

BLESSING OR CURSE?

Jeremiah 11:3-4 (KJV) ³ And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; **Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant,** ⁴ **Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace,** saying, **Obey my voice, and do them,** according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God:

Introduction: The Bible has a great deal to say about “a blessing” and “a curse.” We like to look at the Beatitudes in **Matthew 5** and discuss the significance of a “blessed” person. When we look at these things we find God wants us to evaluate our lifestyle and see if we are under a blessing or a curse. God wanted to bless His people in the Old Testament and He wants to bless His people today, which is the church. Yet it appears that the people of God desired to go their own way and risk the application of the curse of God rather than the blessing.

The first thing God cursed in the Bible (chronologically) was the “serpent” (**Genesis 3:14**). The second thing God cursed in the Bible was ground (**Genesis 3:17**). The first person God cursed was Cain who had slain his brother Abel (**Genesis 4:11**). The word *curse, cursed, cursest* is found **182 times** in your Bible.

Yet God, in addition to the curse, wants to bless His people. In contrast to the number of times the word *curse, cursed* occurs the word *bless, blessed, blessing*, etc. occurs over **384 times** in your Bible. This should tell us something about God. He has a greater desire to *bless* His people than to *curse* them. The question we have to ask ourselves is what has been the testimony of your life in relation to God? Has it been filled with *blessing* or *curses*? Most Christians would say today that they are blessed just because they have the privilege of knowing the truth of the Gospel and have been given the opportunity to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and be saved. That is truly a blessing and there are many benefits of this relationship.

Still, when we look at our overall life and the ups and downs of it, are there *blessings* or *curses*? I personally can tell you of the times where my lifestyle brought about things that God did not want in my life and they could often be attributed to my behavior

which was out of character of a Christian. There are *bad* results of disobedience and sometimes they are far reaching.

The text of **Jeremiah 11:1-10** recalls the event where God brought Israel as a family out of the land of Egypt which in **verse 4** is called the “iron furnace” (**Deuteronomy 4:20; 1Kings 8:51; Isaiah 48:10**, “furnace of affliction” other places Egypt is seen this way). Please go with me to the section that gives us a picture of what God was doing with Israel when he set them free from the bondage of slavery in Egypt.

If you look at **Deuteronomy 11:26 (KJV)** *Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse*; we see that God has made it clear that He wanted to *bless* Israel and yet there were consequences if they did not follow the instructions given. Notice in **Deuteronomy 11:27-28 (KJV)** ²⁷ *A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day:* ²⁸ *And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.* God wanted to bless the people of Israel yet not long after these words were uttered they entered into idolatry with the golden calf (**Exodus 32:4f**). The “blessing” and “curse” came with the Law of Moses which was given at the mount. I want to note two things in this message. **One**, the Old Testament picture of *blessings* and *curses* as it related to the Law of Moses and the behavior God expected of His people. **Two**, the New Testament picture of *blessings* and *curses* as it relates to the Lord Jesus Christ and the relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ after being set free from the bondage of sin.

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT BLESSINGS AND CURSES. Look with me at just a few of the “blessings” they would receive if they obeyed the commandments. God accomplished this in a unique way. He had the people gather on two mountains, Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerazim. It is fascinating that God had the people stand on Mt. Gerazim and they were the ones who were the children of Jacob’s legal wives, Leah and Rachael. These were Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin. The ones of the concubines were Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali (**Deuteronomy 27:12-13**) and they stood on Mt. Ebal.

Note the “blessings” and the “curses” as they stood on the two mounts facing each other. First the “curses.”

