
Question Time: What is a Patriarchal Blessing/Benediction?

--- by Patriarch-Evangelist Mike Ballantyne



Many times when we look at a church service bulletin or a priesthood schedule, we may see the words “invocation” and “benediction.” Other times we may see “opening” or “closing prayer.” These phrases are not synonymous although they may be similar in purpose. I would like to consider with you the **benediction**.

The dictionary describes the word benediction as “a blessing of formal character; the blessing at the end of a religious service; to impart or pronounce a blessing; the act of blessing.”

In the Old Testament the Lord told Moses to speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, “On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them,

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;
The Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

— Numbers 6:22-26

This is a benediction, a blessing from the Lord God, pronounced upon His people. Many places in the scriptures we read of the blessings given by the patriarchs from the first patriarch Adam, down through time to our day. God’s blessings are given to individuals as well as groups of His people. In Genesis 48 we read of the patriarch Jacob blessing his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob also gave blessings to his 12 sons just before he died of old age. In Deuteronomy 33, we read of the patriarch Moses blessing the 12 tribes of Israel just before they entered into the Promised Land.

A benediction is not a prayer to God, but rather a statement of blessing from God to His loved ones. Most church services end with a closing prayer asking for a continuing blessing on behalf of His people, and this is very appropriate. On some occasions, however, there may be a need and special situation when a benediction is requested and given. This happened on April 6, 2008, at the meeting of the Saints at Waldo Avenue Restoration Branch. A 2:00 p.m. service with about 700 Saints in attendance was concluded with a benediction pronounced upon them.

The Lord, through His priesthood, gives the benediction. Therefore, it is not addressed to God, as a closing prayer is, but to the ones receiving the blessing. It requires of His priesthood much fasting, prayer and preparation and many times it is written down so the carnal mind does not forget the message of the blessing. The Lord gives His benediction by the power of His Spirit and the messenger may well acknowledge the source of the blessing. It is always pronounced upon the people in the name of Jesus Christ.

All of this leads us to the benedictory ministry of the patriarch. A **patriarchal blessing** is always a benediction—blessing. It is made available to any member of the Church who is in good standing. Most patriarchs suggest a recipient be 16 years or older in order to assure understanding and maturity of purpose for receiving and using a patriarchal blessing. Each recipient should be honest and wholesome in the influence of their covenant. This does not mean they must be without weakness or mistakes, for the blessing is to help them achieve spiritual strength.

Receiving and using your patriarchal blessing wisely will enrich your life and discipleship. It is best understood as you view it in relation to the total gospel of Jesus Christ, taught from the beginning. The patriarchal blessing can function only in a church that believes in a God who reveals Himself today, for the good of His disciples. Consider the very personal ministry the Lord yearns to give you in His benediction – blessing. Consider seeking your patriarchal blessing while you are in your youth so His blessing will guide you through your life.

As you awaken each morning, before you go out to change the world for good, do these three things:

1. Kneel down and thank the Lord for all your many blessings.
2. Make your bed.
3. Determine to ask about a patriarchal blessing in the near future.

May the Lord continue to bless and keep you always, is my prayer.

“ . . . using your patriarchal blessing wisely will enrich your life and discipleship.”