

21 July 2013

Bless the Lord (Pt 1) Bless His Holy Name

This week we begin a new study on the topic of 'Blessing God'. I have realised that we spend much of our time focusing on what to do and what not to do, and such studies are good and useful for the battle we are in today, but there is also a need to learn more about the God we worship and hence this series. We will consider phrases like 'blessed be God' and 'blessed be the Lord', and much of what we learn on this topic, although not exclusively, will come from the book of Psalms.

Before we establish our points let us consider what it means to 'bless God'. The Hebrew words for *blessed* include; *ashbrey* and *baruk*, and the Greek includes; *eulogetos* and *makarios*.

i) *ashbrey* is also translated; happy, and

ii) *baruk* is also translated; to kneel, to kneel down, to salute, and

iii) *eulogetos* is only translated blessed, but its derivative *eulogio* is also translated praise, and

iv) *makarios* is also translated; happier or happy.

Generally verses where *blessed* is used of God the words *baruk* and *eulogetos* are behind the English word, hence having a sense of praise or kneel down. And when used of man the words *ashbrey* and *makarios* are behind the word *blessed*, hence a sense of happy or happier.

In this study we will cover four points from the Psalms:-

1. bless the holy name of the Lord, and
2. bless the Lord for He has loaded us with benefits, and
3. bless the Lord for His kindness, and
4. bless the Lord for He is very great and is clothed with honour and majesty.

Let us add a little more detail to our points:-

1. Bless the holy name of the Lord

Ps.103:1 [*A Psalm*] of David. *Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, [bless] his holy name.*

See also Ps.113:2

When we bless the Lord, when we praise Him and kneel before Him in worship we are encouraged to bless His name, His holy name. This concept of blessing God may appear unfamiliar to believers today, but is not so strange to the Jew or Messianic believer, who in their prayers for Shabbat will often begin with blessing the Lord, when they say "*Baruk attah Adonai Eloheinu melak baalam*", which means, *Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the universe*. I remember when Karen and I were at the Messianic Jewish group and it was customary to pray the blessing before we received the bread and wine, hence we would pray to the Lord blessing Him for the elements. Since Karen and I moved away from the Messianic group we slowly slipped back into not blessing the Lord.

In our verse from Psalms we see David blessing the name of the Lord with *all* that is within him.

There are other believers in Scripture that bless the Lord and His name, some examples include;

i) Ruth 4: 14, where the woman blessed the Lord for giving a son unto Ruth and Boaz.

ii) In Nehemiah the Levites stood up and blessed the name of the Lord (see Neh.9: 5).

iii) When Job's possessions were burnt up and his servants stolen, Job rent his clothes before the Lord and said, *the Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord* (see Job 1: 21).

iv) When David sung unto the Lord he blessed His name (see Ps.96: 2).

When we bless the Lord, when we bless His name, we exalt His name above all blessing and praise (see Neh.9: 5).

And it is the same with the Lord Jesus Christ whom God the Father exalted by giving Him a name above all names (see Phil.2: 9). So when we bless the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we exalt His name above Allah, Buddha and all the other gods of the heathen. We lift up the name of the Lord Jesus Christ on high.

When the heathen use the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ as a swear word and blaspheme His name (see Jam.2: 6,7), they are doing the opposite of blessing Him, they are disobeying the commandment to *not* take the name of the Lord thy God in vain (see Ex.20: 7 & Deut.5: 11). The only person who would want the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to be blasphemed, is Satan.

Why doesn't the heathen use the name of Mohammed as a swear word, and so when they cut their finger, or just want to vent their frustrations they say "Mohammed"? Because Mohammed's name is to be exalted as much as mine is, i.e; *not at all*. Mohammed's name is not worthy of our praise, his name is not to be blessed, so let those who want to swear use his name or the Pope's name, but *not* the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name is to be exalted above every name. Now that's a good reason to bless His name, to exalt it!

Let us *Sing unto God, sing praises to His name: extol Him that rideth upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him* (see Ps.68: 4).

When we come before God in our quiet times, in our worship together, let us bless the name of the Lord together as one voice, exalting His Holy name above *all* names.

2. Bless the Lord for He has loaded us with benefits.

Ps.68:19 *Blessed [be] the Lord, [who] daily loadeth us [with benefits, even] the God of our salvation. Selah.*

See also: Ps.103:2

In my job as a sales person, I sell features of a product and their related benefits to the customer. When a customer chooses to buy the product they receive the benefits which they have bought into by handing over money. But I have never thought of trying to promote the benefits of salvation in Christ as I do the products we sell. Yet David in our verse from Psalms is convinced that the Lord God daily bestows upon him tangible benefits. And not just some benefits, but He loads him up daily. In other words David struggles to carry them all because there are so many, they are so plentiful. These benefits appear to be summed up in Ps.74: 12 *For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.*

Today we would also refer to verses in the New Testament that bless God for all His spiritual blessings in Christ (see Eph 1:3), and so we bless God for his abundant mercy, for He hath begotten us in Christ (see 1Cor.4: 15 & 1Pet 1:3).

For some who reject the gospel of Christ crucified they choose not to receive the Lord Jesus Christ because they do not want to give up the pleasures of this world, like wine, woman and beer. And we see this truth in the Scriptures, where the heathen who reject Christ, who reject the Light, *neither cometh to the Light, lest his deeds should be reproved* (see Jn.3: 20). The benefits of salvation are often portrayed as the eternal joy of salvation in heaven, which is correct, but what immediate benefits does a sinner receive when he chooses to believe that Christ died for His sins on the cross, and that after three days He was raised again from the dead? In Ps.68 David is speaking about all the wondrous works that God did in the wilderness for Israel, where He fought for them and defended them against their enemies, provided them manna and water out of a rock. Hence David blesses the Lord for His works, His salvation of Israel. Today the Lord:-

- i) gives the believer His Holy Scriptures of truth to defend themselves against the wiles of the devil.
- ii) gives the believer His Holy Spirit. Which some in the early church saw as a benefit because they were prepared to pay money to receive the Holy Ghost (see Acts 8: 18, 19).
- iii) provides for the believer, where He gives an assurance that *all things work together for good to them that love God* (see Rom.8: 28).

