

Jude 24-25 - Christmas 2020

It is fitting in this season to pause and reflect on the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible certainly celebrates his birth - enough so that angels appear to stir up shepherds to go worship him. Magi from hundreds of miles away make a journey to see the young child and bless him with extravagant gifts that the young family will use to sustain themselves for years while they live in Egypt away from King Herod who wants to destroy Jesus.

The manner of the birth of Christ is absolutely miraculous on every level. God the Son - second person of the Trinity - taking on human flesh. How that all works out and is possible is only explained through the miraculous work of God.

The preservation of the physical line of David through both Mary and Joseph in order that the Messiah would come from David is a miracle.

The Virgin Mary who conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit - that's a miracle.

Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, conceiving John the Baptist in her old age was a miracle. John was Israel's chief evangelist for Jesus, up until he was beheaded by Herod.

The dreams and visions that guided Joseph throughout the birth narrative are miracles.

And of course these miracles in bringing the Savior into the world are only the beginning of a growing crescendo of miracles that Jesus himself performs throughout his ministry leading up to his death and the ultimate miracle - his resurrection three days later.

The miracles continue. Our Lord ascended into heaven some 40 days later. And through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, every time a person comes to true saving faith in Jesus another resurrection happens.

The Bible says that when someone believes in Christ it is because God has raised them spiritually from the dead. God's power to resurrect people from spiritual deadness continues until the end of this age when the Lord Jesus returns in power and glory and raises all people *physically* from the dead and he ushers in the New Heavens and New Earth.

He was born to die, he died to rise, he rose to reign and he will reign forever and ever.

Why did God do all of this? Why was that the plan? What was the purpose of God in all of this?

The grand design of God in all of this is what we see here at the very end of the book of Jude. The grand design in God creating the universe, in making covenants with sinful people, in sending his Son into the world - is ultimately that we would praise him forever.

The Bible says the endgame for everything that God does is actually his own praise. All that God does is for his glory and his honor. And the reason that he sent his Son into the world to save the world was so that we would get a small taste of his greatness in this life that leads to eternal praise for his greatness in the next life.

And that's what I want us to focus on in our passage here this morning. Jesus came to set off a chain of events that ultimately leads to our eternal joy and eternal praise of the God who sent his Son to save us. Our eternal joy and his eternal glory are wrapped up in salvation.

This section of Jude is well known to many Christians. It is called the doxology. A doxology is an expression of praise for what God has done and who he is. The word doxology comes from 2 words. Doxa meaning glory. Ology meaning to speak about. To speak about God's glory. They're usually small poetic formulas of praise.

Rom. 11:36: For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

We sing the doxology: Praise God from whom all blessings flow...

That's called a doxology because it's a formula of praise. And it is an amazing section. It praises God for what he has done through Jesus and praises God for who he is.

In fact, the praise itself is really only at the beginning and end - the middle is just qualifiers:

"Now to him...be glory, majesty dominion, and authority, before all time, now and forever. Amen." That's the praise. The stuff in **Vs. 24** is just added reasons to praise God.

You ever had a double stuffed potato? Where you take all the potato out of a baked potato and add a bunch of other ingredients and then bake it again and you have this amazing dish?

Or you take a brownie, take the center out, and then fill it with ice cream and whipped topping. So you're taking something that's already good and jamming it with even more goodness?

That's what this section is. It's praise to God for who he is jammed with even more praise to God for what he's done for us. And what holds it all together at the very center is the reality that God is our Savior. **Read 25**

It's almost like he starts over. "To him who"...then he says again "to the only God." He's talking about the same person! It's almost as though Jude is bursting with praise for God.

And it's this bursting forth in praise that I want us to home in on this morning. Christmas is supposed to be a time of joy and praise. But really the only thing that will truly bring us joy and praise is to be reminded afresh the great work of God our Savior.

Jude here's reminds us of 4 reasons to praise God for what he's done for us and 4 reasons to praise God simply for who he is. We will look at those in a moment, yet here I want us to see that all of that praise comes because God is our Savior. **Read 24, 25.**

I want to start here in the middle - because this is who the praise in this doxology is aimed at. **Vs. 24** starts off "now to him" and **Vs. 25** makes that "him" very clear: it's glory to God our Savior through Jesus Christ. So we have 2 person of the trinity - the Father and the Son - whom this praise is specifically aimed at: God, speaking about the Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Wait, isn't Jesus our Savior? Isn't that what we celebrate this time of year? The Savior, Jesus, coming into the world?

