

## Deuteronomy 28:1-68 (July 2, 2021)

**Reflection:** *Are there covenant blessings and curses in the New Covenant? If there are, please list a few of each.*

**Answer:** Yes, there are. Blessings in the New Covenant are often tied to being “in Christ” and curses are often tied to being “without Christ.” (cf. *John 15:1-6, Ephesians 1:3-10, Col 1:21-23*)

### **Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14**

**1. What did the Israelites have to do (covenant stipulation) to receive these blessing? How does this covenant stipulation relate to loving the Lord? (cf. Deu 6:4-7, 30:15-20)**

**i. What did the Israelites have to do (covenant stipulation) to receive these blessing?**

The Israelites were to faithfully obey the voice of the Lord (v.1) by doing all his commandments.

**ii. How does this covenant stipulation relate to loving the Lord? (cf. Deu 6:4-7, 10:12-13, 30:15-20)**

That these were related to loving the Lord because it was part of the relationship that God had with Israel. Israel obeyed God because they were in a covenant relationship where they loved him with their whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. God did not want them to practice these things alone but were a part of their love of God. In fact, God would punish Israel for just practicing empty sacrifices and sabbath days.

**2. From these verses, what are the covenant blessings they would receive from the Lord?**

*Prosperity blessings: large families, large herds, and abundant crops*

- Their womb will be blessed, their livestock's womb would be blessed
- The kneading bowl (food provision) would be blessed
- Their barns would be blessed and all undertakings
- God would open up the treasury of rain on the land

*National blessings*

- Defeat enemies
- Their wealth would overflow, and they would lend and not need to borrow
- They would be the head of nations and not the tail

*Blessed in every situation*

- God would lift them high above nations (for more details on this read 26:19)
- Blessings would overtake them
- They would be blessed in the city, the field, come in and come out (wherever they go)
- The Lord will establish you as a people holy to himself, if you follow God
- All the people of the earth shall see that you are called by my name and shall revere (afraid) of you

*Connected to promises made to Patriarchs since they happened to the People and the Land*

- People will be great, with a great name, and numerous
- Great nation

### **Read Deuteronomy 28:15-48, 58-68**

**3. In v.15-44, what are the covenant curses if the Israelites did not obey the Lord? From v.58-68, What are the final consequences that Israel will face if they continue in disobedience? Do you think Christians**

**today will experience these curses if they fail to obey, explain what is different in New Covenant? (cf. Gal 3:13)**

**i. In v.15-44, what are the covenant curses if the Israelites did not obey the Lord?**

*These are Curses Israel will face, and they will be expressed firstly as opposite of blessing:*

Curses will overtake you. You will be cursed in the city, in the field, cursed in food provision, cursed shall reach the fruit of the womb, livestock, ground, and wherever they go until you are destroyed and perish quickly because of your evil because of you have forsaken me

*The people will be cursed*

- Experience curses, confusion, frustration in all they do
- Pestilence will stick to them
- They will be stricken by sickness and negative conditions (fever, fiery heat, boils)
- Receive the cursed conditions of Egypt
- Oppressed and robbed continually
- Futility of marriage as your wife will be ravished. Futility agricultural efforts as someone will take what you build, animals, plant. Futility of children as they will be taken away, while your eyes long for them but you will be helpless. Probably the children are enslaved by merchants.

*The land will be cursed*

- The land will experience drought, blight and mildew
- Blight – refers to premature dying of grain growing in the fields
- Mildew involves pathological yellowing of grain, plant disease
- The heavens will be bronzed and earth iron
- Heavens shall bronze, earth be iron, earth as metal, preventing moisture above from watering the earth and ground hardening and resisting cultivation
- Instead of rain they would experience dust storms
- like sirocco, hot desert wind, like those experienced in the middle east
- Locusts and other insects will consume the land (like Egypt)

*National curse*

- Experiencing defeat by enemies
- So bad they would be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth
- Your dead will be food for birds and beasts
- The lord will bring you and your king to a nation you have not known and you shall serve their gods
- The people of Israel will be a horror a proverb, a byword among all the people
- Sojourner will rise higher above them and they will be lower
- They will lend to you, and you will not lend to him. He shall be head, you tail.
- The people will be taken captive

**ii. From v.58-68, What are the final consequences that Israel will face if they continue in disobedience?**

- Extraordinary afflictions and sickness that are severe and lasting,
- The people will not find rest but will have trembling hearts and failing eyes
- You shall long for days to be over (v.66-67)
- They shall be brought back to Egypt and offer themselves as slaves, but Israel will not buy, likely because they are seen as cursed people and buying might bring the curse upon themselves

iii. Do you think Christians today will experience these curses if they fail to obey, explain what is different in New Covenant? (cf. Gal 3:13)

**Answer:** Though there are warnings and admonitions of curses these are experienced for those “out of Christ,” however, those who are in Christ we are free from the curse of the Law. Hence the curse in Deu 28, will never be applied to Christians if we are truly in Christ.

