

# Old Testament Lessons

A look at God's Blessings / Curses

March 22, 2020

- I. A look at God's ways and dealings with His children.
  - A. Last Sunday we looked at temptation, testing, reaping what we sow, chastisement, and punishment. Today we are going to look at the blessings and curses as found in **Deuteronomy 27-30**. Our purpose for doing this is to enlarge our understanding of the ways God deals with the righteous and the unrighteous – while they are living here on the earth – be they individuals, communities, tribes, nations, His people, or those who aren't His people. And finally, this study, along with last Sunday's study are intended to prepare us for our study of selected portions of the OT.
  - B. Prayer
- II. Defining and explaining the Blessings and Curses
  - A. God's blessings and curses, as found in **Deuteronomy 27-30**, are examples of reaping what we sow in the form of God-ordained rewards, chastisements, and punishments.
    1. The blessings are the God-established rewards for obeying His law, doing His will, and living according to His word.
      - a. And these rewards make life fuller, satisfying, and richer – especially in relation to national peace, safety, and prosperity, and in relation to meaningful relationships in the home, in the community, and with God.
      - b. Jesus said it this way in **Matthew 6:31-33**, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' [32] For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [33] But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
    2. The curses are the God-established penalties for disobeying God's law, His will, and His word.
      - a. And these curses make life harder, less secure, less healthy, financially more difficult, and at times just plain painful.
      - b. In addition, these curses make relationships shallower, family life unstable, people unhappy, and they bring about a decline in emotional and mental health.

- B. There are **four** important truths concerning the blessings and curses which are helpful for understanding and realistically applying them to ourselves and our world.
1. **First**, the blessings and curses are intended to be applied to the nation as a whole, first and foremost. Therefore, we can look at our world and our own nation – through them – and gain some insight into the what and why of what is happening in our world today. And yet, they are not just national in scope. They can rightly be applied to groups and individuals within the nation.
  2. **Second**, the blessings and curses are not based on our position before God, but on our behavior. In other words, it wasn't enough to be an OT Israelite to receive God's blessings, just as it isn't enough to be a NT believer. It is obedience to God's law, will, and word that brings the blessings, and disobedience that brings the curses.
  3. **Third**, the blessings and the curses are not natural outcomes of obedience or disobedience, but rather they are God-determined, God-administered outcomes for obedience and disobedience.
  4. **Fourth**, in most cases, God's curses start out as chastisement, that is, God's work of getting our attention, calling us to repentance, and encouraging us to change our ways. In such cases, it isn't until we have resisted God's chastising efforts for a prolonged period of time that His curses turn into punishment.

### III. Lessons for today from the Blessings and Curses

- A. **Deuteronomy 27:15-26** – lists types of behavior that bring God's curses.
1. [15] Intentionally hiding your sin/hypocrisy so as to be accepted as a good Christian, brings God's curses.
  2. [16] Showing disrespect to or bringing undue shame upon your parents, brings God's curses.
  3. [17] Gaining more for yourself by stealing from or deceiving others – when you already have enough, brings God's curses.
  4. [18] Gaining more for yourself by taking advantage of those who for whatever reason are unable to protect or defend themselves, brings God's curses.
  5. [19] Mistreating, discriminating against, or withholding justice from those who lack the legal means, financial ability, or the support of the community for protection, brings God's curses.
  6. [20-23] Sexual immorality of every kind, including promiscuity, adultery, pornography, bestiality, and incest, brings God's curses.

7. [24] Planning and secretly carrying out the murder of your neighbor brings God's curses.
8. [25] Perverting justice for personal gain, especially against the innocent, brings God's curses.
9. [26] Living contrary to God's law, God's will, and God's word brings God's curses.

B. **Deuteronomy 28:1-14** – lists general types of blessings that God pours out on those who obey His law, will, and word.