What we need to understand is that salvation is a unified effort of the Trinity. The Father planned salvation, the Son accomplished salvation, and the Holy Spirit applies the work of salvation to those who believe.

All three persons of the Trinity have an active role in the work of salvation. Here, in the grand sense, God the Father is our Savior because it is according to his eternal design that he planned salvation. We need to be careful that we don't think about the Father and the Son like good cop/bad cop. Like the Father was this irritated deity that just wants to send us to hell and the Son is the good cop who smooths it all out.

No, it is the Father, in his amazing mercy and love that sacrifices his own Son to save sinners.

John 3:16: For God so loved the world that **he gave** his Son.

Yes it was Jesus on the cross bearing the weight of our sin. It was Jesus on the cross enduring the wrath of the Father. It was Jesus's blood shed to cleanse our sins. Jesus the Son is our Savior inasmuch as he accomplished our salvation on the cross.

But it was the Father who, in love, sent his Son to save us. He planned our salvation.

And because salvation came through Jesus - all praise to the Father has to go through God the Son. **Read 25a**

So praise to God our Savior has to come through Jesus Christ our Lord. What does that mean?

If you've been to Silverwood you know that the only way to get into the park is to go through this tunnel. The tunnel goes under the freeway. There's no other way to get into the park. If you want to experience the joy and thrill and glory of rollercoasters you have to go through the tunnel.

In the same way, the only way to experience the saving power of God the Father is through Jesus Christ, the Lord.

No one comes to the Father, except through me, Jesus says (John 14:6).

In order to be saved, you have to come to the Father through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. You won't experience the salvation of God by thinking doing good works will earn your forgiveness. You won't experience the salvation of the Father by thinking you can just say you're a Christian but never actually repent from your sins.

No. In order to know God the Father as Savior, you have to go through Jesus Christ the Lord. You have to believe that the death he died was the death you deserve for your sins. And you have to believe that the life he commands because he is the resurrected Lord - a life of obedience and repentance - is the only way to access the Father.

He is the only way.

It is only through believing in and submitting to Christ as Lord that we come to God as our Savior. That's who this doxology is aimed at. God the Savior, through Christ our Lord.

And in these 2 verses Jude says we praise God our Savior through Christ our Lord for 8 things. The first 4 are for what he's done for us. The second 4 are for who he is.

1) God the Savior is able to keep us from stumbling.

What does that mean? Well, if you remember, the short letter of Jude is a letter to encourage true believers to contend for true Christian faith. There were a lot of false teachers that had seemed to be believers at one point, but who had wandered away from the faith. They had stumbled. They had committed apostasy.

At one time they had claimed to be true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had made a profession of faith, they had been baptized, they probably even still considered themselves Christians. But they had gone off into all sorts of immorality.

Jude says, God our Savior is able to keep us from stumbling. And he doesn't mean "hopefully God will keep us from stumbling." No, he means that God is strong to keep us from stumbling. Those who are truly saved, truly in Christ, will never go the way of these apostates.

Have you ever wondered if you can sin so much that God just washes his hands of you? "I tried to save that one, but man they're stubborn." No - that'll never happen to those whom God has called and chosen for his glory. Those who are apostates were never saved by God in the first place. The beloved of God will never stumble because God the Savior is able to keep us from stumbling.

2) God the Savior presents us blameless. **Read 24**

Jude says that God our Savior presents us as blameless. This doesn't mean that those who have been saved will never sin again. This is not Christian perfectionism that wrongly says Christians should reach a point where they never sin again.

No, this is our standing before God. When we trust in Christ alone for salvation, what God sees when looks at us from that point on is blamelessness because we are covered in the righteous life of Jesus. Christians are not intrinsically righteous - wouldn't that be nice? No, Christians are credited with Jesus's righteousness.

And he uses an interesting word: present. God **presents** us as blameless. The NIV says presents us without fault.

The idea is God showcases us as blameless. He stands us up in a position, like a trophy in display cabinet, where we appear to him as blameless. Not because we are intrinsically, but because he has made us so through faith in Jesus.

