

# Amen

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[0:00] Well, if we could, this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, for a short while, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Nehemiah, I was going to say Ezra, the book of Nehemiah, and chapter 8, Nehemiah chapter 8, and we'll read again in verse 4. Actually, we'll read from verse 2. No, we'll just read from verse 1. And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the water gate, and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, so that the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it, facing the square before the water gate, from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and those who could understand. And all the ears of the people were attentive to the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Matathiah, Shema, Ananiah,

Uriah, Hilchiah, Messiah on his right hand, and Pediah, Mishael, Malchiah, Hashem, Hashbandana, Zechariah, and Mishalem on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And as he opened it, all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. All the people answered, Amen, Amen.

You know, when I sat to prepare a sermon on this closing one-word statement in the Apostles' Creed, I was reflecting and remembering when we had the faith mission in Barvis a few years ago. And you know, it was a great time having the faith mission and the tent beside the community center. But there was one Sunday we had the faith mission team. We had them in the manse for lunch on Sunday.

And I remember Jonathan Currie. If you remember Jonathan, he was a Northern Irish preacher. And he was at our house for lunch. And as he was going into the living room to make himself comfortable, he sat down. And as soon as he sat down, he looked up and he saw and read the plaque that was above, that's above the door in the living room. It's a plaque from a quote. It's got a quote on it from my good friend, J.C. Ryle. The quote says, One single soul saved shall outlive and outweigh all the kingdoms of the world.

One single soul saved shall outlive and outweigh all the kingdoms of the world. And as soon as Jonathan Currie saw and read the plaque above the door, he pointed to it. And he said in a strong Northern Irish accent, Amen, brother. Amen. And you know, I'll never forget it. I'll never forget that moment because with just one word, Amen or Amen. With that one word, Jonathan, he affirmed the truth of the gospel. He asserted the authority of Scripture. And he attributed all glory to God.

[3:49] But you know, what does this word Amen or Amen mean? Because we say it, we hear it, and we read it all the time.

We say it in prayers and in proclamations. We hear it in benedictions and in blessings. And we read it, we read it in creeds and in confessions. And over the past number of months, we have read and recited and even repeated this interesting and important word in the Apostles' Creed, the word, the last word, Amen.

Amen. And so if you can, please say the Apostles' Creed with me this evening. I was testing those in the maths today to see if they knew it, and they didn't know it. So hopefully they'll learn it.

So say the Apostles' Creed with me. I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen. And so this evening we're asking the question, what does the word Amen mean? What does the word Amen mean? And I want to suggest to you that Amen is affirmative. Amen is assertive, and Amen is attributive. Amen is affirmative. Amen is assertive, and Amen is attributive. There are three headings this evening. So first of all, Amen is affirmative.

[6:12] Amen is affirmative. Look at verse 5 in Nehemiah chapter 8. We're told that Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And as he opened it, all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands, and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Now, Nehemiah chapter 8, it's one of my favorite passages in the Bible, because this chapter records for us one of the key moments in the history of the Lord's people. Over a hundred years before this point, a hundred years earlier, due to their idolatry and their ignorance, the Lord had allowed Jerusalem to be destroyed. He allowed the Israelites to be delivered into the hands of the Babylonians.

Because way back in the summer of 586 BC, the Babylonian army, they invaded and they infiltrated the city of Jerusalem. They raised the city of Jerusalem to the ground. They left the temple in ruins. The palace was in ruins. The walls around the city of Jerusalem were in ruins. It was a scene of destruction, devastation, and death. And with that, the Israelites, they were then exiled. They were exiled into Babylon to live in lockdown for 70 years. And they were made to live in a foreign land and serve a foreign king. And they were to worship foreign gods. But as you know, the history of the Lord's people, the Lord in His goodness and His grace and His glory, He rescued and He redeemed and He restored His people to the promised land of Israel. And when they returned, when they returned out of exile, they returned with excitement and enthusiasm. But it wasn't long until they ran into problems.

