

Generational Curses

Biblical Answers to Questions Raised by the phrase "visit the iniquities to the third and fourth generation" by Bob DeWaay

“You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” (**Exodus 20:5,6**)

“Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face.” (**Deuteronomy 7:9,10**)

Oftentimes when a passage is unclear it is used to support false teachings. Because when many Christians are unsure of the meaning of a passage, they are less able to discern erroneous teaching based on the verses in question. This is surely the case for the popular teaching on generational curses that is based on the Biblical passages cited above. Many popular books published in the last thirty years claim that Christians are subjected to unknown generational curses that have detrimental effects on their lives. The writers of the books offer *their* special knowledge that can break the curses.

In this article we will examine the Old Testament passages about generational curses. By careful exegesis centering around the whole counsel of God, we shall show that these passages do not support the idea that Christians are cursed because of the sins of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. We shall also make it clear that these verses do not teach that demons have the right or ability to inhabit Christians because of generational curses nor that Satan has the right to inflict curses upon Christians because of ancestral sins. On the contrary, Christians have the “blessing of Abraham” because of their relationship to Christ.

The Sins of the Fathers

The first passage in the Bible that mentions God's warning about the consequences of idolatry affecting the third and fourth generation is found in the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments). It says *"I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me"* (**Exodus 20:5b**). This is a warning about the grave consequences of worshiping other gods. The Old Testament record is replete with such warnings as well as narrative passages that describe the horrible consequences of idolatry in the life of Israel. Even this warning is tempered with a greater promise of God's mercy: *"But showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments"* (**verse 6**). This will be important to our understanding of the second commandment and similar passages.

At Sinai, God entered into a covenant relationship with Israel and took her to be His own people. They were to honor that covenant from their hearts, by loving God and obeying Him. Worshiping other gods was covenant-breaking in its worst form, analogous to spiritual adultery. They were persistently warned of the consequences of such behavior, yet it was all too common. The consequences would even mean that God would "visit the iniquities to the third and fourth generation." What does this mean? On the surface it appears that God would punish the children and grandchildren for sins that they did not personally commit. But **Deuteronomy 24:16** provides good reason to reject this interpretation: *"Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin."* Later we shall examine **Ezekiel 18** which deals with this issue in more detail.

Biblical scholars have pointed out that if the children turn to God they shall avert this punishment. For example, John Calvin commented about **Exodus 20:5** that, *"[W]hen God declares that He will cast back the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of the children, He does not mean that He will take vengeance on poor wretches who have never deserved anything of the sort; but that He is at liberty to punish the crimes of the fathers upon their children and descendants, with the proviso that they*

too may be justly punished, as being imitators of their fathers."¹ Contemporary Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser writes, *"Children who repeat the sins of their fathers evidence it in personally hating God."*² Kaiser takes *"those who hate Me"* to apply to the children as well as the fathers. The children themselves carry on with hating God as shown by their continued idolatry and covenant breaking. God is just and merciful and **nothing** in this passage suggests otherwise.

Jewish scholars make several interesting points concerning the sins of the fathers being visited to the third and fourth generations. One is based on this passage in Jeremiah:

'Ah Lord God! Behold, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great power and by Thine outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for Thee, who showest lovingkindness to thousands, but repayest the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them, O great and mighty God. The Lord of hosts is His name; great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds; (**Jeremiah 32:17-10**)

Here is a Jewish interpretation of this passage: "Perhaps the strongest Scriptural support for the interpretation that *'poqed 'avon abot 'al banim'* [visits the iniquities of fathers on sons] applies only to children who continue the sinful ways of their father has been brought from Jeremiah 32:18-19. There, in two consecutive verses, the prophet cites God's attribute of cross-generational reward and punishment immediately followed by the principle of individual accountability."³

There is another mention of this principle in a passage that suggests that the key point is God's mercy, not His wrath. In this following section of Torah, God shows His great power through His mercy and pardon, with reference to the idea of the third and fourth generation:

"But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as Thou hast declared, 'The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity

of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.' Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy lovingkindness, just as Thou also hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." So the Lord said, "I have pardoned them according to your word."
(Numbers 14:17-20)

