

July 12

Scriptures: Read Deuteronomy 28

Key Verse: “And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God.” (Deuteronomy 28:2)

Overview

This is an extremely solemn chapter of the Bible in which Moses sets before Israel the results of obedience to God (blessings) and rebellion against Him (curses). The blessings are beautiful to read, but the curses are terrifying. It is interesting to note that there are about four times more curses than blessings. This is probably because of the nature of mankind—more apt to respond to warnings with the threat of terrible judgments than the promise of blessing.

Moses laid before Israel the opportunity to become the most powerful, prosperous, and happy nation in the world through the blessings of God if they would but keep His covenant stipulations. Not only would national blessings be bestowed upon them, but individual blessings and joy in all areas of life. This was the purpose, delight, and will of God for His people, but Israel was to understand that it was conditional.

On the other hand, Moses warned, if they did not walk in nature and bring upon them just punishment for their sin. They would become an oppressed people and lose their national identity, undergoing much individual suffering as well. The curses were to come as a “sign and a wonder” (v.46). A “sign” refers to a divine work that points to the credibility of God and His message. Through these judgments, the people would learn that God keeps His promises and His word is truth.

Sadly, Israel found out the truth of God’s Word the hard way. Just as God said, and their history proved, these very curses came upon them because of their disbelief, ingratitude, and disobedience. What an attestation to the inspiration of the Word of God! They were indeed scattered to all parts of the world; this was accomplished by the Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17:6; c.722 B.C.) and Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 25:21; c.586 B.C.) and by a further dispersion in 70 A.D. when Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem.

High calling and election from God has with it many benefits and privileges, but also great responsibilities. God expects more from His own children who know His teachings than of those who do not, and His chastisement will be more severe because of His love for His own and His desire to see them come to repentance (Amos 3:2). The Gentile believer today must take heed, “for if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either” (Rom.11:21).

Entering into a covenant relationship with God puts one under the obligations of that covenant. In the preceding chapter, the Israeli’s affirmed the covenant with God with a loud “amen” (27:26). However, when they refused to accept the covenant calling, and in their ultimate rejection of Jesus the Messiah (John 1:11-12), they were doomed to fall back into bondage; this was not the literal Egyptian bondage but a much worse bondage to sin and death (v.68). God still, in His unlimited grace and love, gave a glimpse of hope for fallen Israel and for all nations through His Son Jesus. He had opened the way into a new and better covenant relationship (Heb.7:22; 8:6, 13) in which we, His people, enjoy great spiritual blessings (Eph.1:3).

Prayer

O God, thank You for our new covenant relationship. May we always be mindful of our covenant responsibilities with the blessings and curses they entail.