

BLESSINGS AND CURSES

In the first seven verses of **Revelation 21** it tells about all the wonderful things that are in store for God's faithful people, but then the next verse informs us about those who are not going to inherit the kingdom, and it tells us why. God always gives both sides, doesn't He? He tells us what will happen if we obey, and what will happen if we disobey. He did this for ancient Israel in **Deuteronomy 28** where it speaks of the curses and blessings, and elsewhere, and He continues to do it for us today, and **Revelation 21** is a good place for us to start, and we'll be looking at that in just a moment.

We should never forget that our eternal destiny is based upon choice! Are we going to choose to submit to God in all things and be blessed, or are we going to choose to yield to the temptations of our fallen flesh and be cursed. And these two options, and there are only two, remain true even if we have accepted Christ as our Saviour in the past. The Bible gives us no assurance of being forever blessed simply because we have accepted Christ sometime in the past, and neither does it teach that we are forever cursed if we have been disobedient in the past. Our eternal destiny is based upon coming to Christ on a daily bases to receive the strength and power and the desire we need to render acceptable and continual heart obedience, or this thing called salvation won't work.

After telling us we must be overcomers in order to "inherit all things", John goes on in **Revelation 21:8** to list 8 things that will cause us to suffer the second death from which there is no resurrection. In other words, after the wicked suffer for the sins which they have committed, they're going to go to sleep and never wake up, while the righteous who come up in the first resurrection, will wake up and never go to sleep again. Which of these two groups would you like to be in? The intelligent choice is pretty easy to make when you look at it that way, isn't it? But sometimes we don't make the intelligent choice, do we? Many times the right choice is more difficult to implement, because the battle with self is the greatest battle that was ever fought, and only the true Christian can understand that this is absolutely true.

When the Holy Spirit creates within us a new heart and we partake of the divine nature, then the battle begins, because before that there are not two natures to do battle. Does that make sense? You can't have a battle unless there are two sides, and it's not until we are born again that our fallen nature has a competing side to deal with. We're taking about two different spirits battling for the control of the mind here and not just whether or not we do the right thing outwardly. There are many people in this world that do the right thing for various reasons and perhaps because of the consequences if they don't, but only the born again Christian can do the right thing from the heart, and it's heart obedience that God is looking for, and that's the only kind that can form the character in righteousness.

And so, let's turn to **Revelation 21**, and let's read the first **7 verses**, because I want to read the encouraging part before we read what many would consider the negative part, but in reality it's all very positive.

Revelation 21:1-7, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. **(Let's understand something. If we are going to enjoy seeing the new heaven and the new earth, we've got to become new creatures. The new heaven and earth are only for those who have received a new heart and a new Spirit, because there won't be anything old there)** And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. **(Oh I tell you friends, we've got something wonderful to look forward to, but first we've got to let God take out the stony heart and give us a heart of flesh. We need a heart transplant. Can you imagine physically dwelling with God? A couple songs come to mind here. "Farewell, farewell sweet hour of prayer" and "Face to face with Christ my Saviour." That's when these hymns we've been singing down here will become a reality)** And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. **(After the thousand years spoken of in Revelation 20:5-7 come to an end, there will be absolutely nothing left to cause us grief or sadness or pain, those things are gone forever. Words can't express what that's going to be like, so don't miss it)** And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. **(That means it's really going to happen. Don't you want to be there?)** And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

You probably weren't counting, but if you'll go back and reread these verses, you will discover that there are about the same number of blessings as there are curses, and I'm sure you'll agree that the blessings are much better than what it says in **verse 8**, but we need to read that as well.

But first notice; there's the new heaven and new earth, the New Jerusalem, God dwelling with us, no more tears, no more death, no more sorrow, no more pain, and we'll get to drink of the fountain of the water of life, and I'm looking forward to that, aren't you? However, if we choose not to avail ourselves of these things that are freely given, because of the sacrifice of Christ, the only alternative is to be forever cursed, and **verse 8** tells us plainly the reasons why.

After John describes the joys of the earth made new, for those who will be privileged to be there, he goes on to say, “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

Most of the time when we read things like this, we have a tendency to think that these things will never happen to me; “I’m a Christian”, and we ignore the warnings and apply them to others, but God wants us to understand that He’s speaking to us this morning, as well as those who may now be involved in these kind of things, because He doesn’t want anyone to have to suffer the second death. In other words, just because we may be serving the Lord with a clear conscience today does not mean that there is no danger that we might fall into one of these eight sins tomorrow or some time in the future. These eight warnings are words of warning for professed Christians not to become involved in, and also a warning to the worldly person to change their course or suffer the consequences.