What is so interesting here is that Moses cited the passage from the second commandment that warned about the consequences on the third and fourth generation when pleading for **mercy and pardon** from the Lord. This is strong evidence that Moses himself considered the passage to show a **limitation** on God's wrath and evidence of His mercy. Some Jewish scholars have seen it this way: Some have interpreted the concept of cross-generational retribution as associated with God's mercy. In Numbers 14:18 Moshe cites this characteristic of God in his prayer for forgiveness. This may be understood as asking God in His mercy to postpone punishment to later generations, to allow the present generation the opportunity to mend their ways or at least to keep the Covenant alive.⁴

As a matter of fact, in the case of those who came out of Egypt, God judged the parents for idolatry and unbelief, but it was the children who actually entered the promised land.⁵ God showed great patience with His chosen people. Rather than wipe out the unbelieving and idolatrous generation that grumbled in the wilderness, God allowed them to live and raise their children, so that the promise would be kept alive through a future generation that would be faithful to the covenant. As we shall see, God's mercy goes much farther than his wrath.

Showing Lovingkindness to Thousands

Another passage that mentions this warning is **Exodus 34:6,7**: "Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the

third and fourth generations.” We often miss the contrast in both the **Exodus 20** passage and the one here between God's greater love and mercy that tempers His just punishment of sin. These verses in **Exodus 34:6,7** emphasize this. The “third and fourth generation” is a **limitation** on God's punishment in the context of His greater mercy.

The context of this section of **Exodus 34** is God revealing Himself to Moses on mount Sinai. What God said about Himself here was so important in His self-revelation to His covenant people that it was often restated, like a creed. What was oft repeated was this: *“The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.”*⁶ This became so much impressed on the minds of the Jews that even Jonah, when he wished to see the Ninevites destroyed because of his hatred for them, repeated this concept. Here is how Jonah responded after the blood-thirsty, pagan Assyrians (Israel's enemies) repented after hearing Jonah's preaching and were saved from God's wrath:

“But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, “Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.” (**Jonah 4:1,2**)

This came right from God's revelation of Himself to Moses in **Exodus 34**. Even the reluctant preacher Jonah knew that what was promised was not that the children would be destroyed without recourse unto the third and fourth generations, but that God was **more** willing to show mercy because of His gracious and compassionate nature. Jonah was right to expect that God would show mercy, and the events proved this correct.

Consider the fact that the Assyrians, whose capital city was Nineveh, were well known in the ancient world for their viciousness and brutality. They were Israel's greatest enemies for a good part of her history from the divided kingdom to just before the Babylonian captivity. They were polytheistic idolaters. Yet Jonah, when called by God to preach the imminence of God's wrath, ran from his call.

The reason, as shown in **Jonah 4:1,2**, was that Jonah knew that the only reason God was sending him to preach to the pagan enemies was because God was intending to show them mercy. Jonah did not want that. These Ninevites who repented clearly had evil ancestors. Their parents and grandparents had hated the God of Israel and made the Jews their enemies. Yet God forgave them when they repented. His wrath was forestalled. That this special theology lesson from the mouth of Jonah came from **Exodus 34:6** should tell us a lot about the meaning of the passage. God could have justly destroyed Nineveh. He chose to show His mercy.

The contrast between “thousands” and “third and fourth” shows the greatness of God's mercy and grace. His lovingkindness extends far beyond His just punishment of sin. The text says, *“He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.”* In the context this shows that no one should presume upon God's lovingkindness (*hesed* in Hebrew, one of the most important words in the Old Testament about God's nature). If someone was to think that because God is long suffering, slow to anger, and merciful, then there is no reason to concern one's self with loving God and keeping covenant, that person would find out that God will visit the iniquity to the third and fourth generation. No child can assume covenant benefits solely on the ground of his father's faith.

Calvin also comments on this in his commentary on the second commandment: *“We must, however, observe, that in these words grace is not promised severally to all the posterity of the saints, as if God were bound to each individual who may derive their race and origin from them. There were many degenerate children of Abraham, to whom it profited nothing that they were called offspring of the holy patriarch.”*⁷ Calvin, commenting on the contrast between the thousands and the third and fourth generations, states that, “He extends His mercy further than the severity of His judgment.”⁸ The warning in these passages, however, is to not presume on covenant blessings based on ancestry or ancestral promises. God punishes covenant breakers who thereby show that they hate Him.

God Repays Those who Hate Him

There is a passage in Deuteronomy that sheds light on these passages in Exodus because it also mentions God's mercy to thousands, as well as His justice:

“Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face” (**Deuteronomy 7:9,10**).

