

## BLESSING IN THE BIBLE

When a person says “the blessing” over a meal, what is he doing? We generally mean that he is giving thanks for the food. But that was not the case in Bible times. In those days he was blessing God for giving the food.

*Baruch atah Adonai*, three words, meant “Blessed Thou Lord.” “Blessed Thou Lord” is filled out in English to say “Blessed art Thou O Lord.” (In the Bible there was a man named Baruch, who was the secretary who wrote down the words of the prophet Jeremiah.)

Now, the word blessed carries these meanings: “happy,” “joyful,” “fortunate,” “blissfully contented,” “consecrated,” “sacred,” or “sanctified.” The Latin word for “blessed” is *beatitudo*, hence the term “beatitudes.”\* Jesus said that various people were “blessed” in His sermon on the mount.

Now, what about the prayer, “Blessed are You, O Lord?” How can a person make God happy or joyful? It seems presumptuous to us to imagine that we can make God happy by just speaking the words. But in Bible times that is exactly what they thought. Just by speaking the words the one who was blessed was made to be happy.

In the Bible, blessing is the opposite of cursing. In those days when a person pronounced a blessing or a curse on another person, it was taken as a powerful magical command on the forces of nature to make whatever was spoken come to pass. This was especially true if the person speaking was a priest, a prophet, or a patriarch. The last words of a dying person were believed to carry great significance. So any death-bed blessing or curse was believed to be sure to happen.

In the Bible, blessing took five forms:

1. God blesses the world: nature, mankind, the Sabbath day, and certain individuals.
2. Godly men bless God, as in the Psalm: “Bless 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” (103:1-2).
3. Godly men can bless other men. Jesus said, “Love your enemies and bless them that curse you” (Matt. 5:44).
4. Godly men under inspiration bestowed blessings on their children, as when Noah blessed his sons and Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau.
5. Things could be blessed when they were set apart for sacred use. Paul said, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16).

So it should be recognized that the word *baruch* was a very important term in Bible times.

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\*In the Roman Catholic Church, “beatification” is the first step in the canonization of saints. Thus the Church presumes to beatify or bless people - the “blessed” saints - who are already in heaven. This resembles the Jewish custom of “blessing” God.