

'The Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41) is best interpreted as a parable.' Discuss.

**35** *That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.'* **36** *Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.* **37** *A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.* **38** *Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'* **39** *He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!'* *Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.* **40** *He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'* **41** *They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'*

First of all, let us define what we mean by a parable. It is important to understand the meaning of something before we delve deeper. A parable in the bible was usually a made up story that Jesus used to get across an idea or teaching to other people. He always used fictional characters in his parables but this story, however, involves him and his disciples. This would imply that this is not a normal example of what we define as a parable.

It is certainly understandable why many people would interpret this extract from the bible as not being a real story. After all, how could something as impossible happen as one man controlling a storm? To add to this, a great number of people would question the historical accuracy of the Bible itself, meaning that even if this extract *is* portrayed as a miracle - rather than a parable - it would still not be a portrayal of historical reality. Therefore, there is a good argument for this extract being a parable even if it is different from many others.

So if we assume that this part of the bible is a parable, it must have a meaning. Jesus used parables to show people something. In this particular extract Jesus calms a powerful storm using only three words. The disciples' boat was sinking in the Sea of Galilee and they asked Jesus for help. He then gets up and simply tells the storm to stop, and it does. The parable meaning could be to show us how powerful Jesus really is, and that he can work great miracles. However, there are plenty of other examples of this in the bible, so a parable is possibly not needed to show us this. This leads us again to the possibility that this is not, infact, a parable, but a real story.

This leads us onto our next point: does this passage read like other parables? We have already realised that if it is a parable, it is certainly an unusual one, because Jesus is not the one telling it, he is the main character within it. There are many passages in the gospels that are clearly intended to be understood not as stories (like the Good Samaritan), but as actually having happened (like the calling of the disciples). The passage about the calming of the storm sounds much more like the latter than the former.

It leads on from the last part of the chapter to the next, not with Jesus telling a story to his disciples or to a crowd. All of this evidence against it being a parable adds up to form another side to the argument as to whether it is a parable or not.

Perhaps one of the main reasons why many people see this as a story, not real life, is that they have accepted that the bible is not historically accurate and therefore means that the parable of the storm cannot be a reality. Instead of this it must be a parable with some meaning behind it. If you think the bible is not true, then this is a very logical argument, although it still makes this an unusual extract. However, if you think there is even some truth in its pages, then this instantly becomes something worth thinking about.

Instead of being a parable, is this evidence that miracles are real? If we now assume that the bible holds the truth, then this could be an example of Jesus performing a miracle. If we simply dismiss this as a miracle, then we could completely miss that Jesus might have had supernatural powers. We could completely miss the possibility that, in fact, he did perform miracles, healing the sick, controlling the elements and altogether defying the laws of nature.

So if this really was a miracle, not a parable, we still mustn't assume that Jesus wasn't showing his disciples a meaning. Miracles can still have deeper meanings behind them just the same as parables. So what could this meaning be? We have already discussed this early in the essay, and an obvious answer is to show his power. He could have been showing the disciples to trust and believe in his power, and to also give a clear example that he really did have that power.

So in conclusion, most of the evidence adds up to show that actually could be an example of Jesus using supernatural power. It is too different from all other parables to assume that it is one, so it must either be true or the whole bible is fake. But overall, both parables and miracles can have a meaning that Jesus is trying to get across, it's just deciding if any given extract is true or not, miracle or parable.