

Barak

בָּרַכְךָ



“The Lord bless you
and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face towards you
and give you peace.” Numbers 6:22-26

The Hebrew word for blessing is Barak. The idea behind the word is to literally fill your hands. It is not difficult to see that with blessing comes wealth. God blessed Abraham and he became wealthy. The same was true for Issac, Jacob and Moses. In fact if you survey the Old Testament characters, anyone who God blessed prospered. So it is easy to assume that those who prosper must be blessed. That is certainly what the followers of Jesus thought.

Read Matthew 19:16-30

1. What are your first thoughts as you hear this story?
2. What motives might the rich young man have had for asking his question?
3. Why was the answer Jesus gave such a disappointment to him?
4. Why do you think Jesus felt the need to repeat his explanation (23-24)?
5. How did the disciples respond?

It is very easy for our faith to become dependent on our circumstances, especially if we have had a relatively secure upbringing. We get comfortable with our relationship with God, because we might never have known serious hardship or challenges. However, when something changes and we face a crisis or temptations, our response can sometimes be to doubt God. That is because our understanding of God is too closely linked to our circumstances. It is true for the rich young man, we only know him because of his circumstances. He was rich.

In deeper

Think back to the story of Moses leading the Hebrews out of Egypt. You probably don't have to read it, but the part of the story we are interested in is in Exodus 12-14. Think how the circumstances of the Israelites had changed.

- How had things changed from when they were in Egypt to when they were in the desert?
- By Exodus 32, what happened to their trust in God?
- What are the things that challenge our trust and cause us to doubt God?

Read Numbers 6:22-27

By this time in the story Moses had appointed Aaron as the High Priest and Aaron's son would serve as priests. God commanded that this prayer of blessing be spoke over the Israelites, who were facing an uncertain future and ever changing circumstances. Their faith was to be dependent on their relationship with God, not their circumstances.

Read Acts 11:19-26

- How does God bless the people of Antioch?
- In what way might the believers be said to have God's name on them?

In Matthew 1:22 an Angel tell's Joseph that the son Mary carried would be called Immanuel, which means God with us. When God blessed his creation, he gave his Son and those who put their trust in him carry his name.

Very often we cannot be sure of our circumstances, and they may well change in a negative way, as happened to God's people, and then Jeremiah wrote Lamentations 3:22-23.

May Gd bless you and keep you, make his face shine upon you, may he turn to you and give you peace.