

Jesus is Amazing

“²⁸When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; ²⁹for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.” (Matt. 7:28-29).

What’s so amazing about Jesus?

When I read this response to Jesus’ teaching, I marvel at the response of this crowd. They got it right. For the last three chapters we have seen the essence of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. The verses before show Jesus’ ministry in Galilee,

“²³Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

²⁴The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

²⁵Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.” (Matt. 4:23-25).

Jesus’ ministry was sending shockwaves throughout the land. If they had had hospitals and mental institutions, they would have gone out of business. Needless to say, Jesus had a large following. Those who heard Jesus preach were astounded with His message and authority.

Ekplesso (**were amazed**) literally means **to be struck out of oneself**, and was used figuratively of being struck in the mind, that is, of being astounded or beside oneself. Sometimes we can’t get over something that just happened. They were dumbfounded by the power of what Jesus said.

Jesus’ words were comprehensive, insightful words of wisdom, depth, insight and profundity. He denounced the scribes and Pharisees in a straightforward way, without fear. Jesus’ presentation of salvation was black and white, and included clear warnings of consequences awaiting all who would turn away from God on the Judgment Day. He offered great condemnation of the self-righteous along with a clear description of true righteousness. No one could teach like Jesus – with sweetness and love of spirit, yet with strength and authority of God in human flesh.

Jesus taught with authority.

He was teaching them as one having authority,

Exousia (authority) – has to do with power and privilege, Jesus' Kingship and sovereignty throughout Matthew's gospel.

Compared to the Scribes: "***not as the scribes...***"

There had been no prophets for 500 years. The Scribes had memorized the Old Testament and the writings – *walking libraries*.

They quoted the authorities, but Jesus was the authority.

"Jesus clothes the Beatitudes with His own life." Carl F. H. Henry

The Scribes were unimpressive.

Their ordination was the internet variety.

All they knew came from traditions and quotations.

Like politicians they were considered the best scholarship money could buy.

What gave Jesus His authority?

Wasn't it the same as when anyone speaks with authority?

- Being under authority gives someone authority – the servant of a king has the King's authority. So Jesus submitted to the Father's will so that everything He did and said was literally the Father's work.
- Impeccable integrity and experience. A doctor who has successfully performed a new and difficult surgery many times becomes an authority. A builder whose houses have stood the test of time and endured many a storm, would be a man sought after by others desiring to do the same. The best referrals are names mentioned many times by different satisfied clients.

"A good name is more valuable than great riches..."

This is true of the trades, businesses, preachers, political office holders, and prophets. Jesus was recognized as having great authority. The crowds came by the thousands – all by referral.

- Jesus learned what He knew from the Book of God, from a living experience with God and men. The response of sincere people was astonishment.

One such response came from a religious leader, by the name of Nicodemus, “Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him’” (John 3:2).

The people acknowledged Jesus’ power and were in awe of His teaching; even spiritual leaders recognized Jesus as a teacher and miracle worker from God.

MacArthur writes,

“The scribes quoted others to lend authority to their teachings, but Jesus quoted only God’s Word and spoke as the final authority on truth. He spoke eternal truth simply directly, with love (in contrast to the bitter hatred of the Pharisees), and without hesitation or consultation. That astounded the crowd.”¹

Many people have admired the teachings of Jesus. He is included in major world religions as a prophet or teacher of truth. But like the crowds of Jesus’ day, what is needed is more than amazement, they need belief, not astonishment, but obedience. When Jesus came to his hometown, He was amazed at their unbelief. Here Jesus had provided miracles and unparalleled teaching, and they were only moved emotionally, stimulated intellectually, and stunned spiritually. But Jesus wasn’t trying to impress them, He was trying to get them onto the narrow road and through the narrow gate for salvation. The wide road of popularity, the wide gate of prosperity, self-improvement, and religious acceptance, would only lead to destruction, for Jesus was God’s only means of salvation. All other ways were dead ends. Jesus said, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life; no man comes to the father but by Me.’ (John 14:6).

Thomas A Kempis, (1380-1471) wrote,

Follow me; I am the way, the truth, and the life,
Without the way there is no going;
Without the truth there is no knowing;
Without the life there is no living.

¹ John MacArthur, *MacArthur’s New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7*, (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1985), p. 487-489.

Why is Jesus so amazing?

What Matthew doesn't say is that the people obeyed. They admired Jesus' sermon. It is the most admirable sermon anyone has ever heard. In fact, it is the most admired sermon in human history. Jesus didn't preach to be admired, but to produce obedience. Even today, Jesus' sermon is well known, and in some sense 'The Golden Rule' has become everyone's mantra to some degree. Today Jesus is respected, but not submitted to by most.

Jesus is amazing because of who He was – The Messiah, The Lord, The Savior, The Judge, The Son of God, God Himself in human flesh. Not only did He demonstrate who He was by His miraculous works, but by His astonishing teaching ministry.