But under the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah, whom we studied not so long ago, the Lord's people, they were exhorted and encouraged to restore and to rededicate the temple. But then as time passed, the Lord called, commissioned and commanded Nehemiah, boys and girls, Nehemiah, who was a cup bearer to the king in Persia. Nehemiah was a cup bearer to the king in Persia. And the Lord called him to leave his post in Persia and return to Israel. And he was to return to Israel to repair and to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, to make it a fortified city once more. And in the first half of the book of Nehemiah, from chapters 1 to 7, Nehemiah is there. He's exhorting, he's encouraging, and he's enabling the people, the Lord's people, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. But then here in chapter 8, it's no longer about rebuilding the walls. It's now about reforming the people. Where Nehemiah, he calls all the people, he calls the congregation of the Lord's people to congregate, we're told, in the open square in front of the water gate. And they're all to congregate together to hear the word of the Lord.

And you know, it was a poignant and even a powerful moment, because there had been all these years of disobedience to the Lord. But now as we come to Nehemiah chapter 8, it's time for dedication.

[9:57] It's time for devotion to the Lord. And for Nehemiah, the water gate was the perfect setting. It was the perfect setting to declare the word of the Lord to the congregation. And the water gate was the perfect setting because the water gate was where all the fresh water entered the city of Jerusalem.

Hundreds of years earlier, King Hezekiah, he had constructed this artificial water duct, where he redirected fresh water from what was called the Gihon Spring. And he redirected this water, this spring, he redirected it as a duct in under the city walls of Jerusalem.

To the water gate. And for the people in this city, this water that appeared at the water gate, it was life-giving water. It was living water. When they were under siege as a city, when they were in lockdown as a city, surrounded by their enemies, this was the only source of water into the city. And so it was life-giving water. It was living water. And so as the people, as this congregation, all congregated at the water gate, it was a key moment. Because it was a vivid and visual reminder that their true source of life is from the living and life-giving water of God's Word.

And that's why, you know, the New Testament, in the New Testament, Jesus, we're told, He stands up in John 7. Remember how Jesus stood up in John 7, and He said to the congregation, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. And whosoever believes in Me, out of their heart will flow rivers of living water. And you know, it was with that great hope that Nehemiah, this man who had been called and commissioned by the Lord, he invites Ezra the scribe. He invites him to address the people, to address the congregation from the living and life-giving water of God's Word.

[12:09] Now, Ezra was a preacher. He was a pastor of the people. And as we read in the chapter, the people built a pulpit for Ezra. They built a pulpit for Ezra, not to elevate Ezra above the people, but to elevate the living and the life-giving Word of God above the people. The only reason I stand in a pulpit, my friend, is not to be above the people. It's so that the Word is above us, and that we are all sitting under the authority of God's Word. But you know what I love about this chapter? And this is what I think is just amazing, is that we're told that Ezra, the preacher and pastor, and when you read through the chapter, you'll notice all these statements. He brought the book, then he opened the book, then he read the book, and he explained the book. Ezra, the preacher and pastor, he brought the book, opened the book, he read the book, and he explained the book. Ezra brought this life-giving, this living Word, this living book. He brought it to the people so that they'd repent, that they'd reform, and that they'd renew their covenant commitment to the Lord. He brought the book. He opened the book, he read the book, and he explained the book. And you know, my friend, that's what we need in our day and generation, because no other book will do apart from this precious book. Nothing else will do. Nothing else will speak to your soul. Nothing else will save sinners. Nothing else will bring people from darkness to light, from death to life, from the dungeon to liberty in Christ. Nothing else will give you comfort in the midst of sickness and sorrow.

Nothing else will lift you up when you're at your lowest. Nothing else will show you God's faithfulness when you feel like an absolute failure. Nothing else will assure you of God's promises in the face of all the problems and persecutions that might come your way. Nothing else will call you to trust in the Lord in your times of trial and tribulation and temptation. Nothing else will do. Nothing else will give you direction. Nothing else will give you direction during days of despondency and even depression. You know, my friend, nothing else will show you that life is uncertain. Death is sure. Sin is the cause. And Christ is the cure. Nothing else will do. No other book in this world will do apart from this living and life-giving book. And you know, that's what Ezra brought to the people. That's what Ezra opened to the people. That's what Ezra read in the hearing of the people. That's what Ezra explained and emphasized to the people. And how did they react? How did they respond? They reacted and responded with the affirmation of, Amen. Amen. That's what we read in verse 6. Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered. Amen. Amen. Lifting their hands and bowing their heads and worshipping the Lord with their faces to the ground. My friend, Amen is affirmation. Amen is affirmation because the word, boys and girls, the word Amen means this is true. And I believe this. Literally, the word Amen means this is true. Amen means this is true. Or I believe this. And that's what the people were affirming.

