



Can Christians Be Cursed and Curse Others? Curses Series (Part III)

Mark 11:21: (NASB) *Being reminded, Peter said to him, Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you cursed has withered.*



The word “curse” is overused and under comprehended. Cursing can mean using words that are not acceptable to repeat in public. To curse can mean to call upon a perceived otherworldly power for the purpose of harming someone or something. Cursing can also mean the expression of great disdain and loathing for people or things. In Part II of our three-part Curses Series, we observed in great detail how to properly understand cursing, especially the curses of God in the Old Testament. In this episode we will dive into the New Testament uses of “curse” to find the differences and similarities with the Old Testament. Several people in the New Testament used “curses,” including Jesus. What does it all mean to us here and now? Are curses real today, and if so, what do we do?



**Episode 1195:
Are Curses Real?
Curses Series (Part I)**

Examining the complexity of curses and whether they are real or not



**Episode 1196:
Am I Living Under a Generational
Curse? Curses Series (Part II)**

Curses in family bloodlines and the bigger context of Old Testament curses

recap
recap

A brief recap from Part II:

Some people claim the Old Testament proves generational curses, where actions of our ancestors influence our success or failure. We examined how God warned of generational CONSEQUENCES from sin to His chosen people, Israel, at a specific time for a specific purpose. The idea of us having to go back and atone for the sins of our ancestors is not biblical. Finally, we critically analyzed the specific uses of several of the Hebrew words translated “curse” into English.

Previewing this episode in the New Testament, we find the apostles taught nothing about generational curses and never warned the church about having to undo curses from our bloodline.

We were surprised to learn that the belief in curses is planet-wide - it is all around us. For example, let’s start in Africa with a reading from an article called “Curses Attack in an Impartial Way,” by Patrick N. Wachege from the University of Nairobi.

Curses around the world, Africa

- *In many African communities, the fear of curses and cursing is real. A curse is a disturbing anguish in life and living. It does not matter whether one is a leader; educated or uneducated; restless youth or an elder; medicine man or a soothsayer; sorcerer or witch; polygamist or monogamist; celibate churchmen and women, or laity; man endowed with virility...or woman blessed with... fruitfulness; pauper or billionaire; a peace maker or a peace breaker. The underlying factor is that of curse and cursing phobia. It is a fear which is so*



indispensable among many an African's life and living that even the Western or Eastern mainstream world religions have not managed to annihilate it. It is such an incredible phenomenon whose anxiety and wonder remains.

They are basically saying, you can run but you can't hide, no matter who you are. This is disturbing.

In Parts I and II, we discussed two important words that appear in the definitions of the several biblical words translated as curse:

Execrate
/'eksə,kṛāt/
verb: feel or express great loathing for

Imprecate
/'imprə,kāt/
verb: a spoken curse

As we begin our journey through the New Testament, we will start with some Old Testament Jewish thinking regarding curses. This will connect Jewish and Christian applications of “curses.”



The Apostle Paul had just been questioned by both Pharisees and Sadducees. The end result was a heated argument between the two sects about the teaching of the resurrection that Paul had focused on. The dissension was so great that Roman soldiers escorted Paul out for fear they would kill him.

Our account begins the next morning:

Acts 23:12-14: (KJV) ¹²And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves **under a curse <332>**, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. ¹⁴And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, we have bound ourselves **under a great curse <331>**, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

They were literally on a murder mission.

Under a curse: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #332 *anathematizō*;
to declare or vow under penalty of execration

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1. To devote to destruction
2. To declare one's self liable to the severest divine penalties

Under a great curse: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #331 *anathema*;
a (religious) ban or (concretely) excommunicated (thing or person)

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1. A thing set up or laid by in order to be kept
2. A thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed, and if an animal, to be slain; therefore, a person or thing doomed to destruction

The words mean something offered to a god or THE God, so it therefore can no longer be used. We use the word anathema in English to mean something or someone vehemently disliked or shunned. We want to put it away from us. Example: Disrespecting the Bible is anathema to me. In the Catholic church, it means the formal act of excommunicating a person.

