

## The Blessing

by Harrison Conley

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If it's all right with you, I have something on my heart I want to share this morning. If you have a Bible, go ahead and pull it out. Find the book of Numbers 6. I just want to give a special hello to everybody who is watching online right now. We have people tuned in all over the globe. We love you and we pray God's Word would dwell richly with you just as it is here with us today. As well, hello to everyone who is out on the plaza on this beautiful southern California morning. We love you as well. Sometimes, on a momentous weekend like this it can be a little intimidating to figure out what to preach, and what to share. As I began to pray through this last week, not just what was on my heart, but what was on God's heart to share with each and every one of us, I was drawn to Numbers 6, into a familiar passage of Scripture that many of you will recognize the moment we start to read it. Numbers 6:22–26 NKJV says this,

<sup>22</sup> And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>23</sup> "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: <sup>24</sup> "The Lord bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

Then God says this in verse 27,

<sup>27</sup> "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

These verses are what is commonly referred to as "The Blessing." It's also known as "The Priestly Blessing" or "The Aaronic Blessing." It's also known as "The Lifting of Hands Blessing" or even "The Three-in-one Blessing." Just make a mental note of those last two. We will talk more on those in just a few minutes. If you have been to Cottonwood over the last seven or eight years, you have probably heard me pray these verses over us as a benediction at the end of the service. In 2020, Christian music artist Kari Jobe turned these verses into lyrics and wrote a song called "The Blessing." When that song came out, I can't tell you how many people in the church came up to me. They said, "Pastor, pastor, they wrote a song about your prayer!" While I appreciate the sentiment, I can't take credit for it. It's not my prayer. It's actually God's prayer. It's God's prayer that He wanted prayed over His people. As a matter of fact, it's the only recorded prayer in all of Scripture that's written by God the Father. That's really weighty, the only prayer written by God the Father that He dictated and prescribed to prayer. It's written here word for word in the book of Numbers. It's to be prayed and declared over His people.

By the way, God never teaches a prayer, so He can deny answering that prayer. His desire is to bless His people. Then, just an interesting note: in 1979, some Israeli archeologists were digging in burial caves near Jerusalem and found two little, small silver amulets. It was worn as a piece of jewelry. Over a period of years, they ran tests on these amulets and discovered that inscribed upon these amulets in ancient Hebrew, written word for word in its entirety, was this blessing that we have here in Numbers 6. You're just going to have to forgive me for a second. I'm going to nerd out with you here. What really blows my mind about this is that these amulets date back to the 7th century BC. This is the time of Solomon, in the first temple, which makes them actually 400 years older than the Dead Sea Scrolls, which means that the oldest biblical

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texts that we know of in existence today is this blessing, this prayer that God Himself wrote for His people. I don't care who you are, that's cool. What I want to do today is put the magnifying glass on these verses. I want to highlight a few things because I want them to become more than just eloquent words we hear or that we pray. I actually want us to be able to engage with understanding when it comes to this text. More than anything, my prayer is that through these words, we would get a revelation and an understanding of the Father's heart toward us. Can we pray, and then we will dive into it?

God, we love You so much. We come to You this morning in the name of Your Son, Jesus. We want to say thank You for Your Word. We pray today, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, that You would teach us according to Your Word. We pray as the Psalmist prayed, "Revive us, oh God, according to Your Word, Your Word that You have exalted even above Your Name." Today, we give it our full attention. We pray that through Your Word, You would help us and shape us to be more and more like Jesus. It's in His name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

All right, let's dive into this text. Maybe just keep your Bible open. We're going to refer to these verses. In order to grasp what's written here, we actually have to start with a proper understanding of what biblical blessing really is. For most of us, at least here in America, we have either a reduced understanding of blessing or an abused understanding of what blessing is. Reduced in the sense that we often turn blessing into a bit of a social pleasantry. Someone goes, "Hey, how are you today?" You say, "Blessed." If you are feeling really Christian, you say, "I'm blessed and highly favored." In the South, they throw around this phrase, 'Oh, bless his heart. Oh, bless her heart,' which usually comes on the heels of an insult. "Oh, she's not so pretty. Oh, bless her heart." Or we use it to sign off on a text or an email. I did this just yesterday. I finished an email with "Blessings" and then put my name. On the other end of the spectrum, our understanding of blessing can sometimes be abused. Think about the insincere televangelist who's trying to sell you the blessed handkerchief for \$50 that's been dipped in holy water. This is not the biblical understanding of blessing. This morning, let's throw out the abused and the reduced understanding and versions of blessing, and let's try to get a true picture.