Deuteronomy is Moses' "sermon" to Israel before his death. In this book he brings the people face to face with all the implications of their covenant relationship with God. In this passage we see Moses applying terminology from the second commandment which had been reiterated in **Deuteronomy 5:9,10**.

To love God is the primary requirement of the Law, as was emphasized in **Deuteronomy 6:5**. To "hate" God in the context of covenant terminology was to reject the covenant and God as a covenant partner.⁹ Concerning the phrase "to the face" in this passage, Eugene Merrill states that, "This expression occurs only here and probably means that the judgement would not be reserved for unborn generations but would fall immediately upon those who had sinned in this manner, right there and then."¹⁰ Otherwise, the Israelites would misunderstand the 2nd commandment to mean that the children would be punished for the father's sins and the ones who sinned would escape. This verse says that those who reject the covenant (hating God) and refuse to love Him would bear their own immediate punishment. Although the third and fourth generations are not mentioned in **Deuteronomy 7:9,10**, the wording of "*a thousandth generation*" brings to mind the previous passages. This interpretation gives weight to what Calvin and Kaiser said, that it is the haters of God themselves who are punished, not children who refuse to participate in their parent's sins.

The Parent's Sour Grapes

This brings to mind the teaching of Ezekiel 18. Evidently the second commandment was misused later in Israel's history to claim that God was unjustly punishing righteous children for the sins of unrighteous parents. The complaint took this form: *"What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel saying, 'The fathers eat the sour grapes, But the children's teeth are set on edge'?"* (**Ezekiel 18:2**). The people in Ezekiel's day had reason to so misinterpret this commandment because they were the generation that was living during the Babylonian captivity. This captivity happened after many generations of idolatry and the warnings of many prophets. Ralph Alexander comments that, "They reasoned that the present generation was being judged because of the past wickedness of their forefathers."¹¹

It is likely that the sour grapes proverb expressed a misuse of the warning attached to the second commandment of the Decalogue. Alexander argues that this was the case and explains what he believes to be the proper understanding of it:

*This principle of the Decalogue teaches that children would be affected by their father's sin. . . . Parents model for their children. The sinful behavior of parents is readily followed by their children. Regrettably, therefore, children frequently found themselves practicing the same sinful acts as their father. Likewise they must accept the same just punishment for such actions. However, each child is still individually responsible. He can abort the "sin-punishment-inheritance" progression at any time. But he must repent and do what is right.*¹²

The point of the captivity was to purge Israel of pagan idolatry that was covenant breaking in its worse form. The second commandment forbade this pagan practice. The Israelites of the captivity, rather than complaining of being unjustly punished because it was their parents who were the idolaters, are urged to return to the Lord in covenant faithfulness, and thus "live." There is to be no fatalistic interpretation of the principle of the third and fourth generation.

Ezekiel made this very explicit: *"Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity?' When the son has practiced justice and*

righteousness, and has observed all My statutes and done them, he shall surely live. The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself" (Ezekiel 18:19,20). This chapter of Ezekiel concludes with a call to repent and live. The point was that those who were in captivity because of the nation's rebellious ways, could still be blessed if they turned to the Lord in faith. Some, like Daniel, did and the Lord brought a remnant out of captivity.

One of the most beautiful prayers in the Bible is that of Daniel in **Daniel 9**. Daniel exhibited the complete opposite attitude to those who were complaining by use of the sour grapes proverb. Though Daniel himself refused to succumb to the pagan idolatry that was all around him in Babylon, he realized that God's purposes were at work in the captivity. He read in the prophet Jeremiah that the captivity was to last 70 years (**Daniel 9:2**), so he began to pray as the time for release approached. He confessed both God's justice and mercy:

And I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances. . . . Righteousness belongs to Thee, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day__ to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which Thou hast driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against Thee. Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee. To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him." (**Daniel 9:4,5,7-9**)

Daniel had the correct understanding of their covenant relationship to the Lord and His self-revealed nature. Though captive in Babylon because of Israel's long history of idolatry and rebellion, Daniel saw God as righteous, compassionate and forgiving. Yes God had visited the sins of the fathers, just as He said would,

but Daniel found great mercy and blessing because of his own faith in God. Nothing any of his ancestors did, as sinful as it was, kept Daniel from having a humble attitude of faith and trust. Daniel was blessed in spite of external suffering because of the sins of previous generations.