God's got this trophy case the size of the New Earth that is filled with people whom he will showcase for all eternity. "That one? Yeah, I saved her from drunkenness. This one? I saved him from self-righteousness. Those guys, those are my gang members - white as snow. Those ones over there? Those are my know-it-all homeschoolers. I saved them all and they are all blameless because of the salvation I brought about.

God presents us as blameless.

3) God our Savior brings us into the presence of his glory. Read 24

This is really connected to being blameless, but I think it's worth it's own consideration because the Christian hope is that one day we will see God in all of his infinite glory.

Matt. 5:8: Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

That's our hope. That's the gospel. The gospel isn't I'm a wicked sinner who trusts that Jesus died for my sins so that I can go have an eternity of fishing at the lake. No, the gospel is that I'm a wicked sinner who trusts that Jesus died for my sins so that I can stand in the presence of God and all his glory for all eternity. To behold the blazing, brilliant power and beauty of God in all of his splendor forever and ever and ever.

The Bible says no one can see God and live. The problem is that in our sinful flesh we don't have the capacity to behold God with dying. It's like trying to hold gasoline in a styrofoam cup - the cup just dissolves - it's can't contain the gasoline.

That's our problem - we have no ability to behold and contain the glory of God. But the true hope of Christianity is that with resurrected bodies that are presented as blameless we will stand in the presence of the glory of God.

As Job says: though our flesh be destroyed yet with our eyes we shall see God.

I don't know what you look forward to in life. Seeing the beach, seeing the lake, seeing family, seeing the inside of your Christmas presents. Whatever it is - whatever you look forward to seeing, let me tell you it's nothing compared to the full scale grandeur of God our Savior in the full brightness of his glory.

4) God gives us is great joy. Read 24

So what Jude is presenting is this chain of events that God will do that results in praise to God. God will keep us from stumbling so that he can present us blameless as we stand before the awesome power of his glory and that results in great joy.

Something we need to keep in mind is that actually all people are going to stand one day before God and see him in the totality of his glory. Everyone will experience the blazing brightness of our Creator. But not everyone will well up with joy when they see him.

For most - those who are on the broad road that leads to destruction - that's a terrible day because they stand before God as his enemies.

But for those who are in Christ - those have followed him by faith - that day is not terror but pure joy.

Our kids read the Magic School Bus series of books. You're probably familiar with these. But the idea is that there's this crazy teacher who takes her elementary school class on a school bus and takes them to crazy places. One of the places she takes them is to the sun. And as the kids approach the sun they are concerned because the awesome power of the nuclear sun going to consume them. But the school bus protects them from the deadly affects of the sun. And as a result the kids get to behold to amazing glory of the sun without fear of being burned up.

That's just a small illustration of standing before the infinite Creator God. If you know God as your Savior through Jesus Christ the Lord - there is this proverbial blast shield that protects you from God's own glory. The blood of Christ shielding us from the holy wrath of God. And it's not like this shield barely keeps us alive.

No; the power of the righteousness of Christ has so thoroughly covered our sins and richly placed righteousness in our account that the wrath of God is - for us - eternally extinguished. So much so that the author of Hebrews says we can boldly approach the throne of grace in our time of need.

You know how a little kid just wanders over to their parent and just plops themselves down on their lap like it's no big deal? That's how we can go to God now in prayer - and even more so when we stand before God.

Because for all eternity will we be in the presence of the infinitely glorious Savior God who pours out on us joy after joy after joy through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what God has done that causes us to praise him in this doxology.

But that's not the only reason we praise God. We also praise God because of who he is eternally. Jude gives us 4 descriptions of God that are eternal attributes of God. **Read 25**

He says to him - to God - be these things. Why does he say "to him be the glory/majesty?" Doesn't God have those things already? The answer, of course, is yes. God has these attributes and has always had them. That's why he says before all time and now and forever.

What Jude is doing is **ascribing** to God these things. What does that mean? When you ascribe something to someone or something you are describing it in a way that shows you love it.

In the summertime I'll see a beautiful sunset and I'll text Jodee to check out the sunset. Why? Because I'm delighting in the sunset and I want her to delight in the sunset.

If your friend gets a new truck and drops by to show you you're like "This is awesome! This truck can pull a Chevy sideways." You are delighting in the glory of the Ford. It's intrinsically superior and you are delighting in its greatness.

