

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE ASTONISHING SAVIOR

And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Mark 1:22

The English word “astonished” appears 7 times in the book of Mark, (3 times in Matthew; 5 times in Luke). On every occasion when it is used, it is directly related to something the LORD taught or something which HE performed. The Greek word from which it is translated, (in our text) “*ekplesso*” appears in the NT 14 times and is also translated as “amazed”, the use of which is also directly related to HIS actions or doctrine.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word, “*shamem*” is translated as “*astonied*” in the KJV, which carries with it the same sort of meaning as “astonished” and is in fact translated as such in other versions of the scriptures. This Hebrew word is also translated as “to be desolate” as we see in the case of Tamar, having been raped by her half brother Amnon, “*So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.*” (2 Sam 13:20)

Isaiah prophetically declared the reaction of men to the Person and work of CHRIST saying, “*Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonied (astonished) at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.*” (Isa 52:13-15) He said they were “speechless” in HIS presence, they are “overwhelmed” at HIS doctrine, and they are “agape” at that which HE has performed, even though they have no understanding of the import of it nor any respect unto HIM.

When the LORD JESUS began HIS ministry in the temple at the age of twelve, HE fulfilled this prophecy in part, “*And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.*” (Luke 2:47) Even HIS parents were “amazed” and HE replied, “*How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.*” (Luke 2:49-50), and Mary “pondered” these things.

The Greek word which is translated in the text in Luke 2:47 as “*astonished*,” is “*existemi*” and could be translated as “become insane” or “out of one's mind”. It carries with it the notion of extreme agitation and wonderment. This is the reaction of all men to the SAVIOR. It is impossible to be neutral in regards to HIM. HE is the KING of Kings and LORD of Lords, worthy of all praise and is the “*fullness of the GODHEAD bodily*”. To, supposedly, be indifferent to HIM is to ignore GOD, the same as being against HIM and is a rejection of HIM as LORD. The person and work of CHRIST is the dividing line between those who are saved and those who are lost.

Some are astonished at HIS doctrine and rise up in rebellion against it, hating not only its content but its MESSENGER. Others are astonished at HIS doctrine and are compelled to bow down before HIS feet confessing, “*Thou art the CHRIST the SON of the Living GOD.*” This is to believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST and men can only do so as they are given the gift of faith.

Many pay lip service to being HIS followers, like the multitudes which followed HIM when HE was performing miracles openly and feeding them with loaves and fishes. Yet the day came when those

same "multitudes" were "astonished" at the content of HIS message. *"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."* (John 6:66) That message which "astonished" them, was this, *"no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."* (John 6:65) Many of them said HIS doctrine was a "hard saying", since it clearly revealed that salvation was totally of grace and not based on any sort of merit or carnal standing.

This response is not surprising, since the same reaction takes place today when the very message, that CHRIST set forth, is preached. Religious men will "follow" CHRIST for any number of reasons, yet when they hear the truth of HIS electing grace, plainly spoken, they will reject it, saying this is a hard saying. Paul devoted a good portion of the ninth chapter of Romans to this very expression of animosity towards the LORD by the religious.

To reject the message which the SAVIOR preached, is to reject the SAVIOR. Did HE not say, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."* (John 14:15) ? *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not (or love) the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46)

One of the most astonishing aspects of the LORD's teaching was that HE spoke with "authority". HE is the Eternal and Living WORD of GOD and every word which HE spoke was with power and not simple religious shibboleths which comfort the carnal mind. The words which HE spoke were powerful and smote men in the heart. *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* (Heb 4:12)

Over and over again the Pharisee's tried to trip HIM up and pose questions which they felt would overturn the truth that HE preached. Yet this was all to no avail because HIS word cannot fail to accomplish the very thing which HE sends it to do, whether it is a word of deliverance to those in bondage or a word of condemnation to those who are satisfied with their religion. *"For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"* (2Cor 2:15-16)

HE is an "astonishing SAVIOR" because HE:

Despised the "righteous" (i.e.; in their own eyes) and companied with sinners. *"And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* (Mat 9:10-13)

Gained HIS greatest victory by dying. *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."* (Col 2:14-15)

Was wounded in the house of HIS friends and died to save HIS enemies (i.e.; in their own minds). *"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* (Rom 5:7-10)

Embraced death and destroyed it in one fell swoop. HE was *"made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. (Rom 1:3-4)* *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* (1Pet 1:3)

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