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The Sermon on the Mount, Part 32

Not As The Scribes

Text: Matthew 7:28-29

There are at least two different groups of hearers on the mountain where Jesus is teaching. Chapter 5, verse 1 says that there were crowds (the multitudes) and there were followers (His disciples). Some are not yet convinced that this teacher is the Savior of the world. Others are completely convinced and are all in. Where you were on the spectrum would certainly color *how* you heard Jesus. Whatever the case, it was clear that when Jesus concluded His teaching, the unanimous response was: astonishment (28). In some places in the NT, the Greek word for *astonished* (ekpleesso) is translated, *amazed* (Luke 2:48, 9:43). Jesus' teaching rocked their worlds, affected their thinking and behavior. Their response was not, "Thank you, Rabbi. Nice words". No, it was "Wow"! It was amazement and wonder and awe and marvel.

**Illus.**

*Lake Superior State University (Michigan) receives submissions from around the world for its yearly list of "Words Banished from the Queen's English for Misuse, Overuse and General Uselessness", with 2012’s collection– its 37th – topped by the word "amazing". ...Gitel Hesselberg, writing in from Haifa, was concerned that "people use 'amazing' for anything that is nice or heartwarming. In other words, for things that are not amazing". A correspondent from British Columbia agreed, saying that "the word which once aptly described the process of birth is now used to describe such trivial things as toast or the color of a shirt". Martha Waszak, from Lansing, Michigan, was even more concerned. "Every talk show uses this word at least two times every five minutes. Hair is not 'amazing'. Shoes are not 'amazing'. There are any number of adjectives that are far more descriptive. I saw Martha Stewart use the word 'amazing' six times in the first five minutes of her television show."*

Yes, unfortunately, the words, *amazing* or *astonished* are misused and overused. However, in our text, they are most appropriate and accurate as Matthew describes the people's response to Jesus' teaching. When Jesus taught, He brought light in areas where there was darkness and ignorance. Later on in this gospel, in chapter 22, Jesus had a conversation with the Sadducees about the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. After Jesus straightened out their faulty thinking, the Sadducees were astonished/amazed (Matthew 22:23-33, esp. 33). What was it, exactly, that was so amazing? Was it Jesus' voice? No, that wouldn't be amazing. The text tells us what amazed the hearers.

1. **Jesus taught with authority** (Greek=exousia). Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary says that *exousia* has gone through a linguistic evolution.

*“From the meaning of “leave or permission,” or liberty of doing as one pleases, it passed to that of “the ability or strength with which one is endued,” then to that of the “power of authority,” the right to exercise power, e.g., Matt. 9:6; 21:23; 2 Cor. 10:8; or “the power of rule or government,” the power of one whose will and commands must be obeyed by others, e.g., Matt. 28:18; John 17:2; Jude 25; Rev. 12:10; 17:13*

When Jesus spoke in the first century, He spoke in such a compelling way that it was clear to many that this teacher must be obeyed.  
I dare say, it is the same today. When we sit under this authoritative word, God speaks to us in such a forceful way, that we sense His authority and power and we are amazed and transformed. Authority is "the rightful use of power". There is much national conversation today, around the issue of police and the use of their authority. How far is too far? What's constitutes an appropriate or inappropriate use of an officer's office, badge or gun?

What was amazing about Jesus is that He *rightly* used His authority. He personified power under control.

**Illus**.

From [linkedin.com](http://linkedin.com):

*"Managers Abuse Their Power When:*

*1. They periodically remind you that you can be fired . . . “heh, heh, just kidding.”*

*2. They humiliate you in front of others.*

*3. To their team or department they’re yellers, screamers, or cursers and when called on it say “Everyone knows I don’t mean it when I do that” and they clean it up nicely when meeting up the chain of command.*

*4. Their primary exercise is jumping to conclusions because they have a “busy desk.”*

*5. They don’t want to be confused by the facts after they’ve made a decision.*

*6. They openly play favorites with members of their team and isolate themselves from those they don’t like.*

*7. They get angry if you propose an idea to one of their peers they can’t take credit for.*

*8. They exclude you from meetings on projects you are part of.*

*9. They withhold information you need to do your job, saying “I’ll tell you when you need to know.”*

*10. Even though they’ve approved your vacation time and it’s on the calendar, they want you to remind them of your vacation the week before.*

*11. They concoct false emergencies while you’re on vacation or traveling for business and then berate you for not having answered your email or phone while you were gone, even after you told them you'd have limited or no access."*

Those are examples of abuse of exousia, authority.

Jesus didn't play such games. No, He taught in a life-altering way! He was forceful, unapologetic, clear and passionate. The crowds and the already convinced disciples were astonished. One commentator says that "After nineteen hundred years, we are astonished too." (Design For Life: An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. A. M. Hunter. P. 96)

Verse 29 tells us exactly what amazed these hearers: Jesus spoke as one having authority. The text also tells us what was lacking from His teaching. Listen to the negative:" He didn't teach like the scribes. What does that mean?

Scribes taught by quoting. They offered no teaching that was original. Jesus said that which had not ever been heard before. He was original in His proclamation and application.

John 7:40-46:

*40 Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, “Truly this is the Prophet.”*

*41 Others said, “This is the Christ.”*

*But some said, “Will the Christ come out of Galilee?*

*42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?”*

*43 So there was a division among the people because of Him.*

*44 Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.*

*45 Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why have you not brought Him?”*

*46 The officers answered, “No man ever spoke like this Man!”*

Jesus didn’t speak or teach like any other teachers. Scottish theologian A. (Alexander) B. (Blamain) Bruce (18-31-1899) said it best: The scribes spoke “*by authority*” while Jesus spoke “*with authority*”. (Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, P. 136)

Jesus took ordinary objects and caused His hearers to understand a spiritual truth that was, before that, unclear. For example, in Matthew 13, Jesus uses a series of stories (parables) to describe the nature of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:10-11, 24, 31, 33, 34-35, 44, 45, 47)

Listen to Matthew 13:53-56:

*53 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there.*

*54 When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, “Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?*

*55 Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joe, Simon, and Judas? 56 And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?”*

Jesus said what others did not say. He was unique in His **doctrine**, His **declaration**, His **decisions,** His **diagnosis,** His **delivery,** His **direction,** His **discussions** and evenHis **death.** When we hear Jesus, we are astonished. He is not like any other communicator we have heard. We are amazed, stupefied, and awestruck.

**Closing**

Charles H. Gabriel has written a hymn titled *I Stand Amazed in the Presence.* I will quote only the first stanza and refrain.

*I stand amazed in the presence*

*Of Jesus the Nazarene,*

*And wonder how He could love me,*

*A sinner, condemned, unclean.*

***Refrain***

*O how marvelous! O how wonderful!*

*And my song shall ever be:*

*O how marvelous! O how wonderful!*

*Is my Savior’s love for me!*