

**Date** : 24 March 2024

**Topic** : How Serious is God about Curses

**Key Passage:** Deuteronomy 28:15-68

**Key Verse** : Deuteronomy 28:15

**<sup>15</sup> However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you (*no escape but will overpower you*)**

## Introduction

Life outcomes are determined by Covenant keeping. God's Covenant is a spiritual law governing tangible, physical events, including blessings and curses. These spiritual laws impact our lives based on our spiritual state and actions. Some misconceptions view curses as only associated with black magic or witchcraft, or believe they do not affect Christians. However, blessings and curses are not just arbitrary rewards or punishments; they are the natural outcomes of our relationship with God.

Curses are seen as visible manifestations of misfortune, representing a withdrawal of God's blessings. They persist relentlessly, affecting individuals and their families across generations, such as recurring divorces. According to Proverbs 26:2, curses require a legitimate cause to take effect. They result from breaking the Covenant with God through disobedience, leading to a cycle of hardships and calamities. This pattern is evident in Abraham's lineage, where deceit spans multiple generations, culminating in Joseph's brothers deceiving their father.

## 1. Why are curses part of the Covenant agreement?

### i) Preservation and protection of the Covenant

The covenant is central to God's actions, expressing His love for His people and containing promises of blessings. Both parties must remain faithful for the covenant to succeed, with mutual responsibilities and dedication. The inclusion of curses underscores the covenant's importance, ensuring accountability and safeguarding the community from destruction.

### ii) Warning and Deterrence

- The terms of the Covenant are not meant to control with a list of rules and restrictions, but to safeguard the precious bond of love embedded in the covenant.
- The severity and weight of the curses serve as a deterrent, offering a clear warning about the seriousness of disobedience in breaking the covenant, and urging us to stay on the right path.
- Deterrence is effective only when it is severe and firm, otherwise it fails to fulfil its intended purpose. The severity of the curses reflects the seriousness of the offense.

### iii) Call to Repentance

- God does not take pleasure in cursing His people.
- He upholds the terms of the covenant as a covenant keeper. The severity of the curses in the covenant serves as a form of chastisement, discipline, and judgment intended as a call for repentance and reconciliation with God.
- God's call to repentance is reflected in the gradual execution of curses, demonstrating His mercy and patience to correct and guide His people.
- Throughout history, we see God calling people to repentance and restoration through prophets, warning of the consequences of disobedience. *Deuteronomy 30:1-5*  
*Example: During exile in Babylon, Jews repented for disobedience under Ezra's leadership, and God orchestrated King Cyrus to facilitate their return to rebuild their temple.*

#### iv) Lessons to be Faithful and Obedient

- Curses offer insight into God's character – His justice, integrity, and faithfulness to His promises. They are not arbitrary punishments, but rather natural consequences of breaking the covenant.
- Covenant curses serve as lessons in obedience and faithfulness, revealing the outcomes of sin and the value of righteousness. These consequences educate us on living in accordance with God's commands and the dangers of straying from His path.

## 2. How serious is God in carrying out the curses on His people?

The following historical events unfolded in later years demonstrate the operation of curses, as a result of apostasy and worship of false gods.

- **The Canaanite oppression** Judges 1:27-36; 3:12-14

After the conquest and division of the land, the Israelites enjoyed peace and prosperity under Joshua's leadership. However, after Joshua's death around 1250 BC, a new generation emerged, lacking commitment to God's laws. They broke the covenant and turned to pagan practices, worshipping idols like Baal and Ashtaroath, and intermarried with the Canaanites. Failing to fully drive out the Canaanites, they allowed them to dwell among them. Over time, these Canaanites rose to power and oppressed the Israelites.'

Curses activated by covenant violation:

*(Curses: Deuteronomy 28:25,29, 33; 43-44'... day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you'; A people that you do not know will eat what your land... The foreigners who reside among you will rise above you... they will be the head and you will be the tail)*

- Canaanites rose to power.
- The Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalekites defeated Israel and ruled over Jericho.
- Oppressed and robbed continually: Inflicted harsh measures – imposing heavy taxation for 18 years, subject the Israelites to forced labour.

- **The Midianite Oppression** Judges 6:1-6

The Israelites broke the covenant again by worshipping false gods of other nations, committing idolatry and disobedience.

*(Curse: Deuteronomy 28:25 but will flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror' Deuteronomy 28:30-34 '... you will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit ... A people that you do not know will eat what your land and labour produce....)*

God sent the Midianites to chastise His people. The Midianites were nomadic people who inhabited regions east of the Jordan River, including parts of the Arabian Desert.