In order to see the true picture, we have to go to the Scriptures. Blessing in Jewish culture or blessing in a biblical context goes all the way back to the beginning. You can go back to the first book of the Bible. We see God's blessing even in the garden at creation. You can read this in Genesis 1:27-28. God creates Adam and Eve. The first thing it says after that is this: that God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply." The biblical precedent for blessing actually goes all the way back to the very first chapter of the Bible. I love the fact that it's God pronouncing this very first blessing. We keep moving through the Old Testament. We have the patriarchs, men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they are constantly pronouncing blessing upon their children and their posterity. Do you remember the story of Jacob and Esau? Do you remember how scandalous it was, how big of a deal it was when Jacob stole Esau's birthright and his blessing? It was such a big deal that once the blessing was pronounced, it could not be taken back. It could not be reversed, and it could not be switched.

Blessing, in a biblical context, is more than just nice words spoken over people. There is something very real, very powerful, and very tangible about a biblical blessing. Think about the covenant God makes with Abraham. He says, "Abraham, I'm going to bless you, and I'm going to bless those who bless you. Through you, all the nations of the world will be blessed." Blessing is a big deal. Blessing is actually one of the key themes we find throughout the Old Testament. Then we jump into the New Testament, and we find blessings again, especially seen in the work, ministry, and person of Jesus. Think about the Sermon on the Mount.

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Blessings abound. Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the meek and mild. Blessed are those who mourn,” and on and on. How many times is it also recorded of Jesus, where He would let the little children come to Him? He would lift them into His lap, lift them into His arms, and He would bless them. Blessing, from a biblical framework, involves the supernatural transference or an impartation into or onto the receiver of that blessing. It is the act of declaring God’s goodness and His favor upon other people.

This is not just limited to words. This includes the tactile and the tangible. Even the definition for the word blessing in the Hebrew language shows us this. By the way, Hebrew is a really, really neat language. It’s what the Old Testament was written in, but in Hebrew, the words in that language actually paint a picture. The definition of the word blessing in Hebrew literally means “to get low, to bend down, or to kneel beside.” Catch the picture here. When God blesses you, it’s as if the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present God of the universe bends down and kneels beside you so He can touch and embrace His child. This word blessing also infers the idea of bestowing or giving a gift. Here’s the best way I know how to illustrate this. I travel a lot. It’s part of my job, and it’s part of my calling. God has graced it. I enjoy it for the most part, but one of the downsides of so much travel is often I’m away from my family, and I love my family. I love my wife and my three boys, and I tend to miss them terribly. The longer I’m away, the more I miss them, and I look forward to getting home. Oftentimes, as I’m on my way home, I’ll stop off at the airport. If I see something that reminds me of them, I’ll pick it up and put it in my suitcase so I can give it to them as a gift when I get home.

There’s nothing better than coming home from a long trip, walking into the house, and having one of my boys run up to me with their arms extended. It’s usually my seven-year-old because, let’s be honest, my teenagers are just too cool for school these days. My seven-year-old will run up to me with his arms out wide. Are you seeing this picture? As my son runs towards me, I get down on my knees. I kneel down so I can get eye-level with him, so I can go face-to-face, and I can fully embrace him. As I’m embracing him, I reach into my suitcase, and I’m like, “Hey, I was thinking about you. I got you this.” That picture right there is the best way I know how to describe the biblical definition of blessing. God Almighty kneels down into that intimate space so He can embrace His children and impart to us the good and the perfect gifts of heaven. I’m reminded of James 1:17 NKJV. He says this,

<sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Is this not the summation of Scripture? We see it time and time again. God comes down to bless those whom He loves. We see it in the garden. God came down and walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. As we read earlier, He blessed them. We see it in the Exodus account. God comes down and meets with Moses on Mount Sinai. He meets with him face-to-face, the Scripture says, as a man would meet with his friend. We see it over and over throughout the Old Testament where God would come down and meet His people by filling the Tabernacle or filling the temple with His glory, with His essence, and with His Shekinah presence. We see it in the New Testament, and this is perhaps the greatest example we have of all, that God came down in the person of Jesus, blessing us with the greatest gifts of all: forgiveness, salvation, and right standing with the Father. As a matter of fact, the Apostle Paul would talk about this gift of Jesus. He would say it in these terms. In 2 Corinthians 9:15 NKJV, he would say,

<sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

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Indescribable. In other words, all languages, all descriptors, and all superlatives fall short in describing the blessing we have in Christ Jesus. When we consider this, we must conclude with full assurance that God desires to bless His people. It is the indescribable gift where God would condescend to come down to our level and meet us where we are at. Truthfully, I take great hope in that fact because that means wherever I am, or wherever you are in the faith journey, God's heart toward us is that He wants and desires to bless us. Now, just to be clear, that doesn't mean that God exists as a cosmic genie to make us wealthy or to give us a problem-free life. On the contrary, we were created for Him. He was not created for us. Yet He desires to bless His people.