Here certain Jews in Acts vowed not to eat or drink until they killed Paul. They put a curse upon themselves. This sounds passionately harsh, similar to King Saul in 1 Samuel 14 we discussed in our last episode.

By God's providence, the Apostle Paul's nephew heard this and reported it to the Roman guard, as the plot would involve the guards to bring Paul to the place of ambush:

Acts 23:19-21: (KJV) ¹⁹Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? ²⁰And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. ²¹But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have **bound <332>** themselves **with an oath <332>**, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

Bound...with an oath - here we have *anathematizō* again, the verb meaning to declare one's self liable to the severest divine penalties; devoted to destruction.

They vowed to destroy Paul. The captain of the Roman guard assembled 200 armed men and animals for Paul's escape and protection in order for him to be brought before Felix the Governor. They were prepared to subvert the ambush and protect Paul because he was a Roman citizen.



What worked here? Swearing passionate promises or God's providence?

Paul was rescued from the angry mob. We have to wonder how many of the men were loyal to their self-imposed curse and literally starved themselves to death. We tend to think the oath was exaggerated in the heat of the moment. When getting to the point of swearing passionate promises, we are attempting to legitimize our emotions.

Here is another example of dramatic thinking and proclaiming - the Apostle Peter's denial of Jesus:

Matthew 26:73-75: (NASB) ⁷³A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away. ⁷⁴Then he began to **curse <2653>** and swear, I do not know the man! And immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.



Curse: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2653 *katanathematizō*; to imprecate: curse

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: to declare one's self-labile to the severest divine penalties

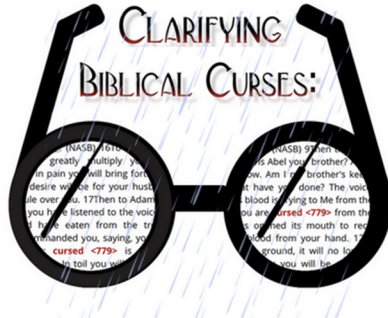
Then he began to curse - *katanathematizō* is kata + *anathematizō* - it is stronger and more dramatic than *anathema* or *anathematizō*. It is only used once in the Bible, here in Matthew 26:74.

Peter's emotional reaction had no place in the life of a Christian. When we read, *he began to curse*, we may think he began to say bad words, but it was much deeper than that. He was making an over-the-top emotional promise before God - *I do not know the man* - in other words: May I be liable to whatever God brings. This was an effort to legitimize his emotion. He went out and wept bitterly afterwards.



Please see the Bonus Material for details on all nine Greek words translated into English as “curse.”

So far, we have been looking at the words for *cursed* in the New Testament from a Jewish-thinking perspective. The teachings of Jesus are built upon Jewish thinking and Jewish teaching.



One dramatic application of a New Testament "curse" is about proclaiming one's position on an issue.

As Christians, we are to be above such drama and simply stand for God's will and righteousness through Jesus.

Be a person of conviction!

One thing is certain - whatever we do or feel, we should never carelessly promise anything before God.

How did curses fit into the teachings of Jesus? Did he ever curse anyone? Did he teach us to curse anyone?

The Old Testament was a foundation for the teachings of Jesus. Based on Part II of our series, we know that it did NOT give anyone the authority to curse others, and that curses from God were an expression from Him of loathing and disdain, often with consequences for sin attached. Why would we expect something different from Jesus in the New Testament when it is built upon the Old Testament?

While we might think the fear of curses is limited to only remote villages where Christianity is not prevalent, it is very much alive in places like the United States. This next reading is from an article in the Washington Post about taking rocks from the Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania.

