

Questions after Week Three No. 1

Question: Can any of Deuteronomy 28 (the Sinaitic Covenant curses) be considered hyperbole? Or is it all literal?

Pastor Chris' thoughts: You, know, my gut says yes (perhaps some hyperbole), but if so, it would also apply to the blessings— showing the marvelous heights and stunning depths of both the blessings and curses as consequences for obeying/disobeying. It was surely meant to stress the seriousness of the covenant agreement.

I do know that the Children of Israel were commanded to write down all the blessings and curses (i.e. “all the words of the law”) on whitewashed stones as a testimony/memorial once they entered the promised land. There is also a spot where Moses declares “cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law.”

Galatians 3, by the way, is a place where Paul quotes this spot from Moses by saying that anyone under the law is cursed by all its words, and then he goes on to show that Christ became a curse for us for us. So, in some ways, whether hyperbolic or not, Jesus takes on all the curses for us.

Now, there are some obvious metaphors, for sure, though they aren't necessarily hyperbolic. (Earth will become iron— no crops— the heavens will become bronze— no rain).

One of the curses for disobeying is that the Nation of Israel will become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth, and that Jerusalem will become a heavy (burdensome) stone to the nations— all opposite to what she was supposed to be. (And again, blessings and curses are national blessings and curses—not against, say, Jews, per se, and not ever against the faithful remnant).

These curses in the Sinaitic Covenant, by the way, were what the returning exiles from Babylon rediscovered and were so very frightened by— it was probably what caused the people to be so alarmed and weep and wail.

One more thing: When you take a close, careful look at the historical record of what happened to Israel in the Babylonian siege and most particularly the Roman siege, it has so very many of the hallmarks and even gruesome details of these curses. For example, one of the curses talks about eating the fruit (or flesh) of your own body, which sounds hyperbolic. But there actually were cases of cannibalism during the Roman siege in 70 A.D.