If these 8 warnings are viewed properly they aren’t negative at all, but positive. God wants us to know how to avoid the lake of fire and the second death! He doesn’t tell us these things to try to scare us into heaven, but to give us the facts so we can make an intelligent choice, and because He loves us and He doesn’t want us to wake up in the wrong resurrection.

The first of these eight warnings are to those who are “fearful.” There are only two other places in the New Testament that use this particular Greek word and both are in the gospels and refer to the time when Jesus calmed the sea, but we only need to read one since they’re basically the same. In **Mark 4:40**, Jesus said to his disciples, “Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith?”

Now there may have been cause for some fear here, after all they were just about to go under, yet there was no reason for the particular kind of fear they were experiencing. The verse we just read defines this kind of fear as being “faithless”, or a fear that is caused by having no faith in the One who was in the boat with them. When we’re going through some kind of crisis, it’s easy to forget that God is near, isn’t it? But that doesn’t have to be the case, and it shouldn’t be. At this point the disciples should have found some comfort in the fact that the One who created the sea was right there sleeping with His head on a pillow in the back of the boat, but instead they had no faith to believe that Jesus could save them.

This word “fearful” in **Revelation 21:8** is not a fear of our own weakness, or even the fear of the power of Satan and his evil host. It’s not a fear of falling into temptation, or a fear of dishonoring the truth. All these kinds of fear only drive us to the Lord for help. The kind of fear brought out here in this verse is a fear that is connected to unbelief; a fear to trust

God and venture out upon His promises; a fear that He will not fulfill that which He has declared.

You might not think so, but this was the kind of fear the disciples had as their boat was about to sink. The One who created the sea they floated upon was on board, and they had no faith in Him. And because they had no faith they forgot momentarily that He was within calling distance. Only after they did all they could do to save themselves, then they turned to Christ. Can you relate to their experience this morning? How many times have you been in trouble and didn't have the presence of mind to call upon the Lord right at first? How many times have you tried to row yourself to the safety of the shore when it finally dawned upon you that you were getting nowhere fast? How many times have you tried to bail out your boat before realizing your case was hopeless without divine intervention?

The disciples were in a panic, and it was dark, and they couldn't see Jesus, and when He didn't answer their call for help right away, their panic became even more intense. Now understand, Jesus was worn out from the day's activities and He was in a deep sleep. Even though He was God, He was human and shared our physical limitations. But finally He woke up, but only after they cried out, "Lord save us, we perish." And I want to tell you something friends; Jesus will always hear a call for help like that. But notice, even after their plea for help, the disciples took hold of the oars once again and made a last desperate effort, when Jesus rises and lifts His hand and says to the angry sea, "Peace, be still." And no sooner does He utter those words than the storm ceases, the waves sink down, the clouds roll away, the stars begin to light up the night sky, and the boat rests upon a quiet sea. That's when Jesus turned to His disciples and said, "Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith?"

There were other boats on the sea at the time and they all witnessed this miracle, and they began to whisper among themselves, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" And if we had been there, I'm sure we would have said the same thing, don't you think?

Now I want to bring out an important point here. This might seem strange to you, but it wasn't Jesus who calmed the storm as you might suppose. And you say, "What! Of course it was Jesus." But I tell you no, it wasn't, and it's important for us to understand this, because it has something to do with our own salvation. Let me read something from ***The Desire of Ages, page 336.***

"When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. **(Now why do you suppose that was? It was because, unlike the disciples, He had faith in His Heavenly Father. It goes on)** But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the 'Master of

earth and sea and sky' that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, 'I can of Mine own self do nothing.' John 5:30. He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God (**that is, God the Father, and then these important words**) As Jesus rested by faith in the Father's care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour."

Think of the many times the disciples performed miracles in the name of Jesus. It wasn't in their own power that those miracles were performed, but faith in the Power of the Saviour. Are you listening? because what I'm about to say is extremely important. Just as it was the power of the Father working through the faith of Jesus to calm the storm, so it is the power of Jesus working through our faith that will calm the storms of life as they break upon us. Doesn't that shed light upon the meaning of **Revelation 14:12** where it says the saints will have, "The faith of Jesus?" Jesus had faith that His Father would work through Him, and we must have the faith of Jesus so He can work through us.

