

# The Meaning of Amen

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## INTRODUCTION

*Amen* is probably the most universally-used and universally-recognized word throughout the world. Each of us probably uses it daily, and perhaps we even understand it. But when we consider what it means, and reflect on how we usually say it, or respond to it, we may have to reevaluate. Jerome commented that in the early church, when visitors used to come to the church, they were commonly frightened at the *Amen*—it had the sound of thunder, said by people who understood it.

## THE TEXT:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, “Amen! “ Praise the Lord!” (Ps. 106:48)

## GOD’S IDENTITY:

In both Old and New Testaments, God identifies Himself with this word. In saying it, we must always remember this connection to His holy name and character. Speaking of the time of the New Covenant, Isaiah prophesies in this way: “So that he who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth [*lit.* “God of *Amen*”]; and he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth [same] (Is. 65:16).

And John the apostle records, “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the *Amen*, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God . . .’ (Rev. 3:14). And Paul teaches, “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him *Amen*, to the glory of God through us” (2 Cor. 1:20).

## THE USES OF AMEN:

Remembering all this, we see three main uses of *Amen* in Scripture:

The first use is that of a covenant oath. This is a word which is taken in the context of affirming covenant obligations—recognizing both the blessings and the curses. We can see this in the law concerning a woman with a jealous husband (Num. 5:22). We have a whole chapter of it in Deuteronomy 27. When Nehemiah confronted the Jewish leaders about their oppression of their fellows, the covenant confrontation concluded with an *Amen* (Neh. 5:13). So the word *Amen* has the force of an oath, sealing an oath, and indicating the agreement of the speaker with the conditions of the covenant. This far stronger than a simple, “Yes, I agree with that.”

The second use is that of a benediction, which is a blessing given to the people of God. There are many examples in Scripture, and *Amen* is usually a part of it. “Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. *Amen*” (Gal. 6:18). “The grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. *Amen*” (Phil. 4:23). “The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. *Amen*” (2 Tim. 4:22). “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. *Amen*” (Rev. 22:21). Whenever the people of God receive a blessing, it is right and proper to seal that blessing with an *Amen*.

And last there is the doxological use. Justified men have also been given the privilege of blessing *God*. And when men praise, honor, bless and glorify God — *i.e.* give a doxology, the Scriptures show us to conclude with *Amen*. “. . . the Creator, who is blessed forever. *Amen*” (Rom. 1:25). “Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. *Amen*” (Rom. 9:5). “. . . to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. *Amen*” (Eph. 3:21). “To Him be glory forever and ever. *Amen!*” (2 Tim. 4:18). “. . . to whom be glory forever and ever. *Amen*” (Heb. 13:21). “To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. *Amen*” (1 Pet. 5:11). See also Jude 25 and Rev. 1:6. When we say *Amen* in this context, we are tasting eternity.

### **APPLICATIONS:**

How do we apply this? In many of the places where Scripture records the use of this wonderful word, it is said by all God’s people. This is not something restricted to religious professionals “up front.” The whole congregation is involved in the worship of God, and the *Amen* is one place where this involvement is most visible. Consider: “And *all the people* shall answer and say, ‘Amen!’” (Dt. 27:15). “And *all the people* said, ‘Amen!’ and praised the Lord” (1 Chron. 16:36). “And *all the assembly* said, ‘Amen!’ and praised the Lord” (Neh. 5:13). “Then *all the people* answered, ‘Amen, Amen!’” (Neh. 8:6). “And let *all the people* say, ‘Amen!’” (Ps. 106:48).

On this subject, we have the privilege of applying and obeying together. And so when should we say *Amen* during our service? Whenever the Scriptures are read—God’s covenant Word to us—we should respond together with *Amen*. And when we receive God’s blessing on us in the benediction, our grateful response must be *Amen*—and *Amen* together. And whenever we sing glory to Him in a psalm or hymn, we should conclude with a hearty *Amen*. And we must remember the exclamation mark. *Amen!*



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