1. In **vs 1-2**, God restates His prerequisites for blessings: "Now it shall be, if you **diligently obey** the LORD your God, **being careful to do all** His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. [2] **ALL** these blessings will come upon you and overtake you **if you obey** the LORD your God:"
2. [3] **vs 3** affirms that God's blessings are not dependent on where you live, but how you live.
3. [4] God will bless you with family, sufficient food and clothing, and sufficient help for doing the work that needs to be done.
4. [5] God will bless your food supply and fill your cupboards.
5. [6] You will be secure at home and protected when you travel.
6. [7] Any enemy that seeks to overpower you will be so badly defeated they will leave you alone from then on.
7. [8] You will have plenty of food in store for the hard or lean times, and your business ventures will be successful.
8. [9-10] God will treat your nation as His nation and cause the nations around you to fear you.
9. [11] Repeat of **vs. 4**.
10. [12] Repeat of **vs 4,5,7**, with the addition that you will have such an abundance that you will be able to lend to others who have need, yet never need to borrow yourself.
11. [13] God will bless you, your family, your community, and your nation in such ways that you will be a leader rather than the led, the superior rather than the inferior, the powerful rather than the ones overpowered.

C. **Deuteronomy 28:15-19** – lists general types of problems that result from God's curses for disobedience.

1. [15] But it shall come about, **if you do not obey** the LORD your God, **to observe to do all His commandments and His**

**statutes**, that **all these curses** will come upon you and overtake you –

2. [16] regardless of where you live. And they will negatively effect you, your family, your food supply, your work, your security at home, and your safety abroad.

D. **Deuteronomy 28:20-44** – lists more specific types of problems that come as a result of God’s curses.

1. [20] (1) **Affliction** – or tribulations which results in mental, emotional, and physical pain and suffering; (2) **confusion** – which produces panic and disorder in the home, community, and/or nation; (3) **rebuke** – the use of curses to get our attention and call us to repentance and godly living.
2. [21] **Pestilence** refers to any contagious or infectious disease that is deadly and devastating to the family, community, or nation.
3. [22] **Consumption** refers to any disease that makes your body waste away, such as TB, AIDS, ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease). **Fever, inflammation, and fiery heat** most probably refer to any chronic illness or ongoing physical ailment that significantly weakens you and may result in being bedridden.
  - a. The word **sword** (in vs 22) causes some problem because it does not fit the context. Another option (found in some manuscripts) is the word **drought**, which could refer to chronic dehydration or a sickness, such as chronic diarrhea that causes dehydration.
  - b. **Blight and mildew** refer to the destruction of part or all of the food supply – be it before harvest or after the harvest.
4. [23-24] The bronze heavens and iron earth speak of a drought so severe the only thing falling from the sky is dust or sand blown into the air from the parched, harden ground by strong winds.
5. [25-26] The LORD will so arrange events that we will be defeated by our enemies – whether as a community or nation. Our defeat will be so horrible that the rest of the world will look upon us and hope they never suffer like us. In fact, so many of us will die that the dead will not be given a proper burial.
6. [27] **Boils, tumors, scab, and itch** refer to chronic and painful skin diseases.
7. [28-29] **Madness, blindness, bewilderment of heart** (*confusion of mind*) refer to emotional and mental problems that get in the way of living an emotionally healthy, mentally healthy, relationship healthy, productive, and reason based life.

- a. In our day, this list might include such things as chronic, depression, panic attacks, severe anxiety, debilitating stress, borderline personality disorder, ADD, OCD, anorexia, overeating, alcoholism, and drug addiction.
  - b. (**Vs 29**) And to make your emotional and mental problems worse, you will continually be taken advantage of and cheated without any hope of protection or relief.
8. [30-33] Powers beyond your control, such as dictators, governments, rebel groups, and gangs will **rule over** and **enslave you**, and will **forcefully take** what belongs to you – from taking your spouse and children to taking your possessions, home, and financial security.
  9. [34] The **circumstances** of your life, the community, or the nation will be so difficult that it **will drive you to act crazy** – like one whose mind is so consumed with fear, anxiety, or anger that you stop using reason or common sense.
  10. [35] A repeat of the boils of **vs 27**, only worse.
  11. [36-37] Your nation will be carried away into captivity by another nation. You will be held in captivity so long that you will end up taking on the cultural and religious customs of your captors, and you will be viewed by the rest of the world as a people group no one wants to be part of.
  12. [38-44] In addition to outside groups of people or nations destroying you, the animal kingdom and nature itself will turn against you to destroy you. Even the poor refugee or foreigner who sought refuge in your land will gain power and take control over you.
- E. **Deuteronomy 28:45-48** – is a general review of what will happen to the person or community or nation that will not obey God’s law, will, and word.
- F. **Deuteronomy 28:49-57** – provides a picture of how bad life will get when you, your community, or your nation refuses to repent and return to obeying God’s law, will, and word.
1. [49-50] The people groups or nations that come against you, your community, or your nation will show no mercy to anyone, but rather will be cruel in their treatment of everyone.
  2. [51] They will take your food, leaving you to starve to death.
  3. [52] They will destroy your homes, cities, towns, and farmlands.