- **Deuteronomy 27:16 (KJV)** Cursed *be* he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.
- **Deuteronomy 27:17 (KJV)** Cursed *be* he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.
- **Deuteronomy 27:18 (KJV)** Cursed *be* he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say, Amen.
- **Deuteronomy 27:19 (KJV)** Cursed *be* he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.
- **The curses go from Deuteronomy 27:16 to Deuteronomy 27:26.** They pick back up in **Deuteronomy 28:15-68.**

Note the blessings found in **Deuteronomy 28:1-14.**

It is evident that God wanted to get the attention of the people to the importance of obeying the commandments of God. God has always wanted to make a distinction between the Blessed and the Cursed. This is evident in many passages in the Old Testament. Something to keep in mind. In the Old Testament, God would not *curse* one who had been *blessed*. This was evident with Ham in the episode of Noah's drunkenness where God brought the judgment of Ham's behavior on his son Canaan (**Genesis 9**). If we had time to look at the events related to Balaam and Balak in **Numbers 22-23** we would find that God made the statement in **Numbers 22:12 (KJV)** *And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.*

We need to remember that God wants to bless His people. According to God's dealing with His people he indicates that obedience is to accompany one who is blessed. God was saying to His people that there is a procedure to be followed that will keep one on the right track with Him. We need to remember **Psalm 1:1-6 (KJV)** ¹ *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.* ² *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.* ³ *And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.* ⁴ *The ungodly are not so: but are like the*

chaff which the wind driveth away. ⁵ Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ⁶ For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish. The process is clear as demonstrated in this Psalm.

God gave Israel a tremendous promise in **Deuteronomy 28:1 (KJV)** And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: Yet, He also made a warning connected with a curse: **Deuteronomy 28:58 (KJV)** If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; The option was the choice of the people to obey God and reap the benefits of a walk with Him.

2. NEW TESTAMENT BLESSINGS AND CURSES. The tenor of the Bible makes a dramatic change from the Old Testament to the New Testament. God knew that man was unable to obey fully the law of Moses. God demonstrated His mercy and grace in so many ways and withheld punishment until the people moved fully from obedience to total idolatry. This is the primary message of the book of **Jeremiah** to this point of study. God so desired to bless the people of Israel

A. Curses. One of the things that is significant about the Law of Moses is that to fail to obey the commandments brought some dire circumstances and the wrath of God would be upon them. The Old Testament saint who failed to obey the commandments found themselves under some conditions that were of their own making. Note **Deuteronomy 27:26 (KJV)** Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, **Amen**. In fact Paul called attention to this responsibility in **Galatians 3:10 (KJV)** For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, **Cursed** is every one that **continueth not** in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. The curse of the New Testament comes about by a person trying to keep the commandments of the Old Testament Law, to gain the favor of God, which is not possible

without the provision of God. The provision of God is tremendous as we examine the truth of the word of God and what marvelous provision He has made for us in this current dispensation. Look at **Galatians 3:12-14 (KJV)** And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. ¹³ **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:** for it is written, **Cursed** is every one that hangeth on a tree: ¹⁴ **That the blessing** of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

It should be noted that there is a curse associated with the handling the Gospel. Note **Galatians 1:8-9 (KJV)** ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, **let him be accursed.** ⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

God places a curse on those who walk in a carnal lifestyle. Look with me at **2 Peter 2:9-14 (KJV)** ⁹ The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: ¹⁰ But chiefly **them that walk after the flesh** in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. ¹¹ Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. ¹² But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; ¹³ And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, *as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;* ¹⁴ Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; **cursed children:**

The major matter that the New Testament notes is found in the provision that God made for those who believe. Look at **Galatians 3:13 (KJV)** Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed

is every one that hangeth on a tree: When Jesus Christ went to the cross at Calvary (the place of the skull, signifying death) he made a provision that we need to remember. The curse of Adam was taken away when Jesus became a “*curse for us.*” There is a provision to avoid the curses of the Law and the curses of the relationship with Adam x, Jesus Christ.

B. Blessings. Jesus made some important statements about the blessings He desired to bring.

- **Matthew 11:6 (KJV)** *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*
- **Matthew 13:16 (KJV)** *But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*

The blessings of the New Testament are primarily related to the believer’s relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Note the following blessings associated with our salvation in Christ.

- **Romans 4:9 (KJV)** *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*
- **Galatians 3:9 (KJV)** *So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*
- **Galatians 3:14 (KJV)** *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*
- **Ephesians 1:3 (KJV)** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

Folks there is not a greater blessing we can have than that which we have in Christ. Two questions proceed from this discussion:

1. Do you have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation where you have been placed in the position of being blessed?
2. Are you under the curse of the Law because you are trying to get to heaven and develop a relationship with God by your “good works?”