John Stott, in his marvelous work on the Message of the Sermon on the Mount, gives seven reasons for Jesus' astonishing authority:²

1. Jesus' authority as the teacher.

Jesus taught truth because He was the truth. He was the living voice of the living God. Six times in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus used the term, "You have heard... but I say to you." Correcting the scribal corruptions of Moses from the local authorities.

2. Jesus' Authority as the Christ

He would say, "I have come."

"I have been sent".

"...not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it."

The implications: All the teachings and predictions of the Law and the Prophets reached their fulfillment in Him

As Messiah Jesus announced that "the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand." (Mk. 1:13; Matt. 4:17)

There were five direct references in the Sermon to God's Kingdom.

"He Himself had inaugurated it and had the authority to admit people into it. Jesus knew Himself to be the Christ, God's Messiah of Old Testament expectation"³

²John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter Varsity Press, 1978), Pp. 213-222.

³ Stott, p. 216.

3. Jesus' Authority as the Lord.

Jesus referred to the people who would address Him as 'Lord, Lord' on the day of judgment. It is a clear reference to him as the fullest implications that the title could bear. He began a section requiring obedience to His commands, in Luke's gospel, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord' and not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Jesus saw Himself as more than a teacher, but as the Master. He didn't merely want His disciples to absorb his teaching but to be devoted to Him personally. He was called their "Teacher and Lord" (John 13:13).

4. Jesus' authority as the Savior.

He not only taught salvation but bestowed it. He said, "You are the light of the world...You are the salt of the earth." How could lowly peasants influence the world apart from following Him? In Chapter 9 Jesus not only healed a paralyzed man but then likened himself to a physician of the sick and a Savior of sinners. "I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matt. 9:13).

A. W. Tozer has written,

"Jesus is not one of many ways to approach God, nor is He the best of several ways: He is the only way."

5. Jesus' authority as the Judge.

The entire sermon points towards the day of Judgment. At the end Jesus describes the final setting where men's destinies are decided.

- Jesus will Himself be the Judge. He will be the One who listens to the evidence and testimony brought before the court.
- Jesus will be the decisive factor of the judgment.
No service for Christ, but relationship to Christ will be the issue.
"I never knew you..."
- The final sentence will be concerned with Him.

"Depart from Me you workers of iniquity"
Terribleness of their end "ruin...destruction" –

The final decision will result in banishment from His presence –
eternal separation from Himself.

Stott writes,

“...the basis of the judgment will be people’s attitude to him, and the nature of the judgment will be exclusion from his presence.”⁴

6. Jesus’ authority as the Son of God

When Jesus spoke of God He referred to Him as Creator and sustainer of the natural world, the living God who provides for the birds and flowers, who will also provide for all people. He supplies rain and sunshine on the good and the evil alike. He promises to also care for all the things that people worry over: food, clothing, and life.

This same God Jesus called ‘Father,’ and taught us to pray to as ‘Our Father’; regularly referring to him as ‘your Father in heaven.’ Only the Son of God can call God His Father. To His followers Jesus gave the privilege of addressing God as ‘Abba, Father’.

Matthew records Jesus’ words,

“All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”

(Matt. 11:27).

A progressive revelation is built into the Sermon on the Mount:

“My Father” “Our Father”, and “your Father”.

7. The authority of Jesus as God.

After Jesus’ teaching on the ‘beatitudes’ he spoke of Himself in the place of God: “⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matt. 5:8-12)

⁴ Stott. P. 219.

Jesus speaks of Himself on par with God, with equality with God. The prophets suffered for their faithfulness to God, while the disciples of Jesus will suffer for their faithfulness to Him. Chrysostom put it at the end of the fourth century, “He here... covertly signifies His own dignity, and His equality in honor with Him who begat Him.”⁵

Second, those who addressed Jesus as ‘Lord, Lord’ on the day of Judgment, but had not done “the Father’s will,” are compared to those call Jesus, “Lord, Lord,” (from Luke’s gospel), and did not do what Jesus “commanded” We see a parallel in this of Jesus comparing Himself with the Father as equivalents.

Third, everyone knew that God was the Judge on the day of Judgment. Jesus was also aware of this, as He also equated himself with God as the final Judge of all mankind on that day.

Jesus speaks of Himself as God’s Son, and that what He does God does, and what people do to Him they are doing to God. If we take Jesus at His word and His claims at their face value, we see clearly that Jesus is amazing – God as man, in human flesh, as the Teacher, as the Christ, as the Lord, as the Savior, as the Judge, as the Son of God, and as God.

“His zeal never degenerated into passion, nor His constancy into obstinancy, nor His benevolence into weakness, nor His tenderness into sentimentality, His unworldliness was free from indifference and unsociability, His dignity from pride and presumption, His affectability from familiarity, His self-denial from moroseness, His temperance from austerity.

He combined child-like innocency with manly strength, absorbing devotion to God with untiring interest in the welfare of man, tender love to the sinner with uncompromising severity against sin, commanding dignity with winning humility, fearless courage with wise caution, unyielding firmness with sweet gentleness!”

Philip Schaff

What will you do with Jesus? Be amazed; or bow and surrender to Him for who He is?

⁵ Stott. P. 221.