

# Reformed Worship: The Anatomy of a Worship Service

## Lesson 13: We Get a New Name

### The Benediction

- I. In worship, we ascend the mountain of the Lord to have Him renew His covenant with us and seal that renewal with a fellowship meal that nurtures and assures our place in that covenant through faith in its Mediator, Jesus Christ. And at the end of our worship, God sends us away with a benediction.
  - A. What is a benediction?
    1. First, let's be clear what it's not.
    2. "In the benediction God blesses His people by confirming that His name is on them for good in Christ, and thereby strengthens them to serve Him in the week ahead."
  - B. Benedictions in Scripture
    1. Num 6.22-27
      - a) The benediction is a ministerial act, done at God's command, in which His blessing and favor are put on His people, cf. Lev 9.22<sup>1</sup>
    2. The NT letters are often concluded with such benedictions from God, Rom 15.13; 2Cor 13.14; Heb 13.20-21; 1Pet 5.10-11; Rev 22.21, all of which reflect and are directly tied to the blessing which the ascending Christ put on His church once and for all, Lk 24.50
- II. All week long the world is giving us names. Sometimes these names really beat us down and we forget who and whose we are. When God brings us into worship to renew His covenant with us, by which He's made Himself our God and made us His children, He doesn't send us out without reminding us of our name: Blessed.
  - A. "A major point of the worship service is to teach us who we really are: those who are called by God out of sin, cleansed by His gospel and freely forgiven, led by His Word, and invited to feast with Him at an eternal meal. And if all that doesn't entirely reorient us, if that doesn't teach us that we belong to Christ and not to our sin [or to the devil or to the world], then God does this one final thing: He gives us His name."
- III. It's important to point out that the benediction isn't the first time that Christians receive the name of God. We first receive God's name in our Christian baptism, Mt 28.19
  - A. When we're baptized we're brought into the covenant name of God, and when the Holy Spirit works saving faith in our hearts, we receive all the blessings that come along with that.
  - B. God brings us into His covenant family by distinguishing from the community of the world by putting His name upon us, and then He sends us out each week with the same benediction. If we have ears to hear it, He's reminding us that we belong to Him and that we have His name upon us, and that just as we are His, so He is ours.
- IV. The benediction is God's way of sending us into our week with the assurance of His blessing upon us. We are not alone. We are not to go out to our workweek in our own strength.
  - A. In fact, we're not to live a single day of the rest of our week without finding comfort in the reality that the blessing of God rests upon us because the God who blesses is with us.
  - B. God's benediction is a promise of His blessing because it's a giving of Himself to us.

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<sup>1</sup> This is why, in the OPC, neither ruling elders nor licentiates are permitted to give a benediction. Hence, they usually close in prayer or read a doxology, a proclamation from Scripture that God is blessed.