They were affirming the truth of God's living and life-giving word. They were giving their Amen and Amen to what Ezra had preached and proclaimed in their hearing. They were saying, I believe this. I believe this. I believe this. And you know, we're to do the same. We're to react and to respond to the preaching and the proclamation of God's word with our Amen. We're to affirm the truth of God's

word and say, Amen. This is true. I believe this. This is my testimony. This is what I believe.

[16:46] And you know, that's what we've been doing in our study of the Apostles' Creed. We've been affirming the truth that's taught in God's word. The Apostles' Creed, it's all based upon the teaching of God's word. And so we've been giving, every week we've been giving our Amen to the truth of God's word.

We've been saying about God's word through the teaching of the Apostles' Creed, we've been saying, Amen. This is true. I believe this. I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. I believe that He was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. I believe that He suffered under Pontius Pilate and was crucified, dead, and buried. I believe that He descended into hell, and on the third day He rose again from the dead. I believe that He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and from there He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe all that. I believe in the Holy Ghost. I believe in the Holy Catholic Church. I believe in the communion of saints. I believe in the forgiveness of sins. I believe in the resurrection of the body. I believe in the life everlasting. Amen. Amen. Amen. This is the truth of God's living word. It's a living and life-giving word, and I believe it.

[18:22] I believe it. And you know, my friend, if this is your creed, if that's your confession, then you should have absolute assurance that you are a Christian. If this is your creed, and that's your confession, you should have absolute assurance that you are a Christian. Because amen is affirmative.

Amen is affirmative. But we also see that amen is assertive. Which is what we see secondly. Amen is assertive. So amen is affirmative. And amen is assertive.

He says in verse 6, Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Amen. You know, when it comes to the Bible, there's no one who used the word amen more than Jesus.

In fact, Jesus describes himself in the book of Revelation as the amen, the faithful and true witness. But there's no one who used the word amen.

[20:13] Truly, truly, truly, truly. Literally, what Jesus was saying was, Amen, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Amen, Amen. I say unto you, whosoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. Amen, Amen. I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am. Amen, Amen, Amen. I say unto you, one of you will betray me. Amen, Amen, I say unto you, the cock shall not crow until you have denied me three times. Amen, Amen, I say unto you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. Amen, Amen, I say unto you, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. You see, there's no one who used the word amen more than Jesus.

But Jesus used the word amen in all these statements and many, many more statements in the New Testament. He used the word amen not only to affirm the truth of God's word. Jesus used the word amen to assert the truth of God's word. Because as God, as the word of God, Jesus affirms and he asserts that God's word is the absolute truth. He asserts and affirms that God's word is the absolute truth. Therefore, amen is assertive. Amen.

Amen is assertive. Not in the sense of being arrogant or aggressive, but assertive in the sense of God's word being authentic and absolute. God's word is authentic and absolute. And you know, this is so important and so integral to our understanding of the Bible. Because you know, we live in a day and age where it's been drilled and drummed into us that there's no such thing as absolute truth. Because all truth is relative. We're told time and time again, there's no such thing as absolute truth.

All truth is relative. Therefore, what God says and what the Bible says and what anyone else has to say, it doesn't really matter. Because what you think is true in your own heart and in your own head, if you think that that's true, then that's true. If it's true for you, then that's okay. Your truth is your

truth. And so whatever view you have on gender or sexuality or relationships, well, it's true.

[23:06] Because we're told so often there's no such thing as absolute truth. All truth is relative. But as you know, my friend, when we dismiss and when we deny the absolute truth of God and His word, you know, we have children growing up in a chaotic and a confused society.

And that's all we see around us, isn't it? We have children growing up in a chaotic and confused society. This was mentioned in prayer on Wednesday evening when praying for our children and the youth of today. They're growing up in an age where right is called wrong and wrong is called right.

They're growing up in an age where right is called wrong and wrong is called right. Because they're told all truth is relative. There's no absolute truth.

And yet it's Jesus who comes to us in the pages of Scripture and He repeatedly affirms to us and asserts before us that God's word is the absolute truth. God's word is the absolute truth. Therefore, if our truth is not based upon the absolute truth of God's word, then it's not truth at all.

