

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Kingdom Marveling

by Dan Trygg

“And after the demon was cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the multitudes marveled, saying, ‘Nothing like this was ever seen in Israel.’”

Matthew 9:33

“And all were speaking well of Him, and marveling at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, ‘Is this not Joseph's son?’”

Luke 4:22

“Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household.’⁵ And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And He marveled at their unbelief.”

Mark 6:4-6

“Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who were following, ‘Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.’”

Matthew 8:10

“I marvel that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷ which is really not another...”

Galatians 1:6-7

“Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you.”

1 John 3:13

The Greek word for “marvel” is *thaumazō*. It occurs 43 times in the NT. *It means “amazement, wonder”.* It covers a range of meaning: from surprise, to shock, to incomprehension, to even bordering on terror. In that sense, it is like our word, “awful”, which originally meant “full of awe and wonder”, and sometime refers to things being “scary” and “distasteful” to even speak of what is downright “horrifying”. **The strong message is that *this is something that is way out of the ordinary, or what was expected. This is not “business as usual”.*** It can set a person back on their heels, as they try to grasp what is happening, or it can leave a person shocked and speechless. Something is happening, or has just happened, which is somehow shockingly surprising or amazing. It is somehow beyond grasping with the mind. **It is “outside the box” of regular life experiences, and is what we might call “mind blowing”.** I have selected some verses above to survey different ways in which people reacted to the Kingdom of God, and marveling was the result.

The first, and most obvious, way in which the Kingdom produced awe and wonder was through *the manifestation of supernatural power in signs and wonders.* These “signs” were a regular part of the declaration and demonstration of the power of the Kingdom of God. It was part of the methodology of gospel preaching (Matt. 9:33; 15:31; Mk. 5:20; Lk. 11:14; Acts 2:7; 3:12.) They also helped to confirm who Jesus was (Matt. 8:27; 21:20; Lk. 2:18,33; 9:42,43; Jn. 5:20; Acts 2:22), and also accredited His followers (Jn. 14:12; 2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 13:5-12). Look at our first example above, Matthew 9:33. In this chapter alone, Jesus healed a paralytic, the woman with the flow of blood, Jairus’ daughter, two blind men, and the demonized mute individual mentioned in vs. 32 and 33. Then in verse 35, we have the summary statement: “Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.” This was also a normative part of the preaching of the apostles and the early church (Matt. 10:7,8; Lk. 10:1-9; Acts 2:43; 4:29,30; 5:12; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12; Rom. 15:18,19; Heb. 2:3,4). **Miracles were a big part of what Jesus and His followers were doing. They displayed the power of the Kingdom.** Often, when a miracle took place, **people were amazed, filled with astonishment and wonder,** ...as you might expect.

A second example of people being amazed had to do with *a radical change in a person's life, ...in this case, in Jesus' own life!* In Luke 4:22, Jesus was in His hometown, early in His ministry. As was His custom, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. This particular day, He stood to read, and then He preached a message to the people in attendance. These people, who had known Him all His life, “were amazed at the words of grace coming out from His mouth, and they were saying, ‘Is this not the son of Joseph?’” **Apparently, Jesus had never spoken like this before! They were shocked, astonished, amazed at Jesus!** It is like they were saying, “Who are You, and what have you done with Jesus?” – That’s how profoundly different Jesus’ behavior was! It would seem that the Lord must have been a “sleeper”, a quiet, unobtrusive person, most of His life, ...that is, up until His baptism, the receipt of the Holy Spirit, and the radical shift in His life from carpenter to preacher. **The quiet boy they had known was now a gifted speaker! Where did *this* come from?** We see this come up a couple of other times, first in regard to Jesus (Jn. 7:15) and then, later, with regard to the apostles (Acts 4:13). In both of these examples, people could recognize an unusual ability to speak and reason, ...an ability which was given by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 6:10). Well, **this should be part of our own experience, as well.** Many of us have gone through such a radical shift. Others of us have been slowly *being transformed.* In any case, **people who knew us before should recognize radical changes in our lives, too.**

Did you know that there were two times recorded in the NT where *Jesus Himself* was amazed?