 **Curses around the world, Gettysburg**

- *An unnamed man returned three small stones that he and his wife had picked up 10 or 11 years ago. Fairly quickly after that visit, he said, “Our lives fell apart. My wife took my son and walked out on me. I lost my house and the majority of what I owned and ended up in jail for nine years. My now ex-wife has fared no better. She has been plagued with health problems and other issues.” He goes on to say that after he was released from prison, he searched through boxes of his belongings his mother had saved for him. That was where he found the three souvenirs from Gettysburg. He recalled reading somewhere that they were cursed. “I’m sorry that we had taken them,” he wrote.*



There are many curse legends like this here in the United States, including taking lava rocks from Hawaii and rocks from the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona.



My husband and I recently moved and within a week the dryer stopped working, the bathroom sink clogged, the shower wouldn't stop dripping and the toilet overflowed! My husband blurted out, "This place is cursed!" Of course, it isn't, and I knew what he meant, but the idea is so engrained in our culture, that we instinctively attribute anything that goes wrong to a curse.



Doing so is disrespectful to the Heavenly Father.

Let's focus now on the teachings of Jesus. Jesus caused an uproar saying he came from the Father and that those who came to him would have a river of living water flow from them.

The Pharisees were upset and questioned their representatives who had been listening:

John 7:45-49: (NASB) ⁴⁵The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, Why did you not bring him? ⁴⁶The officers answered, never has a man spoken the way this man speaks (they noticed Jesus was different and did not bring him.) ⁴⁷The Pharisees then answered them, you have not also been led astray, have you? ⁴⁸No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in him, has he? ⁴⁹But this crowd which does not know the Law is **accursed** <1944>. (This is a loose reference to Deuteronomy 27 from Part II.)

Accursed: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1944 *epikataratos*; imprecated, that is, execrable

execrable
/'eksəkrəb(ə)l/
extremely bad or unpleasant.
adjective:

The Greek word here is a combination of words:

epa = upon + kataratos = cursed,
thus "under a curse, doomed to punishment"

This crowd...is accursed - the Pharisees had contempt for anyone who should have known what the Law said - the Pharisees' version of what the Law said. It is like they are saying: "This Sabbath-breaker could not be the Messiah. Whoever is 'falling for' what Jesus is teaching is ignorant. God relies on US to teach the people. If you do not listen to US, then you are (cursed) separated from God."

The Pharisees were referring to the Jews under the Law. Of course, there were the consequences for not obeying the Law, but they grossly misrepresented this. This clearly exposed the Pharisees as the egocentric group that they were. To look at their fellow Jews (their sheep), those whom



they were called upon to shepherd, and label them loathed and rejected of God speaks volumes about their sense of entitlement, for they were also NOT following the Law.

The Pharisees would have debates and try to trap Jesus. But he would always speak the Law correctly to them, and they could not answer. They felt they were above all the people and called them *accursed* because they were not following the Law in the way they were. The Pharisees expressed this word (*epikataratos*) for curse in the New Testament toward the average individual in the Jewish community.

Accursed: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1944 *epikataratos*; imprecated that is execrable



Check out our CQ Kids video:
WHO WERE THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES?
christianquestions.com/youtube

Let's look at the teachings of Jesus and how he used words for curse in the New Testament.

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount instructs us as to how to handle those who wish us serious harm:

Matthew 5:43-45: (KJV) ⁴³Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. ⁴⁴But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that **curse** <2672> you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; ⁴⁵That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

This is also quoted in **Luke 6:28**.

Curse: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2672 *kataraoimai*; to execrate; by analogy to doom

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: to curse, doom, imprecate evil upon

Jesus said, *Ye have heard it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy* - the commandment was never taught to hate your enemy. This is what the Pharisees turned it into. We are to love, bless, do good and pray for our enemies.

Bless them that curse you - the construction of this Greek word - *kataraoimai* - means to literally call a curse down upon someone. The idea is to invoke evil on someone by appealing to a supernatural power to inflict harm. This shows that humans can try to curse us - the actual magical curse, hex or jinx. What do we make of this?