Therefore, to diverge or deviate from the word of God is to diverge and deviate to destruction.

[24:45] And you know, the thing is, we affirm and assert the authentic and the absolute truth of God's word. And we do so when we come to Him in prayer. This is the wonder of it. You know, every time we pray, we all conclude with the word, Amen. But Amen, it's not just a full stop to our prayer where we're done and we just say, Amen. No, Amen is affirmative. Amen is assertive. Because as we said, the word, Amen, boys and girls, the word, Amen means this is true. The word, Amen means I believe this. This is the truth. Therefore, when we pray, Amen, we are boldly coming to the throne of grace. We are asserting and affirming to God that we believe that His word is absolute truth and that in our approach and in our attitude of prayer, we are humbly admitting, we are humbly acknowledging our sinfulness and God's sovereignty over our lives. We are being honest and wholehearted in our prayer to God. You know, my friend, when we pray, Amen, we are affirming and asserting to God. We're saying to Him,

I believe, I believe, I believe, I believe that you'll hear my prayer. I believe that you'll answer my prayer, not according to my will, but according to your will and according to your word and according to your way. I believe that you are the God of heaven and the God who hears and the God who answers and the God who does in us and for us exceedingly, abundantly, above all, more than we could ask or even think. And you know, in many ways, that's what we pray every time we pray the Lord's Prayer.

You know, we all pray the Lord's Prayer on a Sunday morning. Maybe you prayed at home. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we're saying to the Lord, when we're using the word Amen at the end, we're saying, I believe that you are our Father in heaven and your name is holy. I believe that your kingdom will come to fruition and to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. I believe that your will is being done in heaven and in earth. I believe that you'll provide for me my daily bread. I believe that you'll forgive my debts and enable me to forgive the debts of others. I believe that you'll protect and preserve me from temptation by delivering me from the power of the evil one. Because I believe, as we often see at the end of the prayer, I believe that it's all about your kingdom. It's all about your power.

It's all about your glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen. This is true. This is what I believe. I believe this.

And you know, that's why Paul, you read in one of his letters, he could affirm and assert that all the promises of God's word are in Christ, yea and amen to the glory of God. He was ascribing all glory to God.

[28:12] He was asserting and affirming the Amen to God, giving it all to God. All the promises of God's word are in Christ, yea and amen to the glory of God. Which brings us to see lastly that Amen is attributive.

Amen is attributive. So Amen is affirmative. Boys and girls, are you listening? Amen is assertive.

And Amen is attributive. Amen is attributive. Look again at verse 5.

Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And as he opened it, all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people

answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. You know, another thing I love about this passage in Nehemiah chapter 8, is not only that a pulpit was built to elevate the living and the life-giving word of God above the people, but also that when the word of God was being read, when the word of God was being read, we're told there in verse 5 that all the people stood. They stood in reverence and respect for the living and life-giving word of God. The people stood to listen. They stood to learn from the voice of the

King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And you know, I've often wondered, I've often wondered if we should be doing the same in church. There are some churches, I think, in America, they stand when the word of God is read. That when the living and life-giving word of God is read, I often wonder, should we stand in reverence and respect as we listen and learn from the voice of the Lord? Because, you know, the reading of God's word, the reading of God's word is, as Angus Graham often reminds me, it is the most important part of the service. The reading of God's word is the most important part of this service tonight and any other night. It's far more important than our singing and my sermon. The reading of God's word is the most important part. And you know, that's why I often say before we read the Bible, let us hear the word of God. Because God's speaking is the most important part of coming to church. It's hearing

God's very word. But you know, as we see from this passage, the people, they reacted and they responded to the word of God by worshiping the Lord. We're told that they raised their hands, they bowed their heads with their faces to the ground and they said, Amen. Amen. And they did that because Amen is affirmative.

[31:25] Amen is assertive. And Amen is attributive. Amen attributes and ascribes glory to God. Amen attributes and ascribes glory to God. And you know, that's why we often read these benedictions and these doxologies in the New Testament. A doxology is from the Greek word doxa, meaning glory. And we often see them at the end of certain letters. And so a doxology is a declaration which ascribes and attributes glory to God. And there are many doxologies in the New Testament.