Notice what it says in **John 14:10**. Jesus said to Philip, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in me, he doeth the works." And so, we would do well to remember that the way the Father worked through Jesus, is the way Jesus works through us.

The next warning is for those who are "unbelieving." According to the meaning of this word in the Greek, an unbeliever is an "infidel", or again, someone who is faithless and does not believe the inspiration of the Scriptures. There are many today who call themselves followers of Christ, but disbelieve the inspiration of all the Bible; or they pick and choose what's inspired and what isn't. And by the way, there are many professed Adventists today that pick and choose what's inspired in the Spirit of Prophecy writings; a very dangerous position to take. And even if they say they believe every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, that's not true unless there is action to show they believe, because doesn't James tell us that it's not the hearers of the word, but the doers of it that will be justified? Doesn't he also say, "faith without works is dead"? And didn't Jesus say, "by their fruit ye shall know them"? You see, we can claim to be Christians, but unless we have faith to believe that God means what He says, and that He will do what He says and follow that up by action, we are no better than an infidel who disbelieves the Bible in its entirety. Unless we put God's word into practice "we shall have our part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone and suffer the second death."

The third warning is for "the abominable." The word abominable means, "To stink; to be disgusted; to detest; or to abhor, especially when connected to idolatry." In short, whatever is an object of extreme hatred to God is an abomination, and when you begin

to look up all the references to the word in the Bible, you have to come to the conclusion that disobedience of any kind is abominable to God. Sin of any kind is an abomination because God hates it. Sin caused war in heaven, the crucifixion of Jesus, and a whole lot of suffering all through the ages, and so yes, it's abominable to God, and if we are connected to it, we are also abominable.

Notice what it says in **Proverbs 15:8, 9**, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loves him that follows after righteousness."

The unacceptable sacrifices of Cain and Saul come to mind here, because neither of these men did what the Lord commanded, did they? The way of the wicked is an abomination because it's the way of disobedience; it's the way of the flesh; it's doing things my way instead of God's way. According to **Revelation 17:4, 5** it's the mother of harlots that's holding a golden cup in her hand full of abominations, and if we are involved in any of these eight warnings, then we are abominable and belong to her and will receive of her plagues.

The fourth warning is to "murderers." In a physical sense, the word murderers means "criminal or intentional homicide." I would say that most people understand that it's wrong to purposely take a life, but how many people understand that hatred falls into the same category? Not too many! **1 John 3:15** says, "Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." And so, it's pretty important that we understand this, isn't it?

In the book ***Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, page 56*** it says, "The spirit of hate and revenge originated with Satan, and it led him to put to death the Son of God."

And so, that's where it leads. We need to understand that anger and hate is sin! And when we do these things we are guilty of crucifying the Son of God afresh, because Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Again on **page 57** in ***Mount of Blessing*** it says, "God will hold us accountable for even a word spoken in contempt (**that is disrespect**) of one soul for whom Christ laid down His life."

Notice also what it says in **Leviticus 19:16-18**, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor (**In other words, if someone is on trial for his life, speak out if your testimony can help him**): I am the LORD. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any

wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. **(Sin needs to be rebuked, as hard as it may be, because it will cause a person to be lost)** Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD.”

If we love people the way we love ourselves, there’s a very good chance we will deal with them in a gentile and caring manner, don’t you think? If we do unto others the way we want them to do unto us, we will not be in violation of the verses we just read, and we will not be classified with murderers.

The fifth warning is to “whoremongers.” To be a whoremonger doesn’t sound like a very desirable thing to be, does it? Let me be as kind as I can here without being too explicit. A whoremonger is someone who lives without restraint, especially as it relates to sexual impurity. I think you will agree with me that the world, for the most part, is filled with whoremongers. But what about professed Christianity? Remember what Jesus said? If a man looks upon a woman to lust after her he has committed adultery with her already in his heart, and this applies to women too, by the way. The churches of today are filled with people who are unrestrained in thought as well as action, and the divorce rate is about equal to the world. Most Christians think they are “saved” even though they allow their minds to dwell upon every filthy thing imaginable, and if we find ourselves in this condition, we are whoremongers in every sense of the word.