God's greatest blessing toward you is not wealth. It's not to give you a problem-free life. His greatest blessing toward you and towards me is the gift of Himself. First, having come in the person of Jesus, but now through the personal indwelling of His Holy Spirit. God's greatest blessing is nearness to Himself. We experience that through His ever-abiding presence. It is there in the place of His presence where we find everything we need. We have blessings of peace in His presence. We have blessings of guidance in His presence. We have blessings of friendship, healing, and provision, all found in His presence. This, my friend, is the biblical definition of blessing. Now that we have the framework, we can dive into Numbers 6. Again, just as a refresher, this blessing is God's specific words given to Aaron, the priest. He was instructed to declare them and to pray them over the people. You will notice this blessing is broken into three distinct sections. Each of these sections starts with the words "The Lord." "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace."

I mentioned in the beginning that one of the names for this blessing is the three-in-one blessing. In Jewish tradition, they call it that because of those three sections that start with "The Lord." I'd also add that now, being able to look at this text through New Testament eyes, it actually lends itself toward teaching and complementing the Trinity. We serve a triune God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Three distinct persons, but one and the same God. As we jump into this blessing, what you're going to see is that the first section reflects perfectly the heart and Will of the Father. The second section reflects the person and the work of Jesus, the Son. Then, the final third section is a mirror image of the fellowship and ministry of the Holy Spirit. That's just something to keep in mind as we read through this.

Let's look at the first section. "The Lord bless you and keep you." Bless you, and keep you. Let's look at this first term, bless. In this case, it's literally speaking of material and practical blessings, but not in a crude sense. What I mean by that is we shouldn't look at this as though it were the prosperity gospel, like God's plan for us is to have the mansion, the Lambo, and the huge bank account. As well, it's not to say those things are bad. God's not even against those things. Actually, the Bible says that God gives us all things to enjoy. However, the problem comes when those material things begin to take God's place upon the throne of our lives. More than anything else in this world and existence, God desires of you and of me, our hearts. He wants our obedience. He wants to matter more to us than all the stuff. That's why I always pray, "God, help me, and teach me to be the kind of person who You can trust with lotto money. Help me to be the person that would do whatever you want me to do with it."

When we hear this phrase, "The Lord bless you," we mustn't think of material blessing in this sort of obtuse crude sense. It's not just a blanket statement. It's actually very personal and hand-tailored. Notice it says, "The Lord bless you." Yes, it's prayed over the crowd. Yes, it's prayed over the people, but it's very personal. It's hand-tailored. "The Lord bless you." It means

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God sees you. Out of all the crowd, He knows you. The details of your personal situation are not lost on Him. Remember this definition for blessing. He kneels down beside you. He's not standing over you. He's near, and He's present. Dare I say He understands your situation even better than you understand your situation? His desire is to get you exactly what you need. Remember, the Scripture says, "He clothes the lilies, and He feeds the sparrows." The Bible says that not even a single bird will fall from the sky, that He doesn't know about. The Bible says that the very hairs on your head, or lack thereof, are numbered and known by Him. Every tear is captured. What God wants is to bless us with both physical things and practical things. "The Lord bless you." For the infirmed, He wants to bless you with healing. For the businessman, He wants to bless you with customers. For the parent, He wants to bless you with wisdom and discernment. He wants to bless you with patience. We need patience when it comes to raising our children. For the lonely student, God wants to bless you with godly friends.

This is the nature of our Father. He knows us. He loves us. His desire is to bless us with both practical and physical blessings. Not just bless us, but He also wants to keep us. This is a shepherding term. It literally means "to gather up to one's heart." It means "to guard." It means "to encircle." It means "to surround, to hem in, or to hedge around with thorns." The picture that's associated with this word keep, is of a shepherd who would lead his sheep or his flock, usually to a cave or a rock wall. Then, he would build a semicircle enclosure or pen around them. He'd use thorn bushes, and these thorn bushes would keep the sheep in at night and keep the danger out. The shepherd would lay down right at the door of this enclosure. This is the picture God is painting for you when it says, "The Lord keep you." It speaks of His protection, His covering, and the fact that He's holding your life together. As a matter of fact, I'm reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 1. He's come to the end of his life. He knows he's about to give his life as a martyr for the faith. These are some of his last words that he writes to his young protege, Timothy. This is what he says in 2 Timothy 1:12b NKJV.

