

Week of December 16-22

## DOXOLOGY OR BENEDICTION?

**Scripture Reading:** Read Jude

There are times when theologians will use \$10.00 words that leave the average person in the pew scratching his or her head in confusion wondering what do they mean. Perhaps today's devotional title does the same for you. Doxology or Benediction? Fancy terms, but what do they mean? A doxology is a declaration that ascribes glory or praise to God while a benediction is usually a blessing that one prays God will give to another person. Put another way, a doxology goes up to God while a benediction comes down from God. For example, compare the two statements below.

*"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."*

Numbers 6:24-26

*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Ephesians 3:20-21

The first is a benediction and the second is a doxology. Notice the difference. The verses from Numbers are a blessing that Aaron and his descendants were to pray over the Israelites. The verses from Ephesians are a declaration of praise to God which Paul makes after providing a panoramic view of God's amazing grace and blessings given to the church through Jesus Christ in Ephesians chapters 1-3.

Now, take a look at the concluding verses of today's chapter reading of Jude: ***To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy-- to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*** Which is it? Benediction or doxology? If you said doxology, you would be right. Most of this chapter is filled with warnings regarding false teachers who were infiltrating the churches. Using expressive language and examples, Jude describes the characteristics of these false teachers and the certainty of God's judgment on them. It's pretty heavy stuff. Jude wants believers to understand the dangers involved and to remain safe and strong in the faith once for all entrusted to the saints. That's probably the reason why at the end of his book, Jude lifts up a doxology of praise to God. He wants to assure believers that, despite the challenges the false teachers presented, God could carry them to heaven and for this reason he was worthy of glory, honor and praise. What's true of God then is still true of God now. He is still able to keep us from falling and to present us before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy and, therefore, still deserves a doxology of praise!

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** Check out the following benedictions and doxologies: Romans 15:13; 16:25-27; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Tim 1:7. Pray the benedictions over yourself. Praise God with the doxologies.

**Take-a-way:** **A benediction from God blesses; A doxology to God praises.**