**4. It says that Gods delights in “bringing ruin upon you and destroying you”. Read Ezekiel 18:32, how do you understand the tension between these two passages?**

Answer: There is a level where God delights in seeing justice but despises that people perish.

Instead, my assumption is that there is a true way that God takes pleasure in the just destruction of the wicked. And there is a true sense in which he does not delight in the death of anyone. In other words, both are true. And our job is to discern, as much as we can, in what different ways or senses they may be true. ~John Piper

This helps us deal with our own tension of loving the people around us and seeing God’s justice dispensed.

**Read Deuteronomy 28: 49-57**

**5. Describe the character of God’s agents that he will use against Israel found in v.49-52, and the horrific consequences the Israelites will experience at their hand given in v.53-57? Do these agents show up in Israel’s history, if so, who are these agents and what do they do to Israel?**

**i. Describe the character of God’s agents that he will use against Israel found in v.49-52**

- If you do not serve God (who you know), then you will serve your enemy that you did not know and you will hunger, thirst, be naked, and lack everything and you will be enslaved
- The Lord will bring a foreign nation against you from far away from the end of the earth
- They swoop down like the eagle
- You will not understand their language
- And they will be a hard nation, one who shows no mercy to old or young
- It shall eat all you toil; animals and things you plant

**ii. and the horrific consequences the Israelites will experience at their hand given in v.53-57?**

- They will besiege you, and the fortified walls which you trusted will be overcome. In all the towns throughout your land
- Things will be so bad that you will resort to cannibalizing your young, including the most delicate and refined among you will resort to this because your enemy has distressed you this degree
  - o A couple of places we see this happening. 2 Kings 6 (9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE before the attack by Assyria) we see a scene where a mother eats her young. We see this in Lamentations 2:20, 4:10 (roughly after Babylon has taken over Israel in 582 BCE)

**iii. Do these agents show up in Israel’s history, if so, who are these agents and what do they do to Israel?**

Yes these are the foreign nations that will judge Israel in their future, the Assyrians, and Babylonians. Many future prophets will use wording from Deu 28 to describe Assyrians and Babylon. They will attack, conquer, and enslaved the nation of Israel, and will be an affliction to Israel.

## **6. What is the value of this section on Old Covenant blessings and curses for us as Christians today?**

From Daniel Block's Commentary on Deuteronomy:

1. *We will see this kind of imprecatory formula used in New Testament:* where writers motivate fidelity by promising blessings and curses for those who do not abide in Christ (John 15:1-6)
2. *Guarding against presumption:* warnings guard us against presuming we are just saved, to bear God's name is a privilege, and must be responded to by faith and demonstrated by obedience to God
3. *Representing God to the world:* that God's people who experience blessing would be a Holy people to God and one which the world would revere. This is also how the New Testament calls Christians to live that the redeemed people of God represent him to the world to demonstrate their lives as transforming power of Christ (Phil 2:13). They also called Ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:20), Light to the world (Matthew 5:14), my witnesses (Acts 1:8).

## **7. What enables Christians to obey God's word and live out the Christian life?**

As we speak of obeying God's commandments, it is important to note that obedience is not something we do on our own power but one in which God empowers us to do. Obedience is a work of the Spirit in us. God has regenerated us (Ti 3:5, Ezk 36:26), given us the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:14), and works in us to do his good pleasure (Phil 2:13). This means that we do not rely on God for salvation and only on our own power to live out the Christian life, in all aspects we look to God.

**In God's covenants, there are both promises and stipulations by which the people of God must trust in and abide. If Israel had been faithful to Him, then they would have flourished under God's covenant blessings. However, because Israel did not love and obey God, they experienced the curse of the Law. Indeed, there is a day nearing where a curse will fall on the entire world, and it will experience God's wrath and judgment. Thanks be to God that we are in Christ! That not only will we be saved, but we enjoy all the blessings of Heaven now and forever because of Christ. However, this chapter is a sober warning for us to test ourselves to see if we really love God and if that love for God motivates us to wholehearted obedience to Him. If this is not us, then we must repent and cling to the gospel for salvation.**