In **2 Corinthians 10:5** the word of God tells us that we are to “bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”, and Paul also tells us that we are to have the “mind of Christ.” Did Christ allow His thoughts to run riot and have their own way? Absolutely not! Every unholy thought was instantly repelled. He was tempted to indulge in evil thoughts that were suggested and aroused by Satan, but He never did! And we don’t have to either.

In ***The Desire of Ages, page 123*** it says, “He (Christ) did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So may it be with us.”

Really? So may it be with me? Yes, but only if I am not fearful, unbelieving, abominable, or a murderer. Do you see? If we get a handle on the other things already mentioned, then we can also overcome being a whoremonger.

We need to understand that the warfare we’re engaged in is a battle for the mind! We can choose to think on evil, or we can choose to think on Christ and virtuous things. And I can already tell you that if we don’t remain in constant submission to Christ, we will think on evil, because that’s the natural inclination of our fallen human nature. Narrow is the way and straight is the gate that leads to life eternal, and few there be that find it, and I want to be one of the few, don’t you? But unless we use our God-given power and

choose to think righteous thoughts, we will end up on the broad road that leads to destruction, no question.

The sixth warning is to “sorcerers.” A sorcerer is someone who practices magic, which links it to spiritualism, and it makes you wonder how anyone who claims to be a Christian could use magic as a means of spreading the gospel as some are trying to do today. You can’t use the devil’s tools to build God’s house! It doesn’t work! Sooner or later the structure will collapse.

A sorcerer may also use drugs as a spell-giving potion in order to alter a person’s thinking. This is one of the meanings in the concordance. Mind altering drugs are a huge problem today, are they not? There’s been a lot on the news lately about opioid addiction, and it affects all classes of people, and those who sell these things would be classed as sorcerers, and those using them are involved in spiritualism.

One of the things that come to my mind here is some of the American Indian tribes who smoke peyote as a part of their tribal rituals and certain African tribes that drink concoctions that take them to “The spirit world.” Let me just say this; anyone who is experimenting with mind-altering drugs of any kind, which would include marijuana and alcohol, are dabbling in sorcery without even realizing it. However, and this is an even more important point to understand; the devil doesn’t need drugs to alter your mind! There are SDA ministers who use neuro-linguistic programming, a form of mind control, and a very tricky form of hypnosis to control their congregations. About 20 years ago there was a lot of talk about ministers being taught NLP at Andrews University and using these techniques on church members, and as far as I know, these things are still being practiced. Even sales people are taught these subtle techniques to get you to buy their products, and people don’t even realize they’re being manipulated. There’s a popular diet program that’s being promoted lately called “Positive Changes”, and how you can lose weight by changing your thought patterns through hypnosis. These kinds of things are all over the place today and they are all a form of mind control. Many professed Christians today speak in what they call an unknown tongue, which is a perversion of what Paul speaks about in **1 Corinthians 14**, and unknown even to God, because in reality they are making contact with evil spirits when they indulge in what they think is from God, and all these things are different forms of sorcery.

How about those who become involved in fanatical ideas? When a person becomes involved in fanaticism, who has changed their mind? Certainly not God! How about those who come to believe a lie? How about those who once rejoiced in the truth but have apostatized from it? Am I pushing sorcery too far? I don’t think so! The purpose of the devil, through sorcery, is to change your mind. To get you to think that black is white and

white is black. He practiced sorcery upon Eve in the Garden of Eden, didn't he? And he's still doing it today.

A warning to idolaters is number seven. According to the Bible, idolatry not only includes the worship of images as symbols of God, but the worship of false gods. And what are false gods? Anything that is not the true God! The first commandment says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The God of heaven is to take first place in our lives, and if we should be led away from serving the living God, we automatically become idolaters. We jump all over the Catholics for bowing down to graven images, but a visible image is not needed to practice idolatry.

Listen to this partial list of things that can become our idol. Our belly, our job, our family, our spouse, our home, our material things, our education, love of ease, sports, dress, and a boastful knowledge of truth to name a few. Sunday observance after light on the true Sabbath has come is the idol of many today. The mark of the beast is idol worship. Selfishness is idolatry! Why? Because people love self more than they love God. **Colossians 3:5** says covetousness is idolatry, because you want some thing more than you want God in your life. Do you see how idolatry is a warning to us as Christians and not just to the wicked?

In **Acts 17** when Paul came to "Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry," it says. What would he say today? It's not just a city given to idolatry today, but a whole world! In **1 Corinthians 10:14** Paul tells us what to do about idolatry; he says, "Flee from idolatry." Flee for your life from the inclination to give anything but God first place in your life.

