

(God #2) The Naming God who Promises to Bless by Bob Young

Introduction

We are in the season of blessing. We are thankful for our blessings. Do we understand the concept of blessing? We say "the blessing." We bless food. Can we bless God? Better is the idea that blessing a part of God's nature.

Heb. 7, the lesser is blessed by the greater, never the reverse. We do not bless God by our presence here today. God wishes to bless us.

Review

The God who creates and calls to re-creation.

We were created image of God and living being, with dual natures. Biological and spiritual, seeking balance, but unbalanced. Sin assaults us from two directions---overemphasizing first the physical morality, then the spiritual with the pride of life.

Desire of world. Muslims crave salaam. Hindus seek the universal Brahman--the ultimate experience of unity and wholeness. Buddhists aspire to the peaceful quiet of Nirvana. Taoists suggest we surrender to the yin and yang in the Tao.

Human beings everywhere show their brokenness, loss of community, loss of relationship, longing for peace. The world is not right. Things are not as they should be or were intended to be. Shalom has been dashed into bits.

Yet on the wrecked fragments of our world is a sweet residue, an aroma that invokes a vivid recollection from our previous days and childhood, the memory of peaceful days, and we long to get it back somehow. We crave good relationships. I am saying that Christians are not alone in this quest. But Christians are alone in saying that the solution is in the initiative of God--that he is calling. That in the midst of a fractured world, that God is yet One. He created the world whole and meaningful, with wonderful relationships, joining elements of creation like a composer crafting beautiful harmonies. Yet now we hear only broken melodies, echoes, distorted, distant. Why?

Human selfishness, blaming, self-worship, self-exaltation, sin, the disintegrating of wholeness into disharmony and discord.

We must not shrink from addressing the world's brokenness, nor our own.

God's solution to the world's problems is to offer himself. Revealing himself in Christ, he invites people to enter relationship with him so they can find in that relationship healing, purpose, and power.

It is with this creating, sustaining God that we begin. Eternal, complete, perfect, all-powerful, holy, just, yet gracious, compassionate and merciful.

Seeing God is not only informative---it is transformative. This is the great need of the world. This is the foundation of the gospel.

Two other themes are relevant to our story of God. But we continue with a story.

Gen. 1:28, God blesses immediately after creating.

2:7, God names Adam

2:19, Adam names the animals

2:22, Adam does not name woman

3:1ff, sin and the fall

3:14, curse on the serpent
3:16, promise to the woman, dominion, rule
3:17, curse on ground.
3:20, Now Adam names Eve
4:1ff, Cain and Abel, 4:11, Cain under a curse.

5:1, likeness, blessing.
5:3, son in likeness, in image.
5:28, naming of Noah, reflecting the story.

I. The God Who Names—claims and gives identity

Name: to mark or brand (Arabic), “shem” as name (837 x in OT), a distinguishing of one thing or person from another. Concept of personal names in OT often included existence, character, and reputation (1 Sam. 25:25). To name indicates power over, ownership, blessing. To cut off the name is to eliminate the person (Dt. 7:24; 9:14; 1 Sam. 24:21). The name chosen for a child was expression of wishes or expectations. Especially evident in renaming--Abraham, Sarah, Israel, Daniel....

Eventually, the name of the Lord comes to be representation and pledge of God's presence. But ultimately, God's presence is fully disclosed in the Incarnation of His son, the one whose name shall be....Isa. 4:1; 7:14; 8:3; 9:6; 12:4; 14:22; 18:7; 24:15; 25:1....

Name--Matt. 1:18,23; 2:6. Matt. 28:18-20.

“Onoma” over 200 x in NT; Rev. 2:3; 2:13; 2:17; 3:1,4,5,8,12; 6:8; 8:11; 9:11; 11:18; 13:1,6,8,17; 14:1,11; 15:2,4; 16:9; 17:3,5,8; 19:12,13,16; 21:13,14; 22:4

Naming implies ownership. Naming implies dominion. Name is also descriptive, character, nature. Thus, name is reputation, fame, blessing by God.

To be well known (renowned) is equivalent to a name, in contrast to being nameless (Job 30:8). To make oneself a name is equivalent to build a monument in honor of oneself; possibly derived from “shamah,” to be high, prominent, known, thus connecting prominence and a name. Luther thus translates “name” as fame, reputation.

Mankind seeks his own name, to make a name for self. This is self-centeredness.

The parallelism in our text signifies grace and favor (being loved), grace which brings favor (11:16), favor being the consequence of a graceful appearance and demeanor (Esther 2:15).

II. The God Who Blesses

At the core of understanding the OT is the concept of blessing. God seeks to bless all created beings, Gen. 1:22,28; (2:3); 5:2, 9:1, 12:1-3. This is essential not only to the theme, unity, and understanding of Gen., but also for the entire OT (barak = at least 286 x in OT). Not have time today to explore related concept of blessed (ashere = 45+). God is desirous of blessing that which he has created/made. Last week we learned that God creates, calls, and recreates.