Paul wrote those beautiful words at the end of Romans 11. I think they're just wonderful. And I think we should all memorize them. Paul writes this doxology. He says, O the depth of the wisdom, both of the wisdom. O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out. For from Him and through Him and to Him and to Him are all things to Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

And then when Paul wrote to Timothy, reminding him that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, Paul attributed, he ascribed all the glory of salvation to God. And he did so by giving a doxology.

He said, Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. But you know the doxology I love, and with this I'll conclude, a beautiful doxology, a doxology that affirms, asserts, attributes, and even ascribes our amen.

Our amen to the goodness, the grace, and the glory of God. It's what Jude wrote. Jude didn't write much, but he wrote this beautiful doxology. He wrote, Now unto Him, Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. Amen. You know, my friend, as you look at the Apostles' Creed, the question it's leaving us with is, do you believe this to be the absolute truth of God's living and life-giving Word? Can you put your amen to this statement of faith? Can you wholeheartedly confess this creed as your creed? Can you confess it as your confession? Because the call of the gospel, it's very simple, simply to believe in our heart, to believe this creed in our heart, and to confess this creed with our mouth, and to confess that we believe, not just to confess it, but to believe it, we have to believe and confess, and we shall be saved. So if you believe the

[34:54] Apostles' Creed, if you believe this creed in your heart, will you confess it with your mouth? And will you confess it with your mouth? One more time. Say it with me.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from

the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Now let us pray.

Let us pray. Gracious God and loving Heavenly Father, we give thanks to thee for these creeds that have been written for us as statements of faith, statements to believe and statements to confess, to confess the truths that are found in thy word, thy word that is the absolute, infallible, and inerrant truth.

And we thank thee for them. We thank thee that we've been able to study it and be reminded of who our God is, and that our God is, that he is three in one, that he is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is the same in substance and equal in power and glory. And we bless thee, Lord, for revealing thyself to us, and revealing to us the wonder and glory of the gospel, that Jesus Christ humbled himself from the crown to the cradle to the cross, from glory to Golgotha. But he is seated at thy right hand this evening as a risen and exalted Lord, and that we are thy church. We are called to be saints. We are those who experience the forgiveness of sins.

[37:17] We have the promise of the resurrection of the body, and even the promise of eternal life and glory. And help us then, we pray, to give our amen to thy word, to assert that this is truth, and that this, as the psalmist says, that this is our God, and that he is our guide, and he will be our guide, even unto death. Lord, bless us, we pray. Bless thy word to us. Continue to teach us by thy Spirit, that we would learn more and more about who Jesus is, and how much of a wonderful Savior he is.

And Lord, we ask that thou wouldst go before us then. Bless us in the week that lies ahead, a week that is unknown to any of us, but known only to thee. Bless us, Lord, in our meeting this evening of Discipleship Explored. We ask, Lord, that in our study, that we would know more of thyself, that we would learn to be faithful disciples, walking with Jesus day by day. Cleanse us then, we pray. Go before us. Forgive us, we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing in Psalm 72. We sang it this morning, but you can never get enough of Psalm 72. As we mentioned this morning, it's a psalm that was written by Solomon, who was the great king of Israel. And yet the psalm points us always to the greater than Solomon, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because as Solomon says about the greater than Solomon, his name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall.

Men shall be blessed in him and blessed. All nations shall him call. Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, for he alone doth wondrous works in glory that excel. And blessed be his glorious name to all eternity. The whole earth let his glory fill. Amen. So let it be. These verses in conclusion to God's praise.

His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall. Men shall be blessed in him and blessed. All nations shall be blessed in him and blessed.

[40:02] the Lord our God, the God of Israel. Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel. For he alone doth walk in him and blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel.

the earth God of Israel. In j eternity.

The whole earth is glory fell. Amen.

So let it be. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen. So, the young and the not so young. Question one.

[41:42] What did Nehemiah do before God called him? A cup bearer to the king. Yep, well done. What does the word Amen mean?

Sorry? The truth. Yep. So what are you saying? You're saying, I believe this. Yes, this is true. And you say, Amen. I believe this. This is true. And so what are tonight's headings? Amen is affirmative.

Affirmative. Affirmative. Amen is assertive. Amen is attributive.

Yeah, good. Well done. You did great. So Amen is affirmative. Amen is assertive. And Amen is attributive. Well done.