

Amazing Jesus
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Matt 8:10a

(NA 28th ed.)

(NLT)

ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς
ἐθαύμασεν

When Jesus heard this,
he was **amazed**.

Mark 6:6a

(NA 28th ed.)

(NLT)

καὶ **ἐθαύμαζεν**
διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν.

And he was **amazed**
at their unbelief.

The salient word here is **θαυμάζω**, to marvel at, to be amazed, to wonder at. In English, a thaumaturge is a wonder-worker. Thaumatology is the worship of miracles.

There was a lot of wonderment surrounding Jesus. The disciples marveled (*thaumazō*) when Jesus calmed the wind and waves (Matt 8:27), and when the fig tree withered at Jesus' word (21:20). The crowd marveled (*thaumazō*) when the mute spoke, the lame walked, and the blind saw (Matt 15:31). They also marveled (*thaumazō*) at his words (Mark 12:17, John 7:16). Pilate marveled (*thaumazō*) at his silence (Mark 15:5). Peter wondered (*thaumazō*) at the empty tomb (Luke 24:12).

Well, you get the idea. The word represents the emotion of surprise at the unexpected. Something outside of one's set of expectations is a marvel. The religious leaders were astonished (*thaumazō*) at the boldness of uneducated Peter and John (Acts 4:13). When Jesus ministered, and his disciples after, the order of the world was overturned and it was amazing.

Have you ever heard someone say, “I thought I had seen it all, but this surprises even me!” Once in a while, a person in his or her own field may be surprised at something unusual or particularly extreme. Usually, to be amazed means that you didn’t really have a full grasp of the world you live in. You still have things to learn, and so you can still be amazed.

Jesus of course was fully aware of the true spiritual state of affairs of this world. He perfectly understood God his Father (John 10:15). He knew mankind and what was in their hearts (John 2:25). He knew God, knew humans, knew Satan, knew the world, and knew everything there is to know about the spiritual condition of the human race.

And yet—people could still surprise him! There are two things that the gospels say actually rose to the level of taking Jesus by surprise. He marveled at the faith of the Roman centurion. The centurion understood Jesus’ authority so completely that he conceptualized it in terms of an invisible chain-of-command. As the centurion simply issued orders and his underlings followed through, so also he believed that Jesus could simply order unseen forces over a distance to heal, and they would dutifully obey him. Jesus had not encountered such a clear and confident faith before, and it took him aback. To discover it in a Roman no less! Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel!”

When I hear of a long-standing skeptic becoming a Christian, I am amazed. It reminds me that the gospel is really real and it isn’t just me and my little circle holding on. I was in China recently and attended worship services in downtown Beijing. It was standing room only in a large church with six

consecutive services. I have to tell you, I was amazed. When I traveled to Xi'an to see the Nestorian stele, and three Chinese ladies came up to tell us that the cross was on top because "Christ is more powerful than Buddha"—I marveled.

But the other thing that amazed Jesus during his ministry was the lack of faith among his own people. He marveled at the unbelief of his hometown. This is like the man born blind who said that the Jews refusing to believe the obvious was a marvel (John 9:30). It is like Paul being amazed (*thaumazō*) at the Galatians abandoning the gospel (Gal 1:6). These things—great faith in a Roman and the Jews' unbelief—are so unexpected that Jesus marveled at them.

When you have opportunity, or when you are tempted, remember this about Jesus. Use this insight as a resource to help you dig deep and find a way to stir up great faith. You want to be part of the group that Jesus enjoyed being amazed at, don't you? Practice exercising faith like the Centurion. Get in the habit of reminding yourself of Jesus' Kingdom authority—and be confident.

You don't want to be with those who drew Jesus' negative amazement, do you? You want him to do great things in your life, right? Amazing things! Wonderful things!

Treat him as the Lord who is sovereign over all of life, and you will experience wonders. Amen!