<sup>12</sup>. . . for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

In this case, Paul is talking about committing to God his life, his salvation, and the results of his ministry. He says this, "In thee, I am persuaded that He's able to keep, He's able to guard, He's able to hold the things that I've committed to Him." This morning, let me ask you a question. What have you committed to the Lord's keeping? Your family? Your kids? Some of you have college students who have gone away to school, and you're no longer in a position where you can control what they're being exposed to. Have you committed your college students to God's keeping? Have you committed your future? Have you committed your finances, your business, or your career? Most importantly, have you committed your eternity to Him? Jude, the brother of Jesus would write this in Jude 1:24 NKJV,

<sup>24</sup> Now to Him (to God) who is able to keep you (to guard and hold you) from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. . .

God is able to preserve you and keep you until that day. Let's be honest. How often do we try and hold things together here in this life on our own? We try and run a business. We try and raise a family. We try to make our mark on the world, and oftentimes, we do it without consulting or without committing these things to God. If you're anything like me, when I try and make this life work in and of my own power, in and of my own strength, in and of my own intellect, it usually comes crashing down and falls on its face around me, because I'm just not that smart and I'm just not that strong.

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I'm really grateful that even when I screw things up, I can come to the Father, and I can repent and say, "Lord, help me. Forgive me for trying to do this on my own. Forgive me for not committing it to You." God is so kind and faithful to forgive me, and meet me there in that space of my mess, and take control. Martin Luther, the famous reformer, said it like this, "I have held many things in my hands, and I've lost them all. Whatever I've placed in God's hands, that I still possess." "The Lord bless you and keep you." Then it says, "The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you." This second section speaks about spiritual blessings. The first was about practical and physical. This second section is about spiritual blessings. "The Lord make His face shine upon you." It literally means may the Lord illuminate His face upon you. Throughout Scripture, the concept of light is a metaphor for the Word of God. You'll remember these verses. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to my feet. It's a light to my path." In Psalm 119:130a ESV, the psalmist says,

<sup>130</sup> The unfolding of your words gives light.

This concept of God shining on us speaks of spiritual revelation and blessings that come to us through the Word of God. David the Psalmist would say it like this: "Lord, open my eyes that I might see wondrous things from Your Word." He's speaking of spiritual revelation and spiritual blessings that come to us through the vehicle of God's Word. Then notice it says, "The Lord make His face shine upon you." Shining is about revelation coming through the Word, but His face is about revealing His person. I love this so much. "His face," I love this language. He wants us to sense and feel His warmth through His face. How many of you can learn a lot about somebody by looking them in the face? It reveals what's actually in the person. I might even go so far as to say that one's entire being is revealed in one's face. There's an old adage that goes like this: "The eyes are the window to a person's soul." I don't think that's very far off.

Recently, I was with one of my boys. They were trying to convince me of some outlandish story they heard at school. They heard it from a friend and were convinced it was true. I wasn't buying it for a second. My son could see that I had my doubts. He pulled me down, pulled me close, and said, "Dad, look at me. Look at me." He proceeded to retell the entire story. Then he goes, "Dad, now, do you believe me?" To which I said, "No, but I believe that you believe the story." Why? Because I could perceive the truth in his face. You can look at somebody's face, and you can tell a lot about that person, whether they are soft or sincere. You can tell if they have joy or sadness or anger or mischief in their eyes. You can tell if they are nervous or annoyed. You can see whether or not they have confidence. It's all seen, shown, reflected, and illuminated in somebody's face. Here's the thing: God requires His people to seek His face. David the psalmist would say it like this in Psalm 27:8 NKJV,

<sup>8</sup> When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek."

