

## Overtaken by Blessings or Overtaken by Curses – *Deuteronomy 28:1-68*

**Introduction** – This chapter is long and, like the prophecies of this chapter, its rhetoric is supposed to overwhelm us. God promises that either the covenant people of Yahweh will be overtaken, overrun, by blessings, or we will be overtaken, piled upon and overwhelmed, by curses (v2, 15). The first part contains breath-taking blessings, the latter part, four times as long, contains curses which cause one to shudder. God is not tame, He is not indifferent, He is not impersonal in His outpourings, and He is not ashamed of His delight in bringing both to bear (v63).

**Overview of Blessings** (vv1-14) – This mosaic is not exhaustive, but it is supposed to symbolize how comprehensive God's blessings are to an obedient people. The blessing will be both urban and agrarian (v3), it will affect everything that reproduces (v4) – and so we should see the restoration of blessing upon the original Dominion Mandate (Gen 1:28). Your kitchen and your commute will be blessed (vv5-6) and you will be victorious over any enemy (v7). Your storehouses and everything to which you put your hand will be blessed (v8). Your reputation, the fruit of your hands, even the weather which Yahweh sends, will be blessed (vv9-12). You will lend and lead the nations; you will not borrow nor be subservient to them (v13).

**Covenant Faithfulness** – There is an “if...then” conditionality built into the covenant (v1,2,9,13). It was sheer grace and kindness of God which brought Abraham into the covenant, which he received by faith, and His intention is only to renew and expand that covenant of grace, as He teaches us to grow up in that grace. This all rides on our covenant faithfulness (v14), which of course we see in the New Covenant promises, rides on His faithfulness – which Christ was.

**Personal, Physical, Earthy Kindness** – For many commentators, this section is almost embarrassing; they seem to shy away from the physicality of these blessings. We are forced to see, if “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear,*” that God wants to bless His people far more than His people want to be blessed.

**The “Catch”** – We know that Israel, as a whole, did not come into these blessings. But what was the problem, what was the catch? The answer is found in the middle of the next section, vv45-47, but especially v47: “...*you did not serve Yahweh your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything.*” Unbelief, manifest in sour bitterness, unforgiving harshness, nit-picky dourness, stressed and ungrateful covenant breakers forfeit the blessings of God. Covenant breakers, thinking they have the world in their own control, peevish types who say they obey and serve God, but refuse to do so with glad hearts, refusing to acknowledge God in everything or to give thanks, these lose the blessings.

**Overview of Curses** (vv15-68) – The covenant curses are fearsome, exhaustive, unrelenting, and repetitive. We do not have time to go through each, but they should be meditated over often with an eye even to our own nation. Some generally divide them in three sections: suffering under the hand of Yahweh in internal affairs (vv15-44), in foreign policy and military judgment (vv48-57), and finally in the humiliation of exile (vv58-68).

**Some Highlights** – First, the curses match the blessings in stark contrasts (vv16-19), and then Moses expands and expounds (vv20-29) – disease, drought, defeat in battle, more disease (later, he piles on even more diseases, even beyond any they might have known about – vv60-61). Blessings will turn into curses in ways that will drive them crazy (v34) and they will become a laughingstock to the nations (v37). Josephus writes of the kind of siege, including the horrible cannibalism of vv52-57, that took place as Jerusalem fell under judgment in AD70. Moses is not afraid to call these plagues extraordinary, or wonderful (v59) – and remember - he saw the plagues of Egypt. Having become like Egypt, they are taken captive and sold into slavery (vv64-67) but even there, the final insult will be that no one wants them – even as slaves (v68).

**Yahweh Will Rejoice** (v63) – This verse should take your breath away...and remind you of Rev 19:1-8, the only time in the NT where we have the recording of a multitude in heaven crying out “Hallelujah!” as Babylon is cast into the fire of God's judgment.

**Some Applications** – The center of all of these blessings verses curses is, as we said, found in v47 and this is key to covenant keeping before God: faith that rejoices with thankfulness and hope.

**Who Is Yahweh?** – He is a personal, unrelenting, invading, holy God who rejoices over all He does. He rejoices in blessing a people who receive His grace and grow in it. He blesses because He wants to – and some of us need to get over that. But He also placed curses in His covenant because He wanted to and He rejoices at the point of judgment. He does not bring either His blessings or His curses reluctantly – and some of us need to get over that.

**God's Delight in Christ** – This is the gospel. When God hit Christ on the cross with the full blow of His just wrath for our sin, He didn't hold back and He didn't regret it. He rejoiced to bring forth His wrath for in it He brought forth the salvation of the world. But at the final judgment, Christ will have no reluctance either in sending the sheep into the glory of everlasting grace and the goats into the glory of everlasting justice.

**Rejoice in the Lord Always** – The lessons of joy are hard to master, but *the joy of the Lord is our strength* (Neh 8:10). This was the state of the blessed church (Acts 2:46-47). *At His right hand are pleasures forevermore* (Psalm 16:11). He cries out, “*Open your mouth wide and I will fill it*” – Psalm 81:10-12.