4. [53] You will become so desperate in your efforts to stay alive that you will turn to cannibalism – eating your own family members if need be just to live a little longer.
5. [54-55] Life will get so bad that even the cultured, well-respected, religious man will become desperate enough to act like a selfish cannibal – that is, unwilling to share whatever human flesh he has found with his wife and children.
6. [56-57] And the same will be true for the cultured, refined, well-respected, religious female. She will secretly eat her own children just to stay alive for another day.

G. **Deuteronomy 28:58-62** – addresses the deliberate and persistent refusal to repent and become godly.

1. [58-59] Intentional, prolonged, unrepentant disobedience will bring **extraordinary, severe, and lasting plagues** along with **miserable and chronic sicknesses**.
2. [60] Included in the miserable and chronic sicknesses will be the diseases of Egypt – an evil nation that had been evil for so long they were already experiencing the judgment and curses of God. And added to this threat is the promise that there will be no remedy or healing for these diseases.
3. [61] In addition, God will bring **unheard of** sicknesses and plagues – that is, new ones that we have neither encountered or heard of before.
4. [62] The result of these extreme curses will be the loss of life on a massive scale so that only a few will be left alive in the community or the nation.

H. **Deuteronomy 28:63-68** – gives us a glimpse into the mind of God and the mind of man.

1. [63] God is just as passionate about loving and caring for us as He is about judging, chastising, and punishing us – which eventually includes destroying willfully unrepentant sinners. **Why?** Because sin (*knowingly and willfully disobeying God's law, will, and word*) is like cancer. Once it invades a person, a community, or a nation, it grows and grows, destroying what is good until it is able to overpower the good and destroy the person, community, or nation.
2. [64] Moreover, the LORD will destroy the nation and scatter the people who turn their back on Him by worshiping idols and disobeying His law, will, and word. **Why?** As punishment for those

who have willfully and unrepentantly continued in their sin, and as a lesson to everyone else of the seriousness and cost of disobedience.

3. [65-67] The people that God punishes in this way will have no permanent homeland like they once had. They will live in constant fear of being harmed or killed because they are unwanted foreigners in a foreign land. And they will live in perpetual despair and endless hopelessness because they see no hope of being a family, a loving, secure community, or nation once again.
4. [68] The rest of the world will treat people like this as undesirables who are unwelcome in their cities, territories, or nations.

I. **Deuteronomy 29** – God makes a covenant with Israel

J. **Deuteronomy 30:1-10** – Yet there is hope as long as we are alive and in our right mind, for God is a god of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.

1. [1-3] So it shall be [that if you fall away from the Lord your God, and then repent and] return to the LORD your God and obey Him with **all** your heart and soul according to **all** that I command you, you and your sons, [3] then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.
2. [5] The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers...[10] **IF** you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, **IF** you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

#### IV. Conclusion

A. Contrary to what some think, God is not acting like an egomaniac or a cruel dictator when administering His curses. The reality is, God is just as loving when administering His curses as when administering His blessings – for both have as their sole purpose

1. the inception, protection, and advancement of life,
2. and the utter destruction of selfishness, sin, and evil of every kind so that sin, destruction, and death are no more.

B. God is good, and so are His blessings and curses. I urge you not to act as if you know for certain what God is doing, unless you do. But I also urge you to consider these things when looking at the situations in your life, and the life of your community, your nation, and the world.