

The Priestly Blessing

Introduction.

1. The fourth book of the Bible is called "Numbers."
2. In this book filled with "numbers" we find a beautiful prayer which has been called by some "The Lord's prayer of the Old Testament." (Num. 6:22-27).
3. It reads.

Num 6:22 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Num 6:23 "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:

Num 6:24 The LORD bless you, and keep you;

Num 6:25 The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;

Num 6:26 The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.'

Num 6:27 "So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I {then} will bless them."

- a. The word "LORD" is referring to "Jehovah" or "Yahweh."
 - b. This was the personal name of God occurring numerous times in the Old Testament.
3. As one examines Numbers chapter 6 he finds this prayer is the blessing of the Lord with which Aaron and his sons were to bless the children of Israel.
 - a.. Aaron and his sons made up the priesthood for Israel.
 - b. Therefore this passage as often been called "The Priestly Blessing" (also the Aaronic Benediction)
 3. In this passage we learn things about the LORD [Jehovah] which are just as true today as they were in the time of Aaron
 - a.. We do not live under the Old Covenant with its Aaronic priesthood.
 - b. We do have a "High Priest", who desires and is anxious to bless us just as richly (if not more so)! (Jn. 10:9-10).

John 10:9 "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I came that they may have life, and have {it} abundantly.**"

4. Let us examine this beautiful and meaningful prayer.

The Priestly Blessing Analyzed

1. "The LORD bless you and keep you"

a. The word "bless" means to confer well-being or prosperity

1) It comes from the Hebrew word "barak."

2) It is a word occurring many times in the Old Testament and is the same word used to describe God's blessings on Abram. (Gen.12:2-3).

Gen 12:2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;

Gen 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

3) It is the same word found in Psalm 5:12 and Psalm 29:11.

Ps 5:12 For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD, You surround him with favor as with a shield.

Ps 29:11 The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.

b. The promise of such blessings was conditional. (Deut. 28:1-6).

Deut 28:1 "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.

Deut 28:2 "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God:

Deut 28:3 "Blessed {shall} you {be} in the city, and blessed {shall} you {be} in the country.

Deut 28:4 "Blessed {shall be} the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.

Deut 28:5 Blessed {shall be} your basket and your kneading bowl.

Deut 28:6 "Blessed {shall} you {be} when you come in, and blessed {shall} you {be} when you go out.

c. Failure to meet God's conditions brought curses, not blessings. (Deut. 28:15-19).

Deut 28:15 "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

Deut 28:16 "Cursed {shall} you {be} in the city, and cursed {shall} you {be} in the country.

Deut 28:17 "Cursed {shall be} your basket and your kneading bowl.

Deut 28:18 "Cursed {shall be} the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.

Deut 28:19 "Cursed {shall} you {be} when you come in, and cursed {shall} you {be} when you go out.

d. The word "keep" means to provide and care, to guard and protect

e. A beautiful psalm which speaks of God's care is Psa 121:1-8

Ps 121:1 I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come?

Ps 121:2 My help {comes} from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

Ps 121:3 He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber.

Ps 121:4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep.

Ps 121:5 The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand.

Ps 121:6 The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night.

Ps 121:7 The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.

Ps 121:8 The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever.

- f. Like a shepherd guarding and providing for his sheep, this benediction calls upon God to keep watch over Israel

2. "The LORD make this face shine upon you, and be gracious to you."

- a. To "make His face shine" may be an idiom indicating God's smile of favor on His people, evidenced by His being "gracious."

- b. Note how it is used elsewhere. (Psa 31:16; 80:3; Dan 9:17).

Ps 31:16 Make Your face to shine upon Your servant; Save me in Your lovingkindness.

Ps 80:3 O God, restore us And cause Your face to shine {upon us,} and we will be saved.

Dan 9:17 "So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.

- c. To "be gracious" means to bestow favor, especially that which is unmerited
- d. The parallelism of this benediction suggests this favor refers to the blessing and keeping by the Lord mentioned previously.
- e. Perhaps emphasizing that such blessings are unmerited, even though conditional.