The question becomes this: How does one seek the face of God? How does one get a revelation of God's face? Here's your answer. We see it through the person of Jesus as He is revealed to us through His Word. Hebrews 1:3 says Jesus is the brightness of the Father's glory. He's the express image of the Father's person. In 2 Corinthians 4:6 NKJV, the apostle Paul would say like this,

<sup>6</sup> For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

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Listen, Jesus wants to shine in your life. He wants to show and reveal to you who the Father really is. "The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you." Be gracious to you. Simply put, what does the face of God emanate? It emanates grace towards you. If you haven't heard it before, this is the beautiful message of the gospel. That God has not dealt with us as we deserve to be dealt with. Instead, He poured out His wrath for sin upon His own Son, who willingly took our place. The wages of sin is death. Jesus was crucified and put to death in our place. He died for our sins. The Scripture says He died as our sin is. As He hung on the cross, the Father turned His face away from Jesus. It's recorded. Jesus said, "Eloi Eloi Lama Sabachthani," which is translated as, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me? Why have You turned away from Me?"

Let me tell you why God turned His face away from His Son. It was so that He would never have to turn His face away from you or from me. If we will put our trust in Jesus' finished work on the cross, if we'll put our trust in His resurrection from the dead, we then experience this grace. Our lives then become hidden in Christ, and we get to experience the face. We get to experience the smile, the warmth, the acceptance, and the embrace of the Father. "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you." In the final section, "The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace." "His countenance," this expression can actually be interchanged with the word face we read just a moment ago.

The countenance includes all the details of God's nature in His persons, but the difference between countenance and face is in one little detail we see here in the text: the word lift. "The Lord lift His countenance upon you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you." This implies that God is below us, not in rank, not in station, not in order, and not in importance. Of course not; it does not mean that. It's not what this verse is talking about. God is below us when it comes to posture. He's looking up at us. A couple of things here. First, to be below in posture is to assume the role of a servant. It's to take the posture of humility. I'm reminded of the words of Jesus. "The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve. To give His life a ransom for many." I'm reminded of the actions of Jesus. In John 8, He is confronted with a woman who has been caught in adultery. The religious rulers say, "Jesus, this woman, according to the law of Moses, needs to be stoned, but what do you say?" I love Jesus. He kneels down. He gets down in the dirt, the muck, the mire, and in the mess of this woman's life. He gets eye level with her. Instead of condemning her, instead of throwing stones at her, He says, "I don't condemn you." He reveals His kindness and His grace.

I'm reminded of Jesus on the night before He would go to the cross in John 13. It's recorded that He knelt down and began to wash the disciples' feet, showing us a picture of grace, an example of what it looks like to serve other people. First and foremost, this idea of God lifting His countenance upon us reveals His nature and posture. He's one of a servant. He's one full of humility. Secondly, this lowly posture causes us to actually revisit the illustration I shared a minute ago about coming home from a long trip. This used to work better when my boys were smaller. They are all huge baby dinosaurs now. When I'd come home, I'd kneel down and embrace that son. After, I would stand up, and I'd lift them. I'd pick them up. I'd look them in the eyes so they could see my smile, feel my warmth, and my delight in them. In that moment, the particular child who I'd be lifting, looking up at as if they were the only person in the world that existed, that child had my full attention. If you were to see my face in that moment, what would you see? You would see warmth, joy, and pure delight. If you were to look at my child's face in that moment, what would you see? You would see total contentment and security knowing that out of everybody in the world, my dad sees me.

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This is what it means for God to lift His countenance upon us. It's you personally knowing and experiencing the smile of the Father. It's you experiencing and knowing His tender love and affection. It's you knowing beyond all shadow of a doubt that His favor is towards you. "The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace." The word peace is the Hebrew word shalom. It's the highest blessing that can be bestowed. The word shalom literally means "to fix or to amend what is deficient or broken." Along with this word comes the connotation of rest, joy, well-being, and spiritual wholeness. This final declaration reveals God's heart for His people. He desires us to be whole, complete in spirit, soul, and body. The peace or the shalom that God brings is a peace that the world does not understand and a peace that the world cannot offer. I was reading something the other day, and I stumbled upon this quote from author Tyler Stanton. This is what he said. "Right now, we're living in the most socially conscious, globally minded, and social justice-oriented generation in living memory. We're also the most mentally ill and chronically unhappy. We're a generation of people doing exactly what we want to do with our lives, but yet we are completely overwhelmed, utterly exhausted, and chronically anxious."