One of these scenarios grew out of this same preaching encounter at the synagogue at Nazareth. What started with the people recognizing, and being amazed at, Jesus' dramatic change in behavior, and His ability to preach, quickly changed. **Instead of responding to what was a clear sign of something powerful at work in Him, they took offense at Him. They discounted Him and dismissed Him.** It caused Jesus to comment in all four gospels that a prophet is not without honor, except in his own home town and among his family members, and even within his own household. What started out with surprise and astonishment, "What's *this*?", ended up with an abrupt discounting and dismissal, "It's *only* the carpenter's son." **This attitude of dismissal caused the *third scenario* where someone was amazed.** Even though Jesus had been healing people in Judea before coming to Nazareth, and people were initially excited about that, this change of attitude toward Him caused them to no longer anticipate the power of God. As a result, **"He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled at their unbelief."** We will run into this as well. Some people will be absolutely *closed* toward the possibility of God at work, even when it is happening all around them. Their spiritual dullness will be shocking!

The opposite will be true, as well. **Sometimes we will be amazed at the spiritual openness, insights and faith of those we might consider to be least likely.** When asked for help by a Roman centurion, whose servant was sick, Jesus was willing to come to his house. The centurion, however, sent a message to Jesus, saying that He did not *need* to come. He himself was a man under authority, and he had people under him, as well. He fully believed that Jesus would be able to "just say the word, and my servant will be healed." **Jesus was amazed at the faith of this man who was considered an outsider and unclean by most of the Jews.** He exclaimed, "I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel!" (Matt. 8:10) This was *exciting* to see! The uninitiated can have profound insight, through God.

Fifth, we will also experience amazement and shock at the instability of some people's faith commitment. Paul experienced this with the Galatian churches. He had come to them and preached the gospel message clearly, and they had responded in faith, and were transformed. They had experienced the joy of new life. They had experienced the power of the Spirit, and even had experienced the miraculous power of God, and yet, when some false teachers came in behind Paul, they were quickly taken in, and abandoned the gospel of salvation by grace through faith. When Paul heard of it, he was shocked. They had seemed to be off to such a great start. He marveled that they had lost perspective, and so quickly lost sight of what was important. It is similar to the seeds sown on the rocky soil in Jesus' parable of the sower (Mk. 4:16,17). They gladly receive the word, and they seem to be responding to it and off to a good start. But, when they are confronted with hardship or persecution because of the gospel, they quickly abandon it. I have seen this many times, and **it is always shocking, and often leaves you scratching your head, marveling at how quickly some fall away or are diverted into some other path.** It is a reminder of the spiritual battle we are in, as well as the fickleness of some people. In Paul's case, he was successful in turning the Galatian Christians back to Christ. While we might marvel at the inconsistency of those we work with, we should not easily give up, either. Sometimes, when we pursue or continue to reach out, we will succeed. In other cases, our efforts will prove to be in vain. There is a battle going on for the hearts and minds of people. It is real, and we will see some who persevere, and others will be washed out.

Finally, we will be amazed that the world will hate us. We may have the best of intentions, and do nothing wrong, and *still* people will resent us and even attack us. I have experienced it from both unbelievers and from people within the church. In John 15:18-16:4, Jesus prepared the disciples for this. He told them that **the world hates those who belong to Jesus, because they are no longer of the world.** The part that can be so difficult to understand is that often there is no reasonable basis for their negative attitude. We should *not* be surprised, or marvel, however, because if they hated Jesus, they will hate us, as well. Paul also wrote that **all who desire to live with good-devotion toward Christ will be persecuted. That is as much a spiritual principle and promise as anything else!** It is the nature of the circumstances we are in. **We are in a world in which the enemy is entrenched and is actively at work. He will come against us. It is not a matter of IF, it is a matter of WHEN.** If we are naïve, we will be in shock when it happens. But, **if we are well-informed and emotionally prepared, when the hostility or opposition comes against us, we will not be surprised or flustered.** *We will be able to respond with wisdom, grace and presence of mind.* As Paul says, "our battle is *not* against flesh and blood, but against spiritual beings in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

As we grow in our spiritual maturity, our lives should become puzzling to outsiders! There is something about us that is different. People should "smell Jesus", "read Jesus", and "see the radiance of Jesus" in us (2 Cor. 2:14; 3:2,3; 4:6; Matt. 5:14-16). People who are led by the Spirit are increasingly aware of and receptive to communication from God, ...communication which outsiders, or people living by the flesh, are *not* privy to. As a result, **those who are spiritual will be motivated by inner desires that come from the Holy Spirit, that others will think are strange or foolish.** Those led by the Spirit will do things that other people will *not* understand (1 Cor. 2:12-16). **If our lives are not somehow shockingly amazing, or don't cause people to wonder, then in what way are we any different that they?**