There are those who will not look kindly upon us, but Jesus tells us four things - love, bless, pray and do good to them. The way people deal with experiences depends on their culture, where they come from, tradition, and what they are taught. This will affect the way they express their disdain. For some people it can go as far as wishing evil on someone and saying, "I want you



to step on the cracks of the sidewalk or walk under every ladder and break your leg.” When someone is acting this way towards us, Jesus makes the point by saying, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

Jesus leaves NO room for wishing for or planning for harm to ANYONE.

Jesus answered the Pharisees when they complained about his disciples going against the Law by eating with unwashed hands:

Matthew 15:3-4: (KJV) ³*But he answered and said unto them, why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, saying, honour thy father and mother: and, he that **curseth** <2551> father or mother, let him die the death. (This is also quoted in Mark 7:10.)*

Curseth: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #2551 *kakologeō*; to revile

To revile means to criticize in an insulting manner. While this word is not as deep as the words for loathing, it certainly is in the same family. Jesus reminds all of us of the godliness of respect and to honor our father and mother. It was a serious crime if parents were reviled or criticized.



My wife and I had the responsibility and privilege of having three of our parents live with us in their later years. For my parents, they were out of state in a situation where they were neglected by someone who was supposed to be caring for them. Many are not in the situation to care for parents in their home but there are ways to respect and be responsible for elderly parents. As the scripture said, we are to honor our father and mother.

So far, we have not seen any examples of Jesus or the apostles cursing anyone in the way we would think of cursing today - like a magical spell.



What about the cursing of the fig tree in **Mark 11:12-24**? This uses the Greek word *kataraoimai* meaning to literally call a curse down from heaven upon someone or something.

Mark 11:12-14: (NASB) ¹²*On the next day, when they had left Bethany, he became hungry. ¹³Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if perhaps he would find anything on it; and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴He said to it, May no one ever eat fruit from you again! And his disciples were listening.*

Mark 11:19-23: (NASB) ¹⁹*When evening came, they would go out of the city. ²⁰As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. ²¹Being reminded, Peter said to him, Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you **cursed** <2672> has withered. ²²And Jesus answered saying to them, have faith in God. ²³Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.*

Curse: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #2672 *kataraoimai*; to execrate; by analogy to doom

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon: to curse, doom, imprecate evil upon



May no one ever eat fruit from you again!



The fig tree symbolically represents the nation of Israel. Jesus, by the power of God's spirit within him, withered that tree. Why? It was not even the season for figs! The previous day, he had victoriously ridden into Jerusalem. All seemed poised for victory; there were literally thousands of people out there shouting, *Hosanna to the son of David*. Less than a week later, the cry was, *Crucify him, crucify him!* Jesus was graphically (through the fig tree) showing the nation of Israel that it did have life (as the fig tree had leaves), but it was not producing fruit, and so it would wither in the future. This small miracle was proclaiming a big prophecy of strong consequences!

This was by the miraculous power of God's spirit - there are a lot of things Jesus could do because of who he was. We do not get the same power - we cannot read people's hearts. We cannot raise people from the dead. We are to follow in his footsteps but do not have his feet.

We would agree this is a real "curse" as we know it today, but we must keep it in context and recognize its purpose was an example; it was NOT for evil. This curse was a consequence issued by God's justice.

Jesus' final reference to curses in his earthly ministry was the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. Note the specific time period in which it takes place:

Matthew 25:31-33: (NASB) ³¹But when the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him; and he will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³and he will put the sheep on his right, and the goats on the left.



Sheep, goats and the final judgment

There is a lot of detail to the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats that just dropping in here while talking about curses will not explain. Let's discuss a little about the time period. This takes place after everyone is resurrected in the kingdom, at the end of the 1,000 years of time when Satan is bound and the world is rehabilitated. This parable describes the END part of the Day of Judgment, which is, of course, a period of time and not just a 24-hour day. The sheep and goats symbolically describe a final separation, a final judgment of those who ultimately reject God.