Ezekiel 18 lays to rest any notion that the "*visiting of the iniquities to the third and fourth generation*" removed responsibility from anyone. Those who rebelled against God come under the curses of the covenant. Those who humbly trust God, by faith, shall be blessed no matter what their ancestors did. Also, God's continued faithfulness to His covenant promises is never ultimately thwarted by man. God had promised Abraham that through his seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed (**Genesis 12:3**). That many of Abraham's children ended up putting themselves under a curse because of their own idolatry does not thwart God's plan to bring forth blessed children of Abraham.

This principle of covenant blessing and individual responsibility is also shown in God's covenant promises to David. The term "visit" in regard to sins is used in **Psalms 89**:

My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall be confirmed to him. So I will establish his descendants forever, And his throne as the days of heaven. If his sons forsake My law, And do not walk in My judgments, If they violate My statutes, And do not keep My commandments, Then I will **visit** their transgression with the rod, And their iniquity with stripes. But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. (**Psalms 89:29-35**)

As we see in **Ezekiel 18**, this Psalm confirms God's justice in His dealings. God made an unconditional promise to David that he would have a son whose throne and kingship would last forever (see **2Samuel 7:13,14**; **Isaiah 9:7**; **Jeremiah 33:15-21**). Between the time of David and the fulfillment of this promise through Messiah, David would have many unfaithful sons (meaning descendants). The passage in **Psalms 89** says they will be punished, but God's

covenant with David would continue. Covenant blessing does not offer comfort to rebels and idolaters. But God will be faithful and raise up a person (Messiah) and a people (those who put their trust in God through Messiah) who will be truly blessed.

The Key to Blessing

To summarize the Old Testament material, we can say that the passages about the "third and fourth generation" show a limitation on God's judgement, since they are mentioned in the context of His lovingkindness shown to thousands. The key to blessing was to be in right covenant relationship with God. This meant putting one's faith and trust in God alone, and loving Him alone as the One who had chosen them. Whenever this was the case, even in a situation such as Daniel's where the external affects of the rebellion of previous generations was all around him, God's blessing is still there. However, for those rebellious sons who may want to claim covenant blessing based on their genetic relationship to the patriarchs, they can expect to be repaid "to their faces." They shall bear the punishment and curse for their own idolatrous ways.

Now we can look at what the New Testament says about the matter of blessing and cursing and put to rest the false teachings that are being perpetrated on many Christians who are being told they are suffering from "generational curses" even though they know Jesus Christ as Lord and trust His finished work for their salvation. In **Galatians 3:8** Paul quoted **Genesis 12:3** to prove that God justifies Gentiles by faith. He then says, "*So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them'*" (**Galatians 3:9,10**). Paul was warning the Galatians that to try to find blessing by going back to the stipulations of the old covenant (circumcision in particular) was to put one's self under a curse. The true blessing is obtained by faith, which was true in the Old Testament also as shown in the faith of Abraham.

Again the issue comes down to covenant faithfulness. For Christians, under the New Covenant, our blessing is because of the love and trust relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ. Paul goes on to say this, "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us__ for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' -- in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*" (**Galatians 3:13,14**). If you have been regenerated as are all who have true faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, then you are inheriting the blessings of God and are delivered from the curse of the Law. The cause of the curse is sin. God Himself pronounced the curse. God's wrath must be appeased. Christ's substitutionary death on the cross has appeased God's wrath against sin for all believers and has removed the curse. We are blessed "sons of Abraham."

Just as in the Old Testament, our physical ancestry is not the issue. John the Baptist told the religious leaders of his day that since God can raise up "sons of Abraham" from stones if necessary, their claim to blessing through genetic descent was not going to avail (**Matthew 3:9**). Likewise, people who have nothing going for them through their ancestors (pagan Gentiles) can receive covenant blessings if they put their hope and trust in God through Messiah, the true "seed" of Abraham. Even if our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were atheists, occultists and blasphemers, God will pour out the full blessings of the New Covenant upon us if we truly come to Him through the cross.

On the other hand, those who put their trust in man (**Jeremiah 17:5**) are cursed. That is the essence of the Galatian heresy. By putting people back under a system of works, the false teachers would surely put them under the curse of the law. The Biblical teaching on this is very clear and it holds from Genesis through Revelation. Those who trust God (**Jeremiah 17:7**) are blessed.

