

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)

Lesson Plan: Miracles of Nature

Learning Goals: Students should be able to describe/discuss the dual nature of Jesus' miracles over nature (both the practical and spiritual/symbolic nature)

Question: What is the worst storm you have ever experienced?

Prayer

Discuss Question on Board

Jesus Calms the Storm (Matthew 8:23-27)

- What do you think this passage means?
- Temptation to “spiritualize” it - saying something like “Jesus will calm all the ‘storms’ of our life”
- Jesus is demonstrating a power over the natural order, for he was there at creation and all things were created through him.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

(Colossians 1:15-17 ESV)

- This miracle is an extension of the battle with Satan
 - the sea was seen metaphorically as the place of chaos (similar to wilderness); this is an allusion to the creation story - the Spirit of God hovering over the face of deep (bringing order out of chaos).
- The language Jesus uses here is the language of exorcism (“Be quiet!” is really a tame translation; literally “Shut up!” Same thing he said to the demons when he wanted them to stop talking)

Jesus Feeds the 5,000 (Matthew 14:15-21)

- Jesus had compassion (splachnizomai) on the crowds
- Jesus' first response to the problem is to tell the disciples to give them something to eat.
 - God calls us to bring the kingdom “on earth as it is in heaven”
 - see attached cartoon
- Notice what Jesus does with the small meal (takes, blesses, breaks, gives)
- OT references:
 - God providing manna for Moses and Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years
 - Ezekiel 34 and the image of a sheep without a shepherd (this passage reverberates with Messianic overtones)
- Notice how much was left over - 12 baskets (symbolic - blessings overflowing for each of the twelve tribes)

In each of these miracles, Jesus is bringing the Kingdom in the present (power over nature, power over food, power of judgment).

Review: In his miracles, Jesus demonstrates power over:

- Healing, Disease, and Death
- Spiritual forces of evil (demonic)

- Nature and the created order

Additional Examples of Jesus' Power Over Nature:

- *The great haul of fishes (Luke 5:1-11).*
- *Jesus stilled the storm (Matthew 8:23-27).*
- *Jesus fed at least five thousand people (Matthew 14:15-21).*
- *Jesus fed at least four thousand people (Matthew 15:32-39).*
- *Jesus caused the fig tree to wither (Matthew 21:18-22).*

Lesson Summary / Review:

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- How was Jesus walking on water an extension of his battle with Satan?
- How was the Feeding of the 5,000 connected to the Old Testament?
- What three areas did Jesus demonstrate power over in his miracles?