Matthew 25:41-42: (NASB) ⁴¹Then he will also say to those on his left, *Depart from me, **accursed** <2672> ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;* ⁴²*for I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink;*

Accursed here is *kataraomai* - to call down a curse from a supernatural power.

The "loathed" in this verse are those, who after resurrection and reconciliation, have chosen to be disobedient and to follow the treachery of Satan. They choose death, utter destruction - to forfeit life and be separated from God. Yes, that is a "curse" - a consequence from God. What better symbol of destruction is there than that of *fire*?

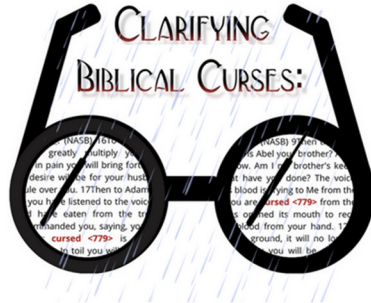


Hellfire is how many Christian denominations vilify God. Only sinful men could come up with this heinous scenario. They distort and misrepresent God.



Episode 1021, 1024 and 1027
Is the Hell of Christian Tradition
Taught in the Bible? (Parts I, II and III)

Understanding the TRUTH of the hellfire teaching



Jesus was specific when it came to curses. Bless, do not curse - build up and do not loathe even your enemies. His only usage of the loathing of curses was related to those who rejected God. First the Jewish nation (who would later find favor) and those who rejected his resurrection and their reconciliation.

Jesus used curses specifically, and in a godly fashion, to represent consequences.

It is important to realize the care with which Jesus used the words for curse. It was without emotion - just God's judgment.

What are the Apostle Paul's messages and interpretations regarding curses? Does he curse others?

The Apostle Paul had a lot to say about curses. His instruction proves invaluable to our clear understanding of what they are and how they apply to Christians. We will begin with Paul and his unmistakable love for the Jewish nation and their role in God's plan of salvation through Jesus.

Let's first check in on curses in Brazil.



Curses around the world, Brazil

- Brooms have power in Brazil. It is said that if someone accidentally sweeps over your feet with a broom, you will remain single for the rest of your life. Immediately spitting on the broom is said to break the curse! But if you receive an unwanted visitor, putting the broom behind the front door will make them leave.*



It is fascinating to see how a tradition or superstition takes hold and becomes a part of culture without us questioning it. We are here to examine and question these superstitions from the standpoint of Scripture.

Paul's loyalty to his Jewish brethren is inspiring, to the point of feeling like giving up his own favor and privilege for the sake of those who were estranged from God:

Romans 9:1-3: (NASB) *¹I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the holy spirit, ²that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed <331>, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,*



Accursed: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #331 *anathema*; a (religious) ban or (concretely) excommunicated (thing or person)

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: a thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed

Anathema, meaning excommunicated - away from God. This is a poetic and emotional response. Paul was being dramatic, trying to get their attention. He was saying something like: "I would throw myself off a mountain for your sake."

The Sadducees used this word, *anathema*, earlier, when they bound themselves to an oath to destroy Paul. Here Paul is using an exaggeration to emphasize a point. There is a great difference between the two uses of *anathema*.

Paul acknowledged the Jewish nation's disloyalty to the Law and the resulting fair, just consequences from God:

Galatians 3:10-14: (NASB) ¹⁰For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a **curse <2671>**; for it is written, **cursed <1944>** is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them (quoted from Deuteronomy 27:26).

For it is written... - in Part II of this Curses Series, we talked about Deuteronomy 27 with its long list of curses and blessings. Here, Paul reminds the Jewish Christians that when their ancestors did not listen, they suffered the fair, just consequences - being conquered by Rome - that God had warned about way back in Deuteronomy 27.

Curse: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2671 *katara*; imprecation, execration: - curse (-d -ing)

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: an execration, imprecation, curse

Accursed: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1944 *epikataratos*; imprecated that is execrable

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: accursed, execrable, exposed to divine vengeance, lying under God's curse

He then used the fact that the nation of Israel is cursed (*loathed*) by God to build the case for faith:

¹¹Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for the righteous man shall live by faith. ¹²However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, he who practices them shall live by them.

