TEACHING THAT ASTONISHED!

Matthew 7:28 (NKJV)
28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,

When Jesus finished teaching, the people were astonished (cf. Mt. 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). The idea of astonished is that of sheer amazement, a state of awe, or being overwhelmed (cf. Mt. 7:28; 13:54; 19:25; 22:22).

I think what amazed them was His dogmatism about salvation – about how some, even though professing so strongly, are not truly saved. You see, the Jews tended to think and teach that as Jews, they were all automatically saved as the favored people of God, so what Christ said was astonishing. I think it was staggering for them to hear Jesus attaching salvation directly to Himself and to recognition of Him as LORD! This was startling. It was shocking! No one else ever dared say these kinds of things.

The word ***teaching*** can refer to either the content or the manner. Evidently, both are in view here. After reviewing the content of Christ's teaching, verse 28 says the people were astonished. But then verse 29 goes on to address the manner of Christ's teaching, saying He taught as one having authority.

It is pointed out that while they were astonished, it says nothing about a heart commitment. However, Jesus calls for allegiance to Him as Lord and not just amazement, as the whole surrounding context shows.
If God showed up in person to teach us, what would it look like? It would look like Jesus! He was God in the flesh, and His manner of teaching and the content of it blew the people's minds.

John 7:32 (NKJV)
32 The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him.

John 7:45–46 (NKJV)
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, "**<u>No man ever spoke like this Man!"</u>**

Isaiah 11:1–2 (NKJV)
1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

2 The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The **Spirit of wisdom and understanding**, The **Spirit of counsel and might**, The **Spirit of knowledge** and of the fear of the Lord.

Luke 4:21–22 (NKJV)
21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."
22 So all bore witness to Him, and **marveled at the gracious words** which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

The wisdom and power of Jesus' words were amazing. You know, Jesus never lost an argument. When Jesus asked the questions, it left his critics just sitting there in silence. He never had to say, "***I don't know, I will get back to you.***" He was never at a loss for words. He never said something really stupid like I often do. Instantly, He always knew what to say, and it was always stunningly profound.

We marvel at His supernatural miracles, but just as astounding was His teaching! It too is one of the great proofs that He is the Messiah. No one ever taught like Jesus did – either before or after Him.

Matthew 7:29 (NKJV)
29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Here is the standout thing – Jesus taught as one having authority in contrast to the scribes. The scribes were the scholars of the day.

Scribes in ancient Israel were learned men whose business was to study the Law, transcribe it, and write commentaries on it. They were also hired on occasions when the need for a written document arose or when an interpretation of a legal point was needed. Ezra, "a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses," was a scribe (Ezra 7:6).

"The scribes took their job of preserving Scripture very seriously; they would copy and recopy the Bible meticulously, even counting letters and spaces to ensure each copy was correct. We can thank the Jewish scribes for preserving the Old Testament portion of our Bibles." - ***Gotquestions.org***

Most of the influential scribes were laymen and were also members of the conservative Pharisaic party (cf. Acts 23:9). For this reason, the scribes are often linked together with the Pharisees.

But here was the problem: the scribes also considered themselves the guardians of the so-called “oral law”. Supposedly, God not only gave Moses the WRITTEN WORD, but also the ORAL WORD. That is where they really got into trouble. In addition to the written law, they also added to it all kinds of legalistic manmade teachings called “the oral law”.

In contrast Christ brought the people back to the intent of the Law and presented a higher spiritual standard which can only be fulfilled in relationship to Him (cf. Mt. 5:28). For example, Christ taught it is not enough to refrain from physical adultery – one must not even look on a woman to lust after her – for to do so is to commit adultery in the heart (Mt. 5:28). While the scribes emphasized outward legalism, in contrast Christ emphasized having a right HEART!

The scribes were scholars, and scholars are always quoting some other authority. **I remember when I was in Bible College,** one of my professors told us young men, “*Now remember you are young and being young you are going to have to quote other scholars if people are going to respect what you are saying.”* There is a certain wisdom in that. Yes, a young person just learning should appeal to those with more knowledge.

But this is the point: Jesus did not need to do that. As someone said, *“He didn’t need to quote anyone because He was the original Word* (John 1:1).” (Life Application Bible) Jesus was THE message – He was the ultimate communication from God. He was the communication of God from God.

In contrast, the scribes are called “*walking footnotes who derived their authority by citing other famous rabbis.”* (The Moody Bible Commentary) The introduction of the idea of AUTHORITY becomes a major theme in Matthew. Christ’s authority in teaching in Matt. 5-7 segues to His authority as seen in His miracle-working ministry in Matt. 8-10.

And this emphasis on ***“authority***” became a major point of contention as the religious leaders felt threatened by Jesus. They had a problem with His lack of ***“official credentials***” (cf. Lk. 4). Never mind that He had all the God-ordained Messianic credentials outlined in the prophetic Scriptures.

This is why they constantly challenged Jesus. This explains the tension over the traditions (cf. Mt. 9:14; 12:2; 15:1-2); their demand for signs (cf. 12:38; 16:1); and their challenging questions regarding authority (cf. 21:23).

In effect, these religious leaders were constantly saying to Jesus, ***"Who do you think you are?"***

Matthew 21:23 (NKJV)
23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what **authority** are You doing these things? And who gave You this **authority**?"

This is why when Jesus said things like, "***You have heard…But I tell you***" in what is called "The Six Antithesis Statements," His voice of authority was met with hostility from these religious leaders (cf. Mt. 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). In each case, Christ explained that what they had been taught about the mere EXTERNAL emphasis of law is to have a DEEPER corresponding INTERNAL reality. Jesus made it a HEART issue!

The theme of Christ's Sermon on the Mount is a message about righteous living. Christ emphasized that His teaching must be received with the obedience of repentance in view of WHO He is as the Messiah-King.

His entire message is not merely ethical but MESSIANIC! It is grounded not merely in doing this or that but in WHO He is. He was not merely a prophet but claimed to be LORD. He determines who enters the kingdom.

Why should we adhere to Christ's Words in the Sermon on the Mount? Why should we put it into practice? Because of its striking illustrations? Because of the beauty of its style? Because of the power of its moral content?

No, as followers of Christ, we practice it because beyond its ethical, moral, and spiritual teaching is the **PERSON** of the preacher Himself. Recognizing Jesus as Lord and Savior means we seek to do what He says. In repentance, He calls us to allegiance to Himself as Lord. Above all, this message is about the AUTHORITY of Christ.

As Lord, Christ speaks with AUTHORITY and true faith responds with obedience! That is the bottom-line issue! That is the conclusion of the whole matter, as emphasized by Christ here at the end of the greatest sermon ever given. Build your life accordingly!

"Many people entertain the idea that Christianity, like almost any other religion, is basically a system of beliefs - you know, a set of doctrines or a code of behavior, a philosophy, an ideology.

But that's a myth. Christianity is not at all like Buddhism, Islam, or Confucianism. The founders of those religions said (in effect), 'Here is what I teach. Believe my teachings. Follow my philosophy.' Jesus said, 'Follow me' (Matthew 9:9).
Leaders of the world's religions said, 'What do you think about what I teach?' Jesus said, 'Who do you say I am?'(Luke 9:20)"

– ***Josh McDowell***

Let me ask you. Who is Jesus to you? Is He truly your Lord? Is He your Savior! As Savior, He died for all your sins. As Lord/God over all, He arose again the third day. Are you building your life upon Him as Savior and Lord? This is the ultimate issue – the ultimate eternal issue.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" – Acts 16:31