That's what ascribing is. It's not giving God glory that he doesn't have. He's got it. And it's not simply describing God's glory in an apathetic way. It's delighting in who he is because he is so great.

Jude ascribes 4 things to God. Glory, majesty, dominion and authority (power).

1) To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory.

Glory is a flexible word. It's kind of like the word love. I love my wife, but I also love coffee - those are very different kinds of love.

Same thing with glory. Even in this passage we see glory used in 2 different ways, don't we? We saw how one day we will stand before the presence of God's glory. What Jude means there is his holy brightness. The outward blazing manifestation of all his attributes. Like standing before the glory of the power of the sun.

But there's another type of glory - same word in the Greek - that means honor or credit. When you're doing a project with a group of people and one person on the team gets all the glory, what we mean is that they get all the credit - usually to the exclusion of everyone else.

That's the idea here in **Vs. 25**. When we ascribe to God glory what we're saying is that God gets all the credit for everything and we get credit for nothing. And that's a good thing.

One of the sure signs that someone knows God as Savior through Jesus is that they give God all the credit for everything.

1 Cor. 10:31: Whether you eat or you drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

So whether we're talking to someone about the gospel that saved a bunch of filthy wretches or we're drinking or eating or whatever we're doing - God gets all the glory.

Why do we have water we can drink? Because God our Savior gave us water. Why do we have food to eat? A roof over our head? Clothes to wear? Eternal life? God our Savior - through Jesus our Lord - gave us all these things. He gets all the credit, we get all the benefits.

The only good thing in us is God's work in saving us and providing for us. It's that glory - that credit and fame - we ascribe to God.

2) And we ascribe to him majesty.

Majesty is greatness or awesomeness. God is intrinsically great and awesome.

If you drive down I5 to go to California you pass right by Mt. Shasta on your left. The first time I drove to California was at night time so I didn't notice the mountain or even know it was there. The second time I was driving by and there are trees that often block the view. But when you come to a clearing the mountain is just massive and looming just a few miles off the freeway. It dominates your whole field of vision. And it is awesome. It is majestic. It's huge and dominating and you're left with this sense of awe and wonder.

Our God made that mountain. He made all the mountains and holds them like fine dust in the palm of his hand. That mountain pales in comparison to the majesty - the greatness - of our God. He is truly majestic, truly awesome in who he is.

3) We ascribe to God dominion.

Someone's dominion is where they rule and reign as supreme. The prime minister of Norway may have dominion in Norway, but she has no authority here.

God's not like that. God's dominion is every square inch of the universe. Abraham Kuyper once said: There is not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence - and I would say universe - over which Christ who is Sovereign over all, does not cry mine!"

God our Savior through Jesus Christ has dominion over everything. His rule is without any border. All kings are subject to him. He sets up kings and takes them down. He determines the time and duration of their rule. And they will all bow their knee in worship or in submission to God our King.

No one is exempt and no one is above him.

Psalms 2 says the nations rage at God. We see that with every political cycle. There's raging and dishonesty and craziness. The psalmist says God laughs at that nonsense.

Psalms 2:10-11 Now, therefore, O kings be wise, be warned O rulers of the earth, serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling; kiss the Son lest he be angry with you and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled."

Interpretation: All rulers better bow to King Jesus or he will crush them like a pop can and throw them out in his wrath. Our God - our Savior - he has infinite dominion.

4) We ascribe to God our Savior authority.

Authority is closely connected to dominion. Where dominion emphasizes that God has power everywhere, authority emphasizes that God legitimately has that right. He is authorized - authority - to do that.

God is not an illegitimate ruler. His rule is not contested at all because from all eternity he is the sovereign God who has every right to rule his people and do with them what he will.

And as we've seen in Job, no one will question him or call him into account for what he has done. This is his place.

This is our God. This is our Savior. This is our joy and this is glory. When God our Savior brought Jesus into the world 2,000 years ago, this is what he set in motion. He set in motion his own gracious design to save us, make us blameless that we would stand before his amazing glory forever and ever experience non-stop joy for all eternity.

And because that salvation is not based on our works but based only on trusting in his grace our joyful response to that is to ascribe to God eternal glory. Eternal majesty. Eternal dominion. And eternal authority.

And that's what we'll do from now, until forever. Amen.

Pray