These benefits a believer receives in the here and now are by themselves worth blessing God for, let alone the future hope of our long-home in heaven. Is it any wonder that David, who knew of God's saving grace, had the Holy Spirit of God and knew all things worked for good, he blessed the Lord for daily loading him with benefits?

When was the last time you blessed the Lord? If you are anything like me the last time I thought of blessing and the Lord, it was thanking Him for His bountiful blessings, but I don't think I have blessed the Lord since Karen and I were at the Messianic group. Perhaps because I have always thought of the word associating with what God has done for me, His blessings that He gives. And that is true, but regardless of how strange it may feel, the Scriptures speak of believers blessing God, kneeling before Him, praising Him for His benefits, especially the benefits of salvation. Perhaps in retrospect we bless the Lord whenever we get down on our knees and pray and when we praise him.

Let us today be encouraged to bless the Lord, kneel before Him and praise Him for He has loaded us with benefits, in and through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Bless the Lord for His kindness

Ps.31:21 *Blessed [be] the Lord: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.*

David also blessed the Lord for His marvellous kindness in a strong city. It wasn't just for the Lord's kindness, but David called it the Lord's *marvellous* kindness. And which city is this strong city that David is talking about? In Ps. 60: 9 & 108: 10, the strong city is referenced to Edom when David and Joab went up and slew every male (see 1Kgs.11: 5), and perhaps the Lord showed David great kindness in that battle. The Lord's kindness was so marvellous that David wrote a Psalm to remember the event and he blessed the Lord for showing him such kindness.

Other occasions where the Scriptures record a believer blessing God for His kindness:-

i) In Ps.117: 1 & 2 David praises the Lord for His merciful kindness is great.
ii) Joel speaks of the Lord as; gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness (see Joel 2: 13).
iii) Jonah also made known that the Lord was a gracious God, slow to anger, and of great kindness (see Jonah 4: 2).
iv) In the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as “the kindness and love of God” (see Tit.3: 4).
So God is rich in kindness to believers as I am sure each one of us can attest to, but do we ever bless God for His marvellous kindness? Do we get down on our knees and praise God for His kindness?
Even if we do not use the words “blessed be the Lord God for His kindness toward us”, we can be assured that when we get on our knees, we bless the Lord, and when we praise Him for His kindness we are blessing Him. So be not discouraged, but rather, let us be aware of the word *blessed* with God’s kindness.

What kindness has God shown you this day, this week, this month or this year? Has He defended you from your enemies? If He has it was mostly likely in the spiritual battle, with our unseen enemy that hates us. And that is definitely a daily warfare, where the kindness and love of God is a great comfort to our souls, but what if you were one of the persecuted Christians in Iran, Iraq, Nigeria or Syria? Then your daily survival as a Christian in a Muslim land would be dependant on the kindness and love of God for keeping you safe from a physical enemy.

Which ever battle front we are more in-tune with on our journey let us take time out of our day to thank God, to bless Him for His marvellous kindness that He shows us each day in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you happen to feel the hand of God upon you during an accident then you have a special reason to bless the Lord. Imagine you are riding your push-bike and a big truck runs you off the road, then you have something special to bless God for, His kindness in caring for *you* amongst one of many millions of believers around the world. But for that moment of holding out His hand, He shows that He cares for every hair on our heads (Matt.10: 30). Let us bless God for His marvellous kindness.

4. Bless the Lord for He is very great and is clothed with honour and majesty

Ps.104:1 *Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.*

The Lord redeemed Israel through His greatness (see Deut.11: 2), and in this Psalm David is blessing the Lord, he is praising the Lord with his soul for His greatness.

David also blessed the Lord because He is clothed with honour and majesty. Honour we are familiar with, but what does *majesty* mean? According to the Oxford dictionary, majesty means “sovereign power”. So the Lord God in heaven is clothed with sovereign power and therefore we bless Him. When the Lord is compared to the gods of the nations, they are but idols and He is Lord of the heavens, honour and majesty are before Him (see Ps.96: 6), hence David blessed the Lord, he praised the Lord (see Ps.71: 8) for His honour and he acknowledged that the voice of the Lord is full of majesty (see Ps.29: 4). The voice that spoke into being the heavens and the earth is full of majesty, is full of sovereign power.

In the New Testament the Father showed honour to His Son when He spoke the words, “this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (see 2Pet.1: 17).

We all know that God is great, we all know that He is clothed with honour and majesty, but when do we ever, in the quietness of our own homes, bless the Lord for His greatness, His honour and His majesty?

Again, I have never used those words in my prayer time, but whether we sit down in the quiet of our own homes or in our time of worship together, and we kneel, or praise the Lord for His greatness, for His honour and majesty then our bodies are showing Him that we bless Him.

Let us as one body, the church and as individuals bless the Lord for He is very great, and is clothed with honour and majesty.

Having said what we said today, let us say it again. In this our first study on the topic of ‘blessing God’, we have covered four points:-

1. bless the holy name of the Lord, and
2. bless the Lord for He has loaded us with benefits, and
3. bless the Lord for His kindness, and
4. bless the Lord for He is very great and is clothed with honour and majesty. Amen, Amen & Amen!