

What is the “Shetri” (Stern) as we read in Mark 4:38?

Let us read Mark 4:35-38:

Mark 4:35-38 (ESV):

“On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, ‘Let us go across to the other side.’ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’”

Explanation and theological reflection:

In this passage, we see the disciples taking Jesus *as he was*—without any extra preparation, supplies, or protection. They simply put Him in the boat as He was, much like one might give a friend a ride without asking questions. This highlights their trust and dependence on Jesus, even though they did not fully grasp the coming danger.

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Now, the word “shetri” (translated here as “stern”) refers to the back part of the boat. In ancient boats, the stern was a broader area at the rear, often used for storage or sleeping quarters. It contrasts with the “bow” (the front), which is narrower and designed to cut through waves.

Jesus lay down on a cushion in the stern, resting peacefully while the storm raged around them. The “cushion” mentioned is not a pillow for comfort only but likely a thick mat or folded blanket used for resting the head or neck.

What can we learn from this?

1. Jesus is present amid our storms, yet He may appear to be ‘sleeping.’ This reminds us that God’s presence does not always mean immediate action according to our timetable. Sometimes, He allows the storm to rage, inviting us to grow in faith, patience, and trust.
2. Faith requires persistence in prayer. The disciples’ frantic waking of Jesus mirrors our own need to pray earnestly and persistently (Luke 18:1). We must not be passive or silent when facing trials but boldly call on the Lord until He responds.

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3. God’s sovereignty over chaos.

When Jesus awoke, He rebuked the wind and the waves, and a great calm ensued. This shows His authority over the natural and spiritual realms (Psalm 107:29). It encourages believers to trust His power to bring peace amid chaos.

4. The theological symbolism of the boat and the storm.

The boat can be seen as the Church or the believer’s life journey, vulnerable to the attacks of the world and the enemy (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus resting in the stern teaches us that He is the foundation and refuge, even when we feel overwhelmed.

Final thought:

The “shetri” is more than just a physical place on the boat; it symbolizes God’s nearness in the midst of turmoil. Jesus invites us to rest in Him, yet He also calls us to wake Him with persistent faith when we feel threatened by life’s storms. He is always present, sovereign, and ready to bring peace and deliverance when we seek Him earnestly.

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Shalom

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