- Widespread poverty and famine  
The Midianites invaded during harvest, conducting guerrilla raids, destroying crops and livestock, stripping the land bare, plundering and leave nothing.
- Intimidation and fear  
The Midianites instilled fear and terror among the Israelites, causing them to hide in mountain strongholds and caves for safety, unable to defend themselves against their oppressors. The Israelites found themselves subjugated and oppressed by these foreign nations for seven years

- **The Philistine Oppression** Judges 13:1 (*Curses: Deuteronomy 28:25, 43-44*)

The Israelites broke the covenant by doing evil in the eyes of the Lord – disobedience to His commandments and turning away from worshipping Him alone.

(*Curse: Deuteronomy 28:44 'The foreigners ... they will be the head, but you will be the tail'*)

God sent the Philistines to chastise His people. The Philistines were a powerful and warlike people who lived along the coastal plain of Canaan, southwest of the Israelite tribes. They were well known for their advanced military capabilities.

- The Philistines occupied Israelite territories, imposing heavy taxes and tribute, restricting their freedom and suppressed their worship to God and cultural practices.
- Acts of violence and intimidation, instilling fear and insecurity
- The oppression persisted for forty years

- **King Jeroboam's curses**

King Jeroboam broke the covenant by committing sins of **apostasy** and **worshipping false gods**. He fell into idolatry and disobedience to God. He set up golden calves for worship in Bethel and Dan, leading the people away from true worship of Yahweh.

Curses activated by covenant violation:

a) Severe diseases and death 1 Kings 14:9-12

(*Curses: Deuteronomy 28:60-61, 26 'The LORD will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed'; 'Your carcasses will be food for all the birds and the wild animals, and there will be no one to frighten them away')*

- Jeroboam's son, Abijah died of the severe illness.
- Jeroboam's descendants - not buried but eaten by dogs and birds.

b) Cannibalism 2 Kings 6:24-30

(*Curse: Deuteronomy 28:53-55 '... you will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters ... He will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating'*)

The effects of the curses were still operating many years later 2 Kings 6:24-29

During a famine in Samaria, the northern kingdom of Israel was besieged by the Aramean army led by King Ben-Hadad. The famine grew severe, causing food prices to soar sky high and leading to desperate measures for survival. In this dire situation, an appalling incident of cannibalism occurred when a woman cried out to King Jehoram revealing that she and another woman had made a pact to eat their sons for food.

- **Assyrian Invasion 722BC**

(*Curses: Deuteronomy 28:49-57,64 'The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away ... like an eagle swooping down ...)*

The Assyrians were known for their fierce military tactics and ruthless conquests, leading to the destruction of many cities and the devastation of crops and livestock.

King Jeroboam's house was uprooted from the land and scattered beyond the Euphrates River. Assyrian invasion resulted in the exile and scattering of the Israelites from their land, effectively ending the Northern kingdom of Israel.

- **Babylonian Invasion 586 BC**

*(Curses: Deuteronomy 28:68 'the Lord will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.'*)

Led by King Nebuchadnezzar, Jerusalem was besieged and eventually destroyed. The Babylonians deported many Israelites to Babylon scattering them among different nations. The remaining Israelites faced severe hardship, including seeking refuge in Egypt.

- **Roman siege of Jerusalem\_ 70AD**

*(Curses: Deuteronomy 28:49-57,64 'The Lord will bring a nation against you far away, ...The will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until high fortified walls in which you trust fall down... The Lord will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other).*

The Romans besieged Jerusalem during the First Jewish-Roman War, leading to the destruction of the city and the Temple. This event initiated the Jewish Diaspora, scattering Jews across the Roman Empire and beyond due to persecution and forced migrations. This dispersion lasted for nearly two millennia until the establishment of modern Israel in 1948.

- **Holocaust during WWII** *(Curses: Deuteronomy 28:65-67)*

*(Curses: Deuteronomy 28:65-67 ' Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place ... anxious mind ... despairing heart. <sup>66</sup> You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day... because of the terror that will fill your hearts....')*

During World War II, millions of Jews were systematically exterminated by the Nazis, resulting in immense suffering and trauma for Jewish communities worldwide. The Jews experienced moments of profound fear and terror, Millions of Jews were systematically murdered by the Nazis. It was the darkest chapters in human history, marked by unimaginable acts of violence, cruelty and mass murder against the Jews. 6 million Jews were exterminated in gas chambers, concentration camps and mass shooting. This happening was well documented in history and survivor testimonies.

## **Application**

1. How do you reconcile God's inclusion of curses in the covenant terms with His character as a loving and just God?
2. Reflect on a time when you faced consequences for disobedience or straying from God's commands. How did this experience shape your understanding of God's seriousness about curses?
3. How can understanding the gravity of God's curses motivate us to deepen our commitment to obedience and faithfulness in our walk with Him?