

Anathema

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 13 September 2010 17:33

The word 'Anathema' is used freely in churches and by Christians, but do you know what it means? Is it relevant today? After all, the word itself only appears once, in the New Testament.

What matters is not how many times a word or phrase appears, but what its content is, and whether or not it has universal or enduring application. We will look at the word in that one verse, before going on.

1 Corinthians 16:22

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."

We can see that to qualify for the denunciation 'Anathema', a man must not love Christ. In other words, not be born again. But, what does the denunciation mean?

The meaning, as with so many texts, can be one of several, but the context usually gives the definition. One meaning is something put aside to be kept. In particular this referred to an offering given as the result of a vow, and was thus a Jewish matter.

However, the meaning in this text is different: it means never having the hope of being redeemed by God. In human terms, then, it means to be doomed to destruction and hell. The word itself, in this context, is a godly curse upon the person, who will suffer the consequences in this life and the next. It is a fact beyond doubt that unsaved men and women have sorrowful lives, for they have nothing to hope for and live sinfully, whether they realise it or not.

'Anathema' is a 'great curse' from God, upon those who reject Christ. It is imprecatory, offering no reason to have hope. Though this word only appears once, its equivalents are found plentifully throughout scripture, often as the words 'curse', 'cursing' or 'accursed', from the Hebrew, *cherem*. This carried with it the meaning of 'the disfavour of Jehovah'.

'Maranatha' is the Greek for two Aramaic words: *marana tha*, used to underpin the curse; meaning 'our Lord cometh' or 'will come'. Therefore, putting the two terms together is an

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absolute statement against the person, telling him that the Lord will come even if he does not believe, and when He comes, the man will be designated to hell. Thus, he has been cursed by God and can never recover.

Accursed

In its Greek form, Anathema is used only once. But, in its translated form, 'accursed', it is used 20 times.

Its first use was in the matter of hanging: a man who was hanged had to be buried the same day because the person was "accursed of God" (Deuteronomy 21:23). Accursed is qelah, a noun meaning curse, vilification or execration, or accursed. This is from qalal, meaning to be of no account or to be made despicable; treated with contempt because the person has caused dishonour.

In Joshua 6:17, 'accursed' is cherem: meaning to appoint to utter destruction; from charam, meaning to destroy utterly, to exterminate. In verse 18 both words are used for 'accursed'. The meanings are very clear.

In the New Testament Paul speaks rhetorically, saying he would rather be accursed (anathema) from Christ if his kinsmen (the Jews) could be saved. In 1 Corinthians 12:3, he says:

"Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed..."

Thus, only the wicked, unsaved, can ever say Jesus was not blessed by the Father, or that He was not the Christ or that he was wicked. However, those who contradicted Jesus with a false gospel were accursed, or anathema (Galatians 1:8). All who teach other than what Christ and the Apostles taught, and do not repent, are doomed to hell by God, who places a curse on them. This is repeated in verse 9.

Conclusion

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Anathema is an imprecatory curse by God upon those who reject His Son. It is also upon all who are wicked generally or specifically, and those who speak of Christ as less than His divine nature and somehow evil. This is becoming very common today, and much of it is instigated by homosexual activists, who are under His wrath.

When such a curse is pronounced by God, it is permanent. Paul said that those who preached or taught a false gospel were accursed, anathema. With this authority we can also warn a man or woman they are in danger of being accursed, anathema, if they do so today and do not repent. By reason of spiritual logic we can apply such anathema to deliberate deceivers such as those who invented and promote the Alpha Course, true charismatic teachers, and Arminians who openly teach against God's predestination, which is at the core of the real Gospel.

The Gospel is that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. The rest of scripture tells us that salvation is given only to those sinners who are elect, which means they have been predestinated. Therefore, any claim to the Gospel must be on that basis. Logically, any claim NOT based on it is a deception, a lie, and therefore is anathema. We can see that anathema is valid for today, if not moreso, as the devil attempts to destroy God's word and salvation.

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