and has created all things. We cannot deny what the Bible clearly teaches as we testify of our faith.*
- ? **Since we live in a time where many people are very skeptical of miracles and look to natural explanations to explain the world, should we avoid bringing up miracles as we seek to share the gospel with them?** *If we avoid the subject of miracles, we can never share the gospel. Jesus was born of a virgin and was raised to life after being dead. Without those miracles we have no hope as Christians. On top of that, the most amazing miracle is that God would become man. Without miracles, we have no hope of forgiveness in the God-man who died in our place and was resurrected, conquering death and assuring us of a future with Him in eternity.*
- ? **What are some questions we can ask our unbelieving friends to help them understand that they, too, have faith?** *Discuss various answers, such as believing nature made something from nothing, order from chaos, information from matter, life from non-life, etc.*



### MEMORY VERSE

**John 17:3** And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.



### GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for coming in the flesh to demonstrate His power over nature.
- Praise God for His power to create and sustain the universe.
- Ask God for wisdom in talking about miracles with those who are skeptical.

