

His Desire, Our Delight

It is Jesus who said of Himself, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.*” And, since He also said that the scriptures, both old and new testaments, were written of Him, I like to compare the opening and concluding parts of the Bible as one way to learn more about Him. You know, there are several non-trivial words in both the first and last chapters of the Bible – words like beginning, God, Spirit, light, night, morning, water(s), first, fruit and tree. In each of these words, there is a wealth of pertinence to Jesus and some of you could do a whole study on each of them.

However, the one that I find fascinating is the word for “bless” with its various suffixes – there it is in Genesis 1 and Revelation 22. Interestingly enough, in the book of Revelation, it is the last of seven attributes of which Jesus, the Lamb of God is proclaimed worthy by those around the throne in heaven (see Rev 5:12). It is also the first attribute of which Father God is proclaimed worthy by this same group – another ‘first and last’.

But significantly, it is the only such attribute to be in this ‘bookend’ position in scripture – the first and last chapters; potentially, there is something quite special about it. Let’s see if we can find out what.

A careful study of the primary words themselves in the original languages (pronounced “eulogia” in the Greek and “barak” in the Hebrew) reveals something curious – they each have two distinct meanings which at first glance seem to be unrelated. As a consequence, the usage of one or the other appears to be somewhat arbitrary and I will suggest, inaccurate, in the eight versions of the Bible I checked.

The two meanings for each are ‘ **blessing** ’ and ‘ **praise** ’.

The writer of Hebrews tells us, “*Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.* (i.e. greater, stronger, mightier)” (Heb 7:7) But the Bible is filled with sayings like, “Bless the Lord, O my soul...” which seems to contradict that which is ‘beyond all contradiction’. To resolve this, some commentators assert that this latter form of blessing (directed from man to God) is ‘watered down’ or simply a matter of good intentions. Now, in modern languages, this explanation could fly. But in the original languages, it doesn’t even get off the ground. It would seem that the translators missed something.

Perhaps, it is what I would call the ‘connection’. That is, God is connected to us who truly believe by His Spirit. You all know that when you are born again, this connection is established. It’s not that you are simply “interfaced” so to speak with Him but rather that you are indeed a new creation – that is, His life, His being is in you thus making you alive, making you

a part of Him. Though you rarely if ever perceive it in this world, when you are born again, you are actually one with Him.

Now, the expression of this connection is the birth of a relational attitude and that, you can perceive. In you, the ‘lesser’, it is **admiration and/or approval** of the ‘Greater’. While in God the ‘Greater’, it is the **deep desire for goodness toward** the ‘lesser’. The completely natural **utterance** then of this attitude on the part of the ‘lesser’ is **praise**. Whereas, the **utterance** of this attitude from the ‘Greater’ is **blessing**.

Thus, one word, originating from one wonderful event, means two things – praise or blessing. To understand it properly in its context in scripture is to understand the connection produced by God’s Spirit, the resulting relational attitudes and the consequent, natural utterances which are produced. When there is no real connection, whatever praise that may come forth is hollow or feigned.

So why is Jesus worthy of this? First, praise – the utterance of admiration and/or approval from we who are saved. All you have to do is consider His goodness, love, mercy, longsuffering, kindness, faithfulness, grace and truth to appreciate His worthiness of praise. But, add to that the fact that He has never done anything wrong – he is completely innocent of sin. In addition, He glorified Father God in all that He did on earth. He came as a servant and denied Himself all the way to the

cross. And here’s a big one, though saving us from sin and bringing us eternal life was His ‘mission’, He went beyond this when He prayed for our oneness with both Himself and the Father. That is, He desired the fundamental essence of that connection we mentioned. Our sinless or righteous standing before God and immortality weren’t enough for Him; He desired the intimacy of the ‘connection’. And it is this that apparently separates us from the angelic host. So, of course, we praise Him.

Second, blessing – this is the deep desire for goodness which Father God has in a very special way toward Jesus (and since, as a believer, you are in Him, toward you too!) Now, when the host surrounding the throne declares this worthiness, they are only agreeing with the Father’s will, for it is He alone who can bless the Son. We simply echo and agree with what He has done – He has delivered all things into the Son’s hands and seated Him at the right hand of His throne.

So, yes, it is easy to join in the acclamation for indeed, Jesus is worthy. Yet, in this particular case, even if we do not intellectually understand His worthiness, we will still respond with praise for it is the natural ‘echo’ to His blessing. The fountain of our utterance is simply the spontaneous response to His own. Even in this life, as we consider His blessings, His deep desire for goodness towards us,

we are inspired to praise. King David put it this way:

**Bless (Praise) the LORD, O my soul;
And all that is within me, bless His
holy name!**

*Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from
destruction,
Who crowns you with loving kindness
and tender mercies,
Who satisfies your mouth with good
things,
So that your youth is renewed like the
eagle's.*

*The LORD executes righteousness
And justice for all who are
oppressed.
He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the children of Israel.
The LORD is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in
mercy.
He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.
He has not dealt with us according to
our sins,
Nor punished us according to our
iniquities.*

*For as the heavens are high above the
earth,
So great is His mercy toward those
who fear Him;
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our
transgressions from us.
As a father pities his children,
So the LORD pities those who fear
Him.
For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we are dust.*

*As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he
flourishes.*

*For the wind passes over it, and it is
gone,
And its place remembers it no more.
But the mercy of the LORD is from
everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's
children,
To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His
commandments to do them.*

*The LORD has established His throne in
heaven,
And His kingdom rules over all.
Bless the LORD, you His angels,
Who excel in strength, who do His
word,
Heeding the voice of His word.
Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,
You ministers of His, who do His
pleasure.
Bless the LORD, all His works,
In all places of His dominion.*

Bless the LORD, O my soul! (Psa 103)

Finally, like most of us, you may be inclined to think at times that you haven't really seen some of these "benefits", but you must recall that although many of us need our eyes opened to perceive the reality of His goodness in the here and now, all of these blessings will be fully and entirely ours -- perceived, embraced and enjoyed forever, in His presence. Heaven is closer than you think, as close as a blink when the time is right. How fantastically worthy is the Lamb of God! Blessing and praise – it's His desire and our delight.