



Deuteronomy 28:1-14

NKJ Deuteronomy 28:1 "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.

2 "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

3 "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.

4 "Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

5 "Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

6 "Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

7 " The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.

8 "The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

9 "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways.

10 "Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you.

11 "And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you.

12 "The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.

13 "And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them.

14 "So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

One of the things that most modern commentators on Deuteronomy point out are the similarities between this book and the ancient treaties between vassal states and their overlords. These were agreements between lesser nations to faithfully serve the kings of greater nations which spelled out the requirements and obligations on both parties. In other words if lesser nation X will be faithful to send

in their taxes and serve when called to battle and not make agreements with other nations then the king would protect them and not overburden them and so on. While there are a lot of interesting parallels that can be drawn, I don't tend to talk about these much for three reasons:

First, because I'm uncomfortable making extra-biblical documents the primary way of understanding the bible and I don't think that God intended that we would need to have a graduate degree in the history of ancient near eastern Suzerain-Vassal treaties in order to understand his word.

Secondly, because I think its way overdone and the similarities are exaggerated

Thirdly, because while those treaties also contained promises of blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience in the treaties the blessings are earned while in the bible the blessings are not earned but graciously bestowed without ever really being merited and the curses only fall upon God's people after his patience and longsuffering are well and truly exhausted.

The idea we find in the bible is not, if you are good you will be rewarded as though they merited God's favor in the same way that a subject people might merit a king's favor by their obedience, rather God's blessings have already come upon them because God had independently determined to bless them and make them His people. Christians we don't *earn* our blessings, God is determined to give them, in fact its the actually the case that we have to forsake our blessings and EARN our curses. God says to us, this is what I have promised I will do for you, you have not deserved it, but my desire to bless you is so great that these blessings will pursue you and as God puts it *overtake you*, all I ask is that you love and trust me and obey my commands all of which will bless you.

The situation is perhaps best illustrated by that of the covenant child, he or she is born into an immensely privileged position, they are part of the *ekklesia* the assembly and people of the Lord, and in acknowledgement of that fact they have the sign and seal of God's promises applied to them, they grow up hearing and being taught his word, all they need do to enjoy God's blessings is believe the Lord and continue on in His favor. They don't need to earn their salvation, all they need do is love the Lord, exercise their own personal faith, and then not leave the circle of blessing they were born into. The tragedy is that so many choose instead to rebel and in so doing they forsake the blessings and actively seek after cursings.

And you see in that relationship the key to the dynamic between the Lord and His people. It is not Lord and Vassal, Governor and Governed. It is parent and child. That is why in chapter 32 Moses is able to rhetorically ask the people, "*Is He not **your Father**, who bought you?*"

Now as this people whom he delivered from Egypt are about to enter into the promised land, the Lord is renewing his promises to His children Israel. He tells them again that their happiness and indeed the continued possession of the land He is giving them will depend not on their ability to merit it, but their love and obedience to Him. Like a parent giving His child something He reminds them they didn't earn the land, He gave it to them, but if they rebel, He will take it away from them just as surely as He is taking it away from the Canaanites. But even here the Lord sets the blessings before them first as an encouragement to obedience.

So often when we are trying to get our kids to do what is good for them, I find we emphasize the curses first, but God does better he sets the blessings first - these show that God is slow to anger, but swift to show mercy and that that he would much rather we would obey and live than sin and die. It is his delight to bless his children.

They also show us that he would rather we obeyed and did what was good out of the knowledge that it pleases him and will bring his delight and his blessings than making us obey out of a slavish fear of wrath, again he wants us to obey out of love as children than out of fear as slaves.

He also lets them know that by obeying the Lord's name will be spread, the very reason for their existence as He told Abraham is that through them all the nations of the world would be blessed. And so their obedience was linked to that mission of blessing, they could either encourage obedience and turning or bring shame upon his name and dissuade others from becoming his people.

Verses 1-6 blessings of fertility and increase in the land. Having land isn't a blessing by itself unless that land is fruitful.

Now to summarize the blessings –

first in verse 7 he promises them that their security would be maintained not by having a large army or strong alliances but by their obedience, he had already
Shown them this in delivering them from Egypt

Love this idea of one road in and seven out: Their adversaries may attack en masse, but they will flee in all directions as a broken rabble

Verse 8 – storehouses would be full,

Verse 9-10 reminder that their obedience would also result in the blessings of the nations and the hallowing of His name, is that not what we want as well?

Verse 11 – they will not have “just enough” but plenty – Eph. 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,
12 - He will be the one who opens the heavens for them RAIN

BAAL

Yahweh will bring all the blessings that he has promised without them having to do the things that the Canaanites tried to use to get their gods to bless them
No offering up of the first born or temple prostitution

Also they would be the head and not the tail, they would be the lenders and not the borrowers, this is a sign of blessing.

Must not go after other Gods

Blessings will “overtake” Israel – they will pursue and track down the obedient

Two APPS:

NOTE - conditions upon which the blessing is promised

diligently hearken to the voice of God (v. 1, 2), that they hear God speaking to them by his word, and use their utmost endeavours to acquaint themselves with his will, v. 13.

that they observe and do all his commandments

go aside either to the right hand or to the left, either to superstition on the one hand, or profaneness on the other; and particularly that they should not go after other gods (v. 14)

Follow Christ's Commandments - "All the people of the earth shall see, and own, that thou art called by the name of the Lord, that is, "that thou art a most excellent and glorious people, under the particular care and countenance of the great God. They shall be made to know that a people called by the name Jehovah are without doubt the happiest people under the sun, even their enemies themselves being judges." The favourites of Heaven are truly great, and, first or last, it will be made to appear that they are so, if not in this world, yet at that day when those who confess Christ now shall be confessed by him before men and angels, as those whom he delights to honour..." – Matthew Henry