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How Astonishing It Is... Selected Scriptures

In our day of technology and media, it may be rare that we are truly amazed, awed, or astounded by the things we see or experience in our lives. Yet there is something that should amaze, awe, and astonish us every day – the glory of God and all He has done for us sinful people through Jesus Christ.

There was a pastor in America's history who spoke and wrote much of this. He reminds us how astonishing it is when we consider all that Jesus has done for us.

Jonathan Edwards was a New England pastor who lived from 1703-1758. Unfortunately, most only know him for his famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God". He is characterized along with others of that time only as "hell-fire and brimstone" preachers. However, Edwards preached and wrote extensively of the glories of Christ and the gospel and how this would engender love, gratitude, and worship in the lives of those who seek to know and follow Him.¹ Edwards used the word "astonishing" to describe our response when we consider what Jesus did for us in leaving heaven to come to live, suffer, and die for us.

There are many passages in the Bible that remind us of this:

***"But as for me, I would seek God,
And I would place my cause before God;
Who does great and unsearchable things,
Wonders without number. Job 5:8-9***

***Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, And
His greatness is unsearchable. Psalm 145:3***

***"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts.
Isaiah 55:8-9***

***Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom
and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are
His judgments and unfathomable His ways!
Romans 11:33***

***To me, the very least of all saints, this grace
was given, to preach to the Gentiles the
unfathomable riches of Christ... Ephesians 3:8***

***...To comprehend with all the saints what is the
breadth and length and height and depth,
19 and to know the love of Christ which
surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up
to all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:18-19***

Reflect on the words used in these verses. "Great and unsearchable things". "Wonders". "My ways higher than your ways". "Unfathomable". "Love which surpasses knowledge". What should be our response to these truths? Wonder. Awe. Astonishment! One pastor said the purpose of Christian preaching and teaching is simply to present before us the greatness of God and our salvation. This is what Jonathan Edwards constantly sought to do in his preaching and writing.

As we seek to know God better and study His word, we may fall into two different extremes. We may study all the different areas of Theology Proper (the study of God Himself), Christology (the study of Christ), and Soteriology (the study of salvation). We learn lists and definitions and descriptions of God and His work. It may become more like an academic pursuit and we think we have God all figured out and we lose the wonder and astonishment in our lives.

Or we may think of God as someone more like us we can understand and identify with. We may hear someone say, "My God would never judge someone or condemn them to hell". In this we

lose the wonder and astonishment of God's glory and the gospel as well.

We must not forget that God is far above anything we can grasp and understand. Yet He has chosen to reveal much about Himself in His word that should always lead us to a response of awe, amazement, and astonishment.

As Jonathan Edwards pondered these truths, he wrote of how astonishing it is to consider what Jesus did for us.²

How astonishing it is, that One who is blessed forever, and is infinitely and essentially happy, should endure the greatest sufferings that ever were endured on earth!

How astonishing it is, that One who is the supreme Lord and judge of the world, should be arraigned, and should stand at the judgment-seat of mortal worms, and then be condemned!

How astonishing it is, that One who is the living God, and the fountain of life, should be put to death!

How astonishing it is, that One who created the world, and gives life to all his creatures, should be put to death by his own creatures!

How astonishing it is, that One of infinite majesty and glory, and so the object of love, praises, and adorations of angels, should be mocked and spit upon by the vilest of men!

How astonishing it is, that One, infinitely good, and who is love itself, should suffer the greatest cruelty. How astonishing it is, that One who is infinitely beloved of the Father, should be put to inexpressible anguish under his own Father's wrath!

How astonishing it is, that he who is King of heaven, who has heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool, should be buried in the prison of the grave! How astonishing it is!

How wonderful this is! And yet this is the way that God's wisdom has fixed upon, as the way of sinner's salvation!

Surely as we contemplate God's glory and holiness, our sinfulness, and all that God has done for us, let us constantly be astonished by Christ and the gospel!

¹We shared a biographical study on Jonathan Edwards, May 5, 2017. www.capitolcom.org/west-virginia/studies.

²Edwards, Jonathan. *The Wisdom of God Displayed in the Way of Salvation*.

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays

12:00 PM McManus Conference Room

(MB 254 located by House minority offices)