The eighth and last warning is to "all liars." Lying can take on many different forms, can't it? Anything false is a lie. Anything deceitful is a lie. Hypocrisy is a lie! Acting is a lie. To transgress the law is to lie. Fiction is a lie. Exaggeration is a lie. To evade the truth is to lie. To fail to disclose the truth can be a lie.

Now you know what category many lawyers, politicians and used car salesmen fit into, and unfortunately many ministers. To be involved in any form of lying means that we are children of the father of lies. **Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4, page 336** says, "God is a God of sincerity and truth. The word of God is a book of truth. Jesus is a faithful and true witness. The church is the witness and ground of the truth. All the precepts of the Most High are true and righteous altogether. How, then, must prevarication (**or waffling**) and any exaggeration or deception appear in His sight? Even life itself should not be purchased with the price of falsehood. By a word or a nod the martyrs might have denied the truth and saved their lives. By consenting to cast a single grain of incense upon the idol altar they might have been saved from the rack, the scaffold, or the cross. But they refused to be false in word or deed, though life was the boon they would receive by so

doing. Imprisonment, torture, and death, with a clear conscience, were welcomed by them, rather than deliverance on condition of deception, falsehood, and apostasy.”

You know, I’ve often thought about Daniel’s three friends when the command was given to bow down and worship the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar. All Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have had to do is bend over and pretend they were tightening up their sandals to avoid being thrown into the fiery furnace, but no, they were going to be true to God no matter what, and a similar test will soon be coming to us in the form of bowing down to worship the image of the beast.

Let’s turn to **1 Corinthians 6:9, 10**, because God’s not through with warning us about the curses.

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” What does it mean to be unrighteous? **1 John 5:17** says, “All unrighteousness is sin, and **1 John 3:4** says, “Sin is the transgression of the law.” So that’s pretty simple, isn’t it? If we knowingly violate any one of the Ten Commandments, then we are classified as unrighteous and we will not be going to heaven unless there is true repentance, which is a sorrow for sin and a turning away from it.

Paul goes on to say, “Be not deceived: neither fornicators (**that’s sexual relations between unmarried persons which is running rampant today**), nor idolaters (**we already discussed that in Revelation 21**), nor adulterers (**I think we all know what that is, and that’s also running rampant**), nor effeminate (**now there’s one you might not know what it is. It’s a discrete way of saying homosexual, and includes pedophilia. It’s a terrible sickness that’s affecting more and more men than ever before**), nor abusers of themselves with mankind (**again, a discrete way of saying sodomite. These things fit right in with the LGBTQ community that we hear so much about lately. They want so desperately to be accepted as normal, and the liberal democratic party is doing everything in their power to make it seem normal, but it isn’t, and never will be, and I could say more, but I won’t**), Nor thieves (**thou shalt not steal**), nor covetous (**not being satisfied with what you have, but being desirous of more and more**), nor drunkards (**we already touched on that when we talked about sorcery**), nor revilers (**that would be an abuser, especially verbally**), nor extortioners (**or swindlers, cheats, and crooks**), shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

2 Timothy 3:1-5 is another place we could turn to learn about more things that would be considered curses, but we don’t have time. You can read that for yourself when you get the chance.

Friends, if we are going to “inherit all things” as we read in **Revelation 21:7**, then the things that are cursed cannot be a part of our lives! We must overcome these things, and

we can in the name, and the power, and the blood of Jesus. Let us not be fearful and unbelieving, but take hold of Jesus lest we perish. If we are going to walk the golden street of the Holy City and enjoy face to face communion with God in the earth made new, we must make Christ first and last and best in everything now. If we're going to quench our thirst at the fountain of the water of life in the hereafter, we must start drinking today! Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." And so I invite you to come and drink freely this morning, so that Christ will be in you "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

May we take the curses and blessings to heart and apply these truths to our own hearts and understand that the choice is ours to make. I pray that every one of us will be among that group that will soon have every tear wiped away for good, that we will never again experience the death of a loved one, never again experience sorrow, never cry again, and never again experience any more pain of any kind forever. The battle with evil that we must wage in order to receive our inheritance is well worth the effort, that I can tell you, and I hope what we've studied this morning will bring rich blessings to us as we take God at His word, for He is faithful to perform that which He has promised to do.