If faith, not works, can bring us back to favor with God, then faith in what?

¹³Christ redeemed us from the **curse <2671>** of the Law, having become a **curse <2671>** for us—for it is written, **cursed <1944>** is everyone who hangs on a tree. ¹⁴in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the spirit through faith.

Part II of this Curses Series spoke of this in detail. The Law brought difficulty, because man, in his imperfection, could not fulfill the Law. Paul tells us that Jesus took the loathing and disdain of God for sinful humanity upon himself. This is the basis of our faith. He bought the right to be the promised seed of Abraham.

Remember, the promise to Abraham said *in thee and thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3)*. Paul used the word *cursed* to show God's loathing of sin. This loathing, or separation from God, is always a fair, just consequence for sin.



Jesus is identified as that promised seed!

The promised Seed of Abraham

Galatians 3:16: (NASB) *Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, and to seeds, as referring to many, but rather to one, and to your seed, that is, Christ.*

Paul also spoke of curses relating to his Christian brethren. Being *accursed* appears at the end of his first letter to the Corinthians. He had strongly corrected them in this epistle but did it with love and authority.

The ending of his letter reflects that authority and firmness:

1 Corinthians 16:21-22: (NASB) ²¹*The greeting is in my own hand - Paul.* ²²*If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be **accursed** <331>. Maranatha.*

Maranatha is an exclamation of the approaching divine judgment. It is often translated, *Our Lord comes!* Or, *Oh Lord come!*



Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: Our Lord cometh or will come

The King James Version leaves the word untranslated:

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

(Source: Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible) This is not said in the way of a wish or imprecation, but as a prediction of what would certainly come upon them if they did not repent.

Paul is basically saying: If you do not love Jesus enough to follow the spiritual guidance I have put in front of you for your own well-being, there is nothing more I can do. Let Jesus judge you when he comes. You are in his hands now.

This is not a hex kind of curse - it is a separation from God due to poor choices. He is not cursing someone forever. And this does not mean we get to curse someone who we think does not love Jesus enough. That would be a misapplication of Scripture.

These incidents of seeming curses are all about the justice and consequences of God Almighty. There is nothing magical here; it is all about God's plan. It is not dramatic, but it IS scriptural.





In Galatians, Paul was again firm in his stance. This time it was in relation to the purity of the gospel:

Galatians 1:8-9: (NASB) ⁸*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be **accursed** <331>.* ⁹*As we have said before, even now I say again: if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be **accursed** <331>.*

This is *anathema* - separated out from God's favor; a person doomed to destruction. The Apostle Paul is warning to keep false teaching *out* of the gospel. He is very firm. He says if we engage in false teaching, the consequence from God will not put us in good standing with Him. Paul makes the point and repeats it.

The gospel is pure, and our responsibility is to maintain its purity. The consequence of not doing so is being pushed aside by God. Paul is clear - one who subverts the gospel in the name of Jesus becomes subject to God's judgment.

Paul expands this depth of this loathing (curse, execration) in the book of Hebrews with some of his most sober writing.

It goes deeply into the consequences of walking away from God after having been blessed with His holy spirit:

Hebrews 6:4-8: (NASB) ⁴*For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the holy spirit, ⁵and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the son of God and put him to open shame.*

If we walk away from having *tasted of the heavenly gift* and from having *been made partakers of the holy spirit*, it is impossible to come back. We have been so blessed, our minds have been so opened, we have been given God's very influence in our lives - to walk away from that is like rejecting and crucifying Jesus again.

It is an unrecoverable choice to reject Jesus and the gospel IF you have been begotten by God's holy spirit. Much of Christianity does not understand what "being begotten by God's holy spirit" means. Attending church on Sunday does not guarantee spirit begettal - there is a lot of emotion but not the serious, very sober consideration necessary to accept spirit begettal.



