

Astonishment

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The reaction to the teaching of Christ brought varied results and conclusions in the hearts of those who heard Him. On a number of occasions, the gospel writers mention that "the people were astonished at his doctrine." This was the reaction of the people when Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine." (Matt. 7:28). He caused astonishment in His own country. "And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" (Matt.13:54). Mark states on one occasion that even His disciples "were beyond measure astonished." (Mark 7:37). On another occasion, "And they were astonished with a great astonishment." (Mark 5:42). The meaning of the word astonish from the original language is "to be greatly struck". Webster supplies this definition: "to strike with sudden fear or wonder; astound; amaze."

When the word of the Lord is preached today, we shouldn't be astonished to find people "astonished at his doctrine." Human nature and reaction have not changed through the years! I would suppose the

astonishing thing in a great way would be to find the mass of people not being astonished at His doctrine. We have noted that some seem to use their astonishment to offset the weight and power of the truth. But such will not work! I many say in astonishment that "I never heard of such a thing!" or "How ridiculous can one become!" but if the message is the truth, it remains the truth, regardless of my astonishment or any other reaction.

What is it about the doctrine of Christ that caused the people to be astonished? What causes individuals to be astonished today when they come in contact with the simple truth?

1) "For he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." (Matt. 7:29). This is the answer of explanation for the people being astonished in vs 28. Christ spoke the words of the Sermon on the Mount with definiteness. The Scribes of whom the people were accustomed to hearing quoted Moses, but Christ said, "I say unto you." They weren't used to this! In our time, there are those reared in the haze of denominationalism and so accustomed to indefiniteness, that they are "beyond measure astonished" to hear a gospel sermon preached by one truly respecting the authority of the Lord. There is to be no vagueness in our teaching and preaching

and this invariably astonishes those who are not accustomed to such.

2) Christ had the answer for false teachers and their error. The matter in which He answered the Sadducees regarding their question as to whose wife the woman would be in the resurrection who had had seven husbands is a good example of this. (Matt. 22:23-33). Jesus told them that "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." He called to their minds that God was "not the God of the dead, but of the living." His wisdom in answering these Sadducees astonished the multitude, which heard.

Religious questions demand and deserve an answer from the Word of God, the wisdom of God. When ready answers are given from the Scriptures, there are those today that stand astonished. Inspired men in the New Testament did not have to hesitate when asked by sinners what to do to be saved. (Acts 2: 37-38; 16: 30-33; 22: 16). It astonishes some to hear the answer spoken with such plainness, confidence and boldness. But why shouldn't it be so? People were astonished at the doctrine of Christ then and we shouldn't be astonished when they are still being astonished.

Regardless of what reaction may come, we need to

continue to follow and preach the truth with all the fiber of our being. Astonishment does not nullify truth! We may expect people to cry astonishment when they hear the truth of the one church that Jesus built. (Matt. 16: 18, Eph. 4: 4); baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2: 38); Christ before all (Matt. 10: 37-38); the sin of mechanical music in worship (Eph. 5: 19); and many other things that involve the doctrine of Christ. But the truth is still the truth whether it astonishes YOU or ME or anyone else. Christ astonished people with His teaching and we shouldn't be afraid to do so today. There is no time for compromise and the middle road concept when truth is involved. In many areas, it appears members of the Lord's church, who should know and love the truth, cry astonishment when the word of God is preached with forcefulness and conviction. The old denominational attitude of softness has reached the hearts of those who should be ashamed to cry astonishment at the simple truth. Remember: astonishment is not going to change the truth and it takes the truth to save. (1 Pet. 1:22).