False Teachings on Curses

With what we have learned from this study of the Scriptures, it will not be difficult to see the error of contemporary teachings on generational curses. They

uniformly claim that putting one's faith in Christ alone does not break these curses. Something more is necessary. It is this "something more" that refutes everything that Bible says about the matter and makes these teachings insidious. Both the **Galatian** and **Colossian** heresies were similar in that they claimed "something more" (in the one case works, and in the other special knowledge and religious experiences) had to be added to the finished work of Christ for Christians to have fulness or to be pleasing to God. Modern false teachers promote the same errors.

For example, Neil Anderson teaches, based on the **Exodus 20:4-5**, that demons are passed from generation to generation and that these demons have ground in the lives of Christians because of generational sins.¹³ To get the curse of these demonic strongholds out of their lives, Christians supposedly need to find out what they are, use utterances (called "prayers" in the book) to break them, and need counselors with special knowledge of these things if they are severe cases.¹⁴ The words that are to be repeated are provided, including, "I cancel out all demonic working that has been passed on to me from my ancestors. . ." ¹⁵

These utterances (I would call them "incantations") sound very pious and references to Christ and the cross are even given. However, there are obvious problems. One is that **Exodus 20:4,5** said nothing about Satan or demons. It was God who promised to punish covenant breakers. Another problem is that according to **Colossians 2** we are already complete in Christ (verse 10) and that the principalities and powers that dominated us before we met Christ were disarmed through the cross. The reason was that the true power they had over us, our sinfulness in respect to God's law, was taken away. Neil Anderson teaches that the demons have strongholds in our lives as Christians until we gain knowledge and command the evil spirits to go. These spirits supposedly have their places in us because of ancestral sins. Let me point out a problem with this: if the cross is the basis of victory, which Anderson admits, then why would God leave us in demonic bondage **after** we come to know Jesus through the cross? That is, unless we gain revelation knowledge and say the right prayers and utterances. This is the Colossian heresy all over again. We supposedly need Christ **plus** knowledge and some religious process to gain victory over the forces that are deemed to stand between us and "completeness" in Christ.¹⁶

Another teacher who has written a popular book on spiritual curses is Derek Prince. He also quotes **Exodus 20** to show that generational curses are operating in the lives of Christians.¹⁷ He writes:

*A person who comes from such a background is heir to a curse that may be compared to a weed planted in his life, linking him to satanic forces outside himself. This weed has two kinds of roots: one long tap root going straight downward, and other less powerful lateral roots. The tap root represents the influence of ancestors who worshiped false gods.*¹⁸

It is true that the Bible calls occult activity a serious sin and that God does judge idolaters and occult practitioners. The problem arises when we are told that coming to Christ under the terms of the new covenant still leaves these curses operating in our lives unless something more is done.

This is the trap Prince falls into. He writes, "Before he can enjoy true liberty and the fullness of the new creation in Christ, this weed must be completely pulled out, with all its roots."¹⁹ He then quotes **Matthew 15:13** about the pulling out of weeds that the Father has not planted. This passage is in the context of the disciple's discussion of the Pharisee's being offended by Jesus' teaching. The disciples were told "let them alone." God would root those plants (the Pharisees) out Himself. This has nothing to do with the removing of curses that are supposedly still operating in Christian's lives. At issue is whether coming to Christ in faith and fully trusting His finished work removes us from being under the curse of sin or whether it does not. If it does, then God is not going to allow demons to work in our lives because of unknown sins of ancestors. We were **all** cursed by ancestral sin, that of Adam! (**1Corinthians 15:22**). If we are in Christ the curse of sin is removed.

Current popular teachings on generational curses leave little hope for anyone. If Christ has broken all curses once for all for all those who know Him, then there would be no reason to write books to Christians telling them what processes and knowledge they need to break the curses. If Christ has not removed the curses, then by definition all people are likely to be under one. For example consider Derek Prince's conclusion about generational curses:

Conversely, any one of the four generations preceding us, by having committed these sins, could be the cause of a curse over us in our generation. Each of us has two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, and sixteen great-great-grandparents. This makes a total of thirty persons, any one of whom might be the cause of a curse over our lives. How many of us would be in a position to guarantee that none of our thirty ancestors was ever involved in any form of idolatry or the occult?²⁰

Obviously, we can never be sure of freedom from curses if we accept Prince's premises.