Paul then uses a striking example of the ground found useless for cultivating:

⁷*For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; ⁸but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being **cursed** <2671>, and it ends up being burned.*



Remember when we talked about the final judgment in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats? This is the same word meaning completely out of God's favor.

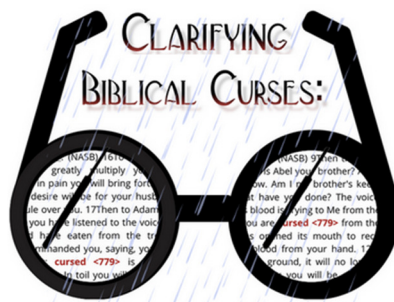
Curse: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2671 *katara*; imprecation, execration: - curse (-d -ing)

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: to being given up to barrenness (the allusion is to Genesis 3:17)

Execrate
/ˈɛksəˌkrɑːt/
verb: feel or express great loathing for

Imprecate
/ɪmˈprɛˌkɑːt/
verb: a spoken curse

God does not give His spirit to someone who cannot handle the responsibility. This is a deep and sobering consequence. We have to live up to the responsibilities we have if we accept His holy spirit in our lives. The deep consequence is what the Bible describes as *second death* in Revelation 21:8. It is not hellfire or eternal torment; the person just ceases to exist. There is no greater punishment than to not have life in the eternity of God.



Paul expresses the seriousness of curses, of loathing, by reminding us of their application to Israel rejecting the Law and Jesus. He also applies loathing to the brotherhood as a warning to stay pure and as a dire warning for those who would walk away from their enlightenment. *In all cases, curses are just and godly consequences, no more and no less.*

Seeing the depth and seriousness of God's curses should wake us up to the responsibilities of our Christian lives.

**What is the bottom line for us?
How should we as Christians handle the whole concept of curses?**

When facing all the evil and treacherous things in our world we need to cling to Christianity's true power. Being a Christian is far beyond loving Jesus, showing up for church and knowing a few Bible verses. True Christianity guides, protects and changes our lives through the power of God's spirit, which is a gift of grace from God through Jesus.

Haiti has been in the news so much lately. Let's take one final look at curses around the world, recognizing that we could have made an entire podcast episode highlighting the globe because this concept is so prevalent.

Curses around the world, Haiti

- *The day after at least 230,000 people lay dead and dying beneath the rubble from an earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010, American televangelist Pat Robertson famously stated the earthquake occurred because Haiti and its people are cursed. He said this was a result of a pact that the Haitian people made with the devil centuries ago to gain their freedom from the French.*



In 2021, another major earthquake and flooding caused devastation and the president of Haiti was assassinated. Over the years, the idea that Haiti is cursed in part because of its cultural and religious practices has proliferated, due in part to the religion known as Vodou, or Haitian Vodou. Haitian Vodou blends African spiritual beliefs with Catholicism. Today, many Haitian Protestants view Vodou as a satanic religion responsible for Haiti's underdevelopment, poverty, corruption and repeated natural disasters. A slave revolt in 1791 sparked the Haitian Revolution from the French after a Vodou spiritual ceremony. Enslaved Africans armed with machetes began beating drums, chanting, and marching from plantation to plantation, killing, looting, and burning the sugar cane fields. Beginning with 12,000 followers, the revolt quickly blossomed into the largest, bloodiest slave uprising in history. By the end of September, over a thousand plantations had been burned and hundreds of white people had been killed.

Of course, the issues with Haiti are much more complex involving racism, conquest, violence, military coups and political instability. It is a heinous misrepresentation of God to say that the people of Haiti are cursed.

For more on the tumultuous history of Haiti:

<https://origins.osu.edu/article/pact-devil-united-states-and-fate-modern-haiti>

<https://tif.ssrc.org/2010/02/18/haitis-pact-with-the-devil-some-haitians-believe-this-too/>

For more on Haitian Vodou:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haitian_Vodou

Let's finish this three-part series with some final questions:



Did the disciples of Jesus believe in generational curses? Is this shown in John 9?

