

# Covenant Curses

Excerpts from *Redemption By Jesus* by Roderick Graciano and Carlos Martinez

With regard to God's covenant, and as specified in Deuteronomy 28, *to be cursed* involves experiencing things like the following:

1. confusion, deception (moral and spiritual; Deut 28.20,28,36,64)
2. desolation, crop failure (Deut 28.18,23-24; 38-40)
3. madness (Deut 28. 28,34)
4. slavery (Deut 28.41,48,68)
5. hunger (Deut 28.48)
6. terror, dread (Deut 28.25,66-67)
7. restlessness (no rest; Deut 28.65)
8. alienation, enmity and hostility, defeat by enemies (Deut 28.25,54,56)
9. humiliation, taunting, no respect (Deut 28.37,50; cf. Jer 24.9)
10. deprivation (lack of all things; Deut 28.48)
11. hopelessness (no help, none to save; Deut 28.29,31)
12. removal from the land, scattering (Deut 28.21,63-64)
13. oppression, crushing, distress, robbery (Deut 28.29,33,53,57)
14. disease (bodily affliction and trauma; Deut 28.21-22,27,35,59-60)
15. thirst (Deut 28.48)
16. nakedness (Deut 28.48)
17. blindness in darkness at noon (Deut 28.28-29; Jer 15.9)
18. smiting, burning wrath of YHVH (Deut 28.22,28; 29.24-28)
19. yearning (for lost relationship; Deut 28.32)
20. despair of soul (Deut 28.65)
21. death ( מָוֹת , perishing, Deut 28.20,22,61,63 etc.; 30.18)

Of these consequences of accursedness, we see that of the sorrows numbered above, Jesus experienced the following:

6. terror (dread; Luk 22.44)
7. restlessness (no rest; Psa 22.2)
8. alienation, enmity and hostility (Psa 22.1-2,6-8; Mat 27.46; Mar 15.34; Heb 12.3)
9. humiliation, taunting (Isa 50.6; Mat 26.67-68; 27.28-31, 39-4; Mar 14.65; 15.17-20, 29-32; Luk 22.63-65; 23.11, 35-37; Joh 19.1-5; Heb 12.2; cf. Act 5.41)
10. deprivation (Joh 19.28)
11. hopelessness (no help, Psa 22.11)
12. removal from community (Isa 53.8; Luk 17.25; Heb 13.12-13)
13. oppression, crushing, distress, robbery (Psa 22.18; Isa 53.7-8; Mat 27.35; Luk 23.34; Joh 19.23-24)
14. disease (bodily affliction and trauma; Psa 22.14-17,24; Isa 53.5,10)
15. thirst (Psa 22.15; 69.21; Joh 19.28)
16. nakedness (Psa 22.18; Mat 27.35; Mar 15.24; Luk 23.34; Joh 19.24)
17. blindfolding, then darkness at noon (Mat 27.45; Mar 14.65; Luk 22.63-65)
18. smiting by God (Isa 53.4)
19. yearning (for previous relationship; Psa 22.19)
20. despair, anguish of soul (Isa 5.11; Mat 26.38)
21. death (Psa 22.15; Isa 53.8-9,12; Luk 23.46; Heb 2.9)

So, to say that Jesus became “a curse for us” (Gal 3.13), is to say that He experienced consequences of accursedness on our behalf, specifically consequences predicted by Moses and then repeated by Joshua when the Israelites ratified their covenant with God on the shoulders of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Deut 27.11-13; Jos 8.30-35). Those consequences culminated in death, which Jesus also experienced on our behalf, but His was not just *any* kind of death. People have asked, “If the divine purpose was that Jesus die for the sins of the world, couldn’t He have just died in his sleep? Why the gruesome death on the cross?” In answer, the Bible tell us that the Messiah had to suffer, and the suffering was (in part) so that He might experience accursedness on our behalf. Why He had to die *specifically on a cross* relates to this accursedness.

As we find in Galatians 3.13, the apostle Paul said that Jesus had become a curse for us specifically as indicated by His *death on a tree*. Paul was alluding to Deuteronomy 21.22-23 which describes the policy for dealing with the body of a person executed for “a

sin worthy of death.” The criminal could be hung on a tree as testimony that he was *cursed by God*. Thus, Joshua, just before he built the altar on Mount Ebal and read the blessings and the curses to the people, “hanged the [Canaanite] king of Ai on a tree until evening” (Jos 8.29) according to the instruction of Deuteronomy 21.23, as a gruesome but timely illustration to the people of what it looks like to fall under God’s curse. This context helps us understand that **Jesus became a curse for us in the ultimate degree**. That is, He experienced the consequences of *being cursed by God* to the fullest possible extent. Let us understand: Jesus was *not cursed by God*; rather, He voluntarily took upon Himself *the consequences of being cursed by God*, as though God were holding Him accountable for having committed sins worthy of death. Another way to say it is that by dying on a cross, Jesus “died a criminals death.”<sup>1</sup> By so doing He demonstrated that His death was not just on behalf of “righteous” people with their peccadilloes, but on behalf even of murderers and the very foremost of sinners (cf. Act 26.10; 1Ti 1.15), all of whom would perish Had he not taken our accursedness.

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Dylan in “Precious Angel.”