God's design is indicated in that he named what He created, and if he named these things, he owned them, for a person names what he owns or has jurisdiction over.

Continuing our Bible survey, of special interest is the flood story, and especially the early verses of Gen. 6. In the midst of blessing by God, Gen. 6:1, evil was heaped up. The rulers of the day adopted for themselves the Near Eastern title of "sons of God," as parallel to kingship with divine authority or prerogative, and these autocrats began to multiply wives for themselves as they pleased. Their lust for a name, a reputation, led them to excesses and abuse of the purpose of their position.

Thus in exasperation, God gave up on mankind. These mighty men of renown (men with a name), aristocrats must be halted. But, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, Gen. 6:8. Favor with God is made equivalent to a name. The God who names thereby favors or graces. This is the bridge to grace. Thus, the great need of the hour would be relieved, as in Gen. 3:15, with an enactment of God's salvation. This righteous remnant gets a name, Shem is often considered derived from the Heb. Word for name.

The divine blessing is repeated, 8:17; 9:1,7. Thus we see that blessing and indwelling seem to be linked. The God who blesses will remain present.

1. Interesting text in Prov. 22:1, connections between naming and blessing in our text.
2. A good name has the preference above great riches; For more than silver and gold is grace. (Heb. Translation)

Note the Parallelism: A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold. (Prov. 22:1)

In the parallelism, a good name and favor (esteem, reputation, renown) are parallel. This refers to our favor in the sight of others and in the sight of God. What is to be desired more than great riches? Good character, reputation, favor by others. But outside of Jesus Christ revealing God most clearly in the NT, and revealing God way of ultimately blessing us even when we do not live up to our divinely given name, there is no character, there is no grace, there is no favor.

3. Eccl. 6:10, 7:1

III. The God Who Promises to Bless

What shall we say when the blessings of God are not always clear? God who by his nature is non-contradictory has promised, and sworn by himself since he can swear by none greater. We have in the Noah story the first covenant.

This is the OT/NT concept of covenant, but with the unilateral initiation of the covenant by God, the continuation of the covenant promise is secure. The only barrier is the conditional acceptance by humankind of the eternal blessings and promises of God.

The promises of God always come to answer the human crises. The first notice of this rhythm is in Gen. 3:15, and throughout history a representative child continues to be God's visible guarantee for the present and pledge for the future. This is true of Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants, ultimately to Jesus Christ (Matt. 1), even to the present where you and I are identified as those descendants. Now the fortunes of the entire earth are tied to our identity as the children of God recipients of the promise (Rom. 8:23ff).

Notice the continuing dilemma of mankind as God exercises his dominion and guidance in loving, non-coercive ways.

1. Man's failure in the fall is overcome by God's blessing in the promised seed (Gen. 3:15).

2. Man's failure in the flood is overcome by God's promise of his dwelling in Shem's tents.
3. Man's failure as evidenced in the scattering of Gen. 11, is overcome by the promise of a world-wide blessing.

We could continue to trace this renewing promise of God through the Cain/Abel crisis (see 5:1ff), the flood crisis (see 9:25-27), the Babel crisis (thus Gen. 12:1-3). Afterward continuing crises in the Exodus, conquest, judges, and kings, with continual renewal of God's promises and the continuation of God's presence and blessings. Even in the Exile, God's hand and purpose remain clear (just read the prophets), and the ultimate fulfillment of this promise is in Jesus Christ.

Through Jesus God recreates and unites, but in more detail, he names—claims and gives us identity, blesses, and seals the promise once and for all. In Jesus Christ, we learn of the God who is with us, and in the Holy Spirit, we learn of the God who is within us.

Summary

Name is reputation, fame, blessing by God—the claim of God, ownership, identity.

A good name has preference above great riches; For more than silver and gold is grace. (Heb.)

Or to make the parallelism more obvious: A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold. (Prov. 22:1)

Calvin Miller wrote that the problem of this world is that its treasures are in the sky and its treasure maps are of the earth.

This is a weekend of considering blessings. God brings sunshine and rain on the just and unjust. These are blessings, but not the blessing.

The greatest blessing is our identity, reputation—more valuable than riches. Our name will take us farther than our money. This is the ultimate will and plan of the naming God who seeks to bless us. The identity of the child of God is fashioned by God, the God who actually gives us his name despite the dichotomy, and continually blesses, even those who are not his. In his likeness, wearing his name/identity. If you wear the name Christian, that is not a reference to your information but transformation.

Our identity depends upon the grace of God exhibited in Christ Jesus.

God grace has come among us, reestablishing his claim, clarifying, leaving no doubt.

We can be his.

And the name we wear is no little matter—our identity, our goal, our purpose.