

Doxology (pt.2)

Jude 24-25

Jude is a hard book to study, because it addresses hard problems. According to verse 4, “certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is a serious matter, one that determined the sober tone of the whole book, as Jude writes in verse 3, “while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” So the matter is urgent. The danger is imminent. The troublemakers who have come into the church are not believers at all, but are those “for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever,” verse 13.

So what is the average reader of Jude’s letter to think? How can they be protected? We saw the answer to that question in, v.20 “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

But still, there must have been some uncertainty. Some cause for alarm. Some real fear that innocent people would be deceived, that those who were genuine and sincere might stumble. They might become contaminated by the error, trapped by the danger that lurked all around them. Yet God promises us a great hope, and the doxology at the end of the book is a word of praise to the God would keep you from stumbling. The words are very broad, and very helpful.

v.24 “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy...”

That’s what we studied last week. The doxology, part 1. Half the sermon. Praise to God for his work of preservation. He keeps you from stumbling. The second half of the sermon is this afternoon. This doxology, this word of glory, ascribes to God things that we might identify as his attributes. His identity. A description and definition of God, as he is revealed and as he is presented in the Scriptures. In other words, theology! The doctrine of God. And our doxology, our word of praise, is founded upon that doctrinal definition of the identity of God. So we give,

II. PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS PERSONAL GLORY.

v.25

We begin with praise, “To God our Savior, Who alone is wise.” Simple words, aren’t they, as are so many descriptions of God. God is alone wise, he is the only one. Or you can attach the word “only” directly to God, as does the ESV in line with the earliest Greek manuscripts, “to the only God.” The point is that there is only one God. Only one true God.

A. Praise to the one and only true God.

Let me begin with a series of cross-references for this crucial point, that there is but one and only true God. Not many gods, among whom you can choose. Religion is not a grocery store, where you select your favorite items. No, true religion is nothing but God’s own declaration of himself, the only true God. First,

Deut. 4:35 “To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him...39 know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.”

Then the familiar summation of the law of Moses,

Deut. 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

So the identity of God, in the singular, is immediately joined with the call to love him! We are not simply talking about the identity of God, but the object of love. The object of devotion, and trust. And worship. And that realization of one and only one true God is, of course, embedded in God’s law as the first commandment, for it is only this one true God whom we are to worship.

Ex. 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before me.”

Consider the prophecy of Isaiah, where we see the foolishness of idols, worthless gods fashioned in the image of the creature.

Isaiah 44:6 “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God. 7 And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, Since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, Let them show these to them. 8 Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.”

Isaiah 45:5 “I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, 6 That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; 7 I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.”

Then,

Isaiah 46:5 “To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal And compare Me, that we should be alike? 6 They lavish gold out of the bag, And weigh silver on the scales; They hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a god; They prostrate themselves, yes, they worship. 7 They bear it on the shoulder, they carry it And set it in its place, and it stands; From its place it shall not move. Though one cries out to it, yet it cannot answer Nor save him out of his trouble. 8 “Remember this, and show yourselves men; Recall to mind, O you transgressors. 9 Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’ 11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it. 12 “Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, Who are far from righteousness: 13 I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion, For Israel My glory.”

The point is clear, I hope. There is only one God who actually governs and rules the world with power and authority. There is only one God who exercises sovereignty over all his creation. He only, he alone, is wise. And he is the God who is revealed in the Bible.

1 Tim. 2:5 “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

That, of course, emphasizes, that we give,

B. Praise to God our Savior.

It’s not just a theoretical discussion. It’s not just a theological discussion. It’s a matter of salvation, and life. “For there is one

God, and there is one mediator.” Jesus.

Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

There is only one mediator. There is only one sacrifice of atonement. There is only one way. Only Jesus.

John 14:6 “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Now, let me not be confusing. I am not talking about two gods, Jesus and God the Father. Rather, the one God our Savior exists as both Father and Son, two of the three persons of the Trinity.

John 10:30 “I and the Father are one.”

Thus Jude’s words makes perfect sense, “To God our Savior, Who [only] is wise...” No other gods can save you. No idols, fashioned with our own hands, can accomplish salvation. And so we sing to his praise because he is a God of salvation.

Ex. 15:2 “The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.”

Is. 12:2 “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.”

No other God can satisfy your need of life. No other God can sustain your life, for no other God is the true God. Thus we sing praise to God our Savior, even as Habakkuk did. And notice how Habakkuk sings that praise, despite the circumstances of this earth. Even if life on this earth offered no help, even if he could find no satisfaction in anything bound to this earth, still he would

praise the God of his salvation.

Hab. 3:17 “Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls— 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills.”

So Jude gives his praise to God, to the only God. Then he identifies four of God’s attributes, four things that make God, God.

C. Praise to God for his attributes.

v.25 “...glory, majesty, dominion, and power.”

First, glory. Doxa. Honor. Dignity. In one sense, in a real sense, glory is the fullest description of God. It is the word most comprehensive in identifying God. He is the God of glory!

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for glory means “heavy.” Important. Weighty. And so we read things like this,

Ex. 40:34 “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

We get the same image in a vision of the future, in,

Rev. 15:8 “...the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power.”

In the New Testament, glory means all that and more. It is a judgment, a declaration of importance. And so we worship the God of glory. We worship the God whose attribute of glory goes beyond our ordinary, puny existence. In the poetic language of

the Psalmist, this is what it means to give doxology to the God of glory,

Ps. 24:7 “Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle! 9 Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 10 Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.”