These teachers also give lists of common human maladies that are possibly caused by curses. They also provide anecdotal evidence of Christians who were struggling with problems that turned out to be caused by spiritual curses that needed to be broken through the therapies they propose. They define the problem so that everyone is included, deny that coming to Christ through the gospel effectively removes the curse (by using born again Christians as examples of people with generational curses needing breaking), and then propose their knowledge and their therapeutic processes as the answer.

I wrote earlier about Marilyn Hickey's book that claims Christians are cursed for not keeping certain Levitical laws from the Old Testament.²¹ Others follow the same error in their teachings on tithing, invoking the curse of God on people who do not tithe as prescribed in the Old Testament law. For example consider this citation from a recent book: "If you aren't tithing, you are taking that which rightfully belongs to God and using it for yourself. Not tithing is a clear violation of God's commandments. . . . Not only are you robbing God but you are bringing a curse upon yourself."²² This author then cites **Malachi 3:9** as a proof text. As I argued in the earlier article on this matter, if we are cursed for not keeping one aspect of the Mosaic Covenant, then we are also cursed for not keeping any of the other 613 laws prescribed therein.

One more example of this insidious teaching should show how wide spread it is. Rebecca Brown and Daniel Yoder write, "Sadly, we have found that very few Christians have any knowledge of those things that the Lord proclaims to be

unclean. Thus their lives and homes are cluttered with unclean things which enable curses and cursing into their lives."²³ They claim we need revelations and special knowledge to get free from these curses and that Satan has legal rights to curse Christians and send demons our way if we do certain things wrong. Among them are such things as "living on cursed ground, living in cursed housing, having cursed objects," and many others.²⁴ Even "circumstances beyond our control" may leave Christians cursed.²⁵ The subtitle for this book is "hidden source of trouble in the Christian's life." Any problems we may have could be caused by unknown curses, and its our lack of revelation knowledge that is supposedly destroying us. As with all of these types of false teachings, the Christian is left with no hope or assurance. We may be victim of unseen forces and curses no matter what our relationship with Christ is.

Conclusion

We need to reject as unbiblical any teaching that says that those who put their hope and trust in Christ are likely cursed. God has pronounced us blessed. Balaam could not curse God's blessed people, neither can anyone else. The Bible says, "*Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose trust is the Lord*" (**Jeremiah 17:7**). That is the simple version. The false teachers are hopelessly confused and give no hope or assurance. They put us back in bondage, and thus the teachings themselves and their perpetrators are accursed (**Galatians 1:8**) according to God's Word.

End Notes

1. John Calvin, *Harmony of the Law*, Vol. 2, "Exposition of the 2nd Commandment"
2. Walter Kaiser, "Commentary on Exodus" in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2 (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1990) 423.
3. From http://shamash.org/tanach/tanach/commentary/j_seminar/volume4/v4n22 Copyright © 1997 Sephardic Institute.
4. Ibid.
5. Hebrews 4:1-6 says that the people did not enter the promised rest because of unbelief and disobedience.
6. See Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalms 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2.
7. Op. Cit Calvin
8. Ibid.
9. Eugene H. Merrill, "Deuteronomy" in *New American Commentary*, (Broadman and Holman, 1994) 181.
10. Ibid.
11. Ralph Alexander, "Commentary on Ezekiel" in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6 (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1986) 823.
12. Ibid.
13. Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, (Harvest House: Eugene, OR, 1990) 201.
14. Ibid. 202, 203.
15. Ibid. 203.
16. I will address the Colossian heresy in detail in the next issue of Critical Issues Commentary.
17. Derek Prince, *Blessing or Curse You can Choose*, (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1990) 61-63.
18. Ibid. 64.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid. 74
21. See Bob DeWaay, *Are Christians Cursed?*, Critical Issues Commentary; Issue 40, May/June 1997.
22. Dr. Norman K. Roberston, *Tithing — God's Financial Plan*, (Norman Robertson Media: Matthews, NC, 1994) 21.
23. Rebecca Brown and Daniel Yoder, *Unbroken Curses*, (Whitaker House: New Kensington, PA, 1995) 16.
24. Ibid. 18,19.
25. Ibid. 19.