3. "The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."

- a. To "lift up His countenance" may be similar to smile (Believers' Study Bible)
- b. It involves "pleasure, approval, recognition."
- c. The word "peace" is not just the absence of war, but a positive state of rightness and fullness of well-being.
- d. For the nation of Israel, God had promised peace if they were faithful. (Lev. 26:6).

Lev 26:6 'I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making {you} tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land.

- e. There was also peace for the individual who trusted in God. (Isa. 26:3).

Isa. 26:3 "The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.

- f. That God would have Aaron and his sons bless the children of Israel with this benediction indicates that God really wanted to bless and provide for them.

The Priestly Blessing Today

1. "The LORD bless you and keep you."

- a. Indeed the Lord does desire to bless us!
- b. Today, those blessings come through Jesus Christ. (Eph. 1:3).

Eph 1:3 Blessed {be} the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly {places} in Christ,

- c.. They come especially to those described in Matthew 5:3-12.

Matt 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Matt 5:5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Matt 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Matt 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Matt 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Matt 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Matt 5:10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 5:11 "Blessed are you when {people} insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

Matt 5:12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

- 1) These beatitudes clearly describe the one whom God will bless now and in eternity.
- 2) God is pleased with those who humbly mourn over sin and seek salvation in His Son.
- 3) He is pleased and chooses to bless those who gentle, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, etc.

- d. And the Lord desires to provide and care for us!

- e. As described by Jesus in Matthew 6:25-32

Matt 6:25 "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, {as to} what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, {as to} what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Matt 6:26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and {yet} your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"

Matt 6:27 "And who of you by being worried can add a {single} hour to his life?"

Matt 6:28 "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin,

Matt 6:29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

Matt 6:30 "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is {alive} today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, {will He} not much more {clothe} you? You of little faith!

Matt 6:31 "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'"

Matt 6:32 "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

- f.. But this care is conditional, the condition described in Matthew 6:33.

Matt 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

2. "The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you".

- a. Just as all spiritual blessings come through Jesus, so God's grace is now manifested through His Son. (Jn. 1:17).

John 1:17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

- b. Yes, God desires to show His smile of favor upon us, but it is imperative that we not receive it in vain! (2 Cor. 6:1-3).

2 Cor 6:1 And working together {with Him,} we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain--

2 Cor 6:2 for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"--

2 Cor 6:3 giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,

- c. How sad that God's grace is so freely extended, yet so few accept His grace!

3. "The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

- a.. Through Christ, peace with God is now possible. (Rom. 5:1).

Rom 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

- b. And as we continue to pray, God bestows peace through His Son. (Phil. 4:6-7).

Phil 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Phil 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- c. The Father is willing to give us peace, but do we accept it?

Conclusion.

1. We have been talking about "The Priestly Blessing."

- a. We have emphasized how God wanted to bless Israel under the Old Covenant.
- b. This would be through His priests in the Aaronic priesthood

2. We have noted that the same sort of blessings are available today.

- a. But the blessings of God are bestowed through His Son, Jesus Christ
- b. Today Jesus is our "High Priest." (Heb. 4:14-16).

Heb 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as {we are, yet} without sin.

Heb 4:16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and

find grace to help in time of need.

1) Our high priest is able and willing to save us by His blood shed on the cross.

2) Those who draw near “to the throne of grace” will “receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

3. The point of this lesson is simple, yet profound!

4. If we desire "The Priestly Blessing" today, we must be in Christ and He must be our High Priest; for that is how God is blessing His people today! (Eph. 1:3)

Eph 1:3 Blessed {be} the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly {places} in Christ,

a. “All” [every] spiritual blessing” is “in Christ.”

b. None are “out of” Christ.

c. Salvation, peace, forgiveness, the Lord’s help and assurance of salvation are found only in Christ.

d. Only those in Christ will be with the Father and Son and Holy Spirit in heaven. (Jn. 14:6).

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

5. May all of us put our complete trust in Jesus and daily live to His glory.

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