Beloved, all of us need to recognize the significance of that glory, because otherwise our lives are left to the trivial, mundane, ordinary and sometimes meaningless existence of life in this age. Here is where you are lifted up from your common, human life on earth. Here is where you find meaning. And hope. And joy. And the glory of the transcendent God, a God who is greater than you. A God who is exalted in every way, in every way glorious. That is the God whom we worship.

Psalms 29:11 “Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones, Give unto the LORD glory and strength. 2 Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters; The God of glory thunders; The LORD is over many waters. 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; The voice of the LORD is full of majesty.”

That attribute of majesty is also identified by Jude. The Greek word begins with “mega.” Greatness, largeness! Think money, mega-millions. Think large church, mega-church. Think importance, greatness, power, dignity.

We still use the word today to address kings and queens don’t we. We address royalty as, “Your Royal Highness,” or, “Your Majesty.” That is appropriate, under a monarchy. That is an accurate description of the place that a royal ruler holds over his people. Your Majesty. So we ascribe that majesty to God, to the

one and only true God, our Savior. To him be glory, majesty, and dominion.

Do you see how these attributes fit together. God has dominion. God rules. God governs. God has power and strength. So this is how Paul prays for the people of Ephesus,

Eph. 1:17 “...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”

This is important, that you recognize, and understand, that God rules the world, through Jesus Christ, “far above all principality and power and might and dominion.” This is the foundation of your praise, to the God who has dominion!

Col. 1:16 “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”

We read of similar praise to God in,

1 Tim. 6:15 “...He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.”

And, Rev. 1:5 “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

That is very much related to his attribute of power, or authority, as many of these verses have made clear. Authority is the right to rule, the power to rule and the power to govern. God has such authority, above all others. God rules, above all others. And so even today, even when Satan, the prince of the power of the air, seeks those whom he may devour, we still read about Jesus, that he sits on a throne, “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.”

And, as that passage in Ephesians continues, that exercise of power and authority is for the benefit of the church.

Eph. 1:22 “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

We need that encouragement, because it often seems to be just the opposite in our experience. The circumstances of the world seem to contradict this reality. It is not difficult to find examples to this day of the sort of persecution that has always been evident in the history of the church. Indeed, it seems to be much more obvious in recent years. So we need this encouragement, lest you lose hope! You need this encouragement, lest you despair of all hope throughout this age. Beloved, our God, the one and only true God our savior is a God of majesty, dominion and authority.

I emphasize all these verses because I want you to behold God, the God who is revealed in Scripture. I want you to behold the God of glory, and give to him your appropriate praise. Too

often today, the view of God in the heart and mind of people is insignificant. Inconsequential. It doesn't make any difference. We have a very low view of God, a small view of God, and ultimately, for many people, an irrelevant view of God. God doesn't matter. The doctrine of God doesn't matter. The attributes of God don't matter.

But they do. Everything about God matters. Everything about the glory of God matters. Because only in the presence of such a great God can we be still, can we be silent. Only in the presence of such a great God can we find strength.

One more thing, then, to mention about God. His eternity. So the doxology concludes,

v.25 “Both now and forever.”

The earliest Greek manuscripts include the words, “before all time,” referring to eternity past. Before the creation of the world. Now and forever, rather obviously, refer to the present and the future. That's the future, eternity future. Yesterday, today and forever. That's God. Eternal, and unchangeable. Never is that stated more clearly than in,

Heb. 13:8 “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

D. Praise to God for his eternal and unchangeable existence.

A vital element of our faith is the belief in God the creator, that God created all things out of nothing. Our Bibles begin with those words,

Gen.1:1 “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...”

This is humbling, too, as we read of the lesson Job learned

from the mouth of the Lord,

Job 38:4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, 7 when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8 “Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, 9 when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, 10 and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, 11 and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed’? 12 “Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, 13 that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it?”

And of course, the answer is no. None of us were there! But this is our hope and strength—God was there. God is eternal. God is unchangeable.

Let me end with one more cross reference, that makes all of this so practical and so helpful for us. You see, it is a God of such greatness and glory that gives us strength. So let me read,

Is. 40:12 “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, Measured heaven with a span And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales And the hills in a balance? 13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has taught Him? 14 With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, And showed Him the way of understanding? 15 Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, And are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. 16 And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering.

17 All nations before Him are as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless. 18 To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? 19 The workman molds an image, The goldsmith overspreads it with gold, And the silversmith casts silver chains. 20 Whoever is too impoverished for such a contribution Chooses a tree that will not rot; He seeks for himself a skillful workman To prepare a carved image that will not totter.”

And here is the encouragement,

Is. 40:21 “Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22 It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. 23 He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless. 24 Scarcely shall they be planted, Scarcely shall they be sown, Scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth, When He will also blow on them, And they will wither, And the whirlwind will take them away like stubble. 25 “To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal?” says the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing. 27 Why do you say, O Jacob, And speak, O Israel: “My way is hidden from the LORD, And my just claim is passed over by my God”?

As you sing this doxology of Jude in your heart, may this strength be yours, as Isaiah declares the greatness of the glory of God.

Is. 40:28 “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

29 He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might
He increases strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be
weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, 31 But those who wait
on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with
wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall
walk and not faint.”

If you force me to choose my favorite passage in the whole
Bible it would be those verses. And so our doxology, the
doxology of our lives, is this,

“...To [the only] God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory
and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.”