Listen, something is amiss. Something is off. Something is drastically wrong with this world. We all know it, and we can all feel it. There is a restlessness, and it's palpable. I think St. Augustine summed it up best and gave the solution in one sentence. He said, "Our hearts are forever restless until they find rest in thee." Listen, there is only one answer for the aching and the restlessness in our hearts. That answer is to know and to experience the blessing of true rest, true shalom that only God can give. "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace." Here's the final thought I want to leave you with. It's a picture and point of application. Go back to your text in Numbers 6:27 NKJV. God ends by saying this. So the priests,

<sup>27</sup> "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

Maybe you will remember this from the beginning of the sermon. I said one of the names for this blessing is called, "The lifting of hands blessing." The reason it's called that is because when the priest would pronounce this blessing on the people, they would lift their hands. They would lift their hands and make a particular shape with their hands. It looked like this, sort of like an exaggerated W. For all the country music fans, it's sort of like Waylon Jennings logo. This exaggerated W formed the Hebrew letter Shin. The priest would hold this letter up with their hands as they pronounced this blessing over the people because Shin, this letter, stood for the abbreviated form of the word Shaddai, which is the name of God, El Shaddai, God Almighty.

Jewish tradition records that the priest would stand with their back to the temple, and the people would be before them. They would pronounce this blessing, and they would lift up the name of God with their hands as they pronounce the blessing. Tradition says that God's presence would fill the temple, and the Shekinah glory of God would be so bright that as the priest lifted their hands with this symbol of the name of God, it would cause a shadow to fall on the people. Literally, God would place His name on the people as they declared this blessing over them. "They, the priests, shall put My name on the children of Israel." God said, "I will bless them." One more Scripture, and I promise I'm done. Luke 24, if you have your Bible, go to Luke 24. Let's go to the New Testament. In Luke 24, Jesus, this is Him post-resurrection. He's gathered with His disciples. He's just given them the great commission. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every nation, every creed, and every tongue." He's about to ascend back into heaven, but look what it says in Luke 24:50 NKJV.

<sup>50</sup> And He led them out (the disciples) as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.



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He's pronouncing this very blessing over His disciples. He lifted up His hands, and He blessed them. Verse 51 NKJV,

<sup>51</sup> Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

Then notice what the disciples did. Verses 52–53 NKJV,

<sup>52</sup> And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, <sup>53</sup> and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

Jesus finishes His earthly ministry by pronouncing this very blessing over His disciples. First and foremost, I think that's awesome. Look at the effect that this blessing had upon His disciples. This is what I believe should characterize a people who have been blessed in this way, which, by the way, that's us. Here's our point of application. Number one, they worshiped. They lived lives that ascribed glory to God. Does your life ascribe glory to God? Every area, every facet, every avenue of your life, is it worship? When you're giving, do you consider it to be worship? When you're serving, do you consider it to be worship? Is worship just when we come in and fill this space, and the band is on the stage? It's every area of our life. There's no compartmentalizing.

It's not Monday through Saturday; we do what we want to do and live how we want to live, and when Sunday comes, we pull our Sunday best out of the drawer, and then we worship. No, every part of our life is spiritual worship unto the Lord. For those of us who have been blessed, the outpouring, the outflowing, we live lives of worship. Here's the second thing they did. They returned to Jerusalem. I love this. They went back on mission, and they did it with great joy. They had just been commissioned to go into all the earth and preach the gospel. They went back to Jerusalem on a mission, blessing other people. Again, all of this flows from having received the blessing of the Lord and how we appropriate on a day like today, on an H4 miracle offering, where we realize we've been blessed to be a blessing. We're on mission. The great commission and churches all over the earth are on a mission together, bringing a living Jesus to a dying world. Come on, let's pray together.

God, we love You so much. Thank You for Your Word. Thank You for Your blessing You put upon Your people. Where would we be without Your intervention in our lives? Oh God, we love You so much. We love You so much. We pray that You would use what's been shared today to reveal in our hearts how good, merciful, and loving You are to each and every one of us. Father, for anybody now who is under the sound of my voice who doesn't yet know You in this personal and intimate way, for anybody who has not yet surrendered their life to Your Son, I pray that by the power of the Holy Spirit, that You would reveal to their hearts right now their need for a Savior. I can't do it. I'm not eloquent enough. I'm not smart enough. Holy Spirit, would You speak to their hearts and reveal their need for Jesus? Would You convict them of sin and convince them that although their sin is great, there is an even greater Savior who loves them and took their place? Holy Spirit, I pray for those You reveal the need for salvation, too. Would You give them the courage to speak out, cry out for help, cry out for forgiveness, and cry out for salvation? I thank You that You meet them there in that space, that You rescue them and bring them into the kingdom. God, I pray You would bless Your people, keep Your people, and cause Your face to shine on them. Lord be

## The Blessing

gracious to them, lift Your countenance upon them, and give them Your peace in Jesus name we pray, amen.

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