John 9:1-3: (NASB) ¹As Jesus passed by, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind? ³Jesus answered, It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

What caused the blindness - the sin of the blind man or the sin of his parents? Does this show us that the disciples were thinking along the lines of a generational curse?

It is doubtful the disciples would have considered this a generational curse in the true sense of Exodus 20:5. The Jews of the time would have known of the consequence of sin - of not following the Law. Like Job's friends, many believed all suffering is the direct result of some personal sin. The blessings and consequences of that time were physical, having to do with land, possessions and health. In the New Testament with Christianity, we see promised spiritual blessings instead of physical ones.

While it is true that some afflictions are the direct results of personal sins, it is not always the case. Trials and afflictions are often permitted to test faithfulness and zeal, and to strengthen character.



Jesus explained that the blindness was permitted for the special purpose of manifesting the power of God through Christ in his recovery. This gave glory to God. All sin, sickness and death will eventually be eliminated, showing the glory of God.



Is the following an example of a New Testament curse placed by the Apostle Paul on the person named Bar-Jesus, also called Elymas?

Bar-Jesus was a Jewish magician and false prophet who was actively hindering the gospel message:

Acts 13:9-12: (NASB) ⁹But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the holy spirit, fixed his gaze on him, ¹⁰and said, You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? ¹¹Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time. And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. ¹²Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.

This was NOT a curse; rather, a miraculous judgment that showed the power of God over satanic influences. Paul would not allow the gospel to be hindered by such a man, and the holy spirit (God’s power and influence) provoked him to stop the evil so that Paul could continue his work. It sounds like Bar-Jesus was given a spiritual “time out” to sit and think about what he did! It reminds us of how the Apostle Paul himself was blinded for three days after seeing the resurrected Jesus, and he needed to rethink his life. This was actually a blessing, as Bar-Jesus could stop and consider what he was doing.

Bar-Jesus was given a "timeOut" because he was hindering the gospel.



Our decisions should be made with clear thinking, not with heated passion:

Matthew 5:34-37: (NASB) ³⁴But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. ³⁶Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷But let your statement be, yes, yes or no, no; anything beyond these is of evil.

Take a stand for truth and godly righteousness. Over-the-top emotions and dramatic oaths are not according to God’s will.

The damaging, loathing things we say are NOT magical curses; they are a result of sinful thoughts and words:

James 3:7-11: (NASB) ⁷For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. ⁸But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we **curse <2672>** men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth come



both blessing and **cursing <2671>**. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. ¹¹Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?

Curse: Strongs Exhaustive Concordance #2672 *kataraomai*; to execrate; by analogy to doom

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon: to curse, doom, imprecate evil upon

Curse: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #2671 *katara*; imprecation, execration: - curse (-d -ing)

The word curse here is *kataraomai* - calling down a supernatural power to inflict harm on someone. We must live up to the standards of being a Christian. We have no authority ever to be wishing evil on any level on anyone else - and in fact, we are charged with loving them and praying for them instead. This is difficult when we are wronged.

These things ought not to be this way - look at our calling, stand up, be mature, do the right thing. Think in a righteous way.



But is this not what the apostles tried to do? When insulted by others, they sought to harm those who hurt them.

Luke 9:54-56: (NASB) ⁵⁴When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them...⁵⁶and they went on to another village.

The disciples must have thought they could have such power under the weight of trial, but Jesus rebuked them. This was not an appropriate reaction.

On the contrary, when under the weight of trial or when being maligned, let us not see curses but the providence of God to move on:

James 5:10-11: (NASB) ¹⁰As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

inspiration@christianquestions.com



We received this in an email:

“...I’ve been cursed. I want to get back all the blessings that have been taken from me.”

We cannot look at the difficulties in our lives as curses. It is not a Christian approach.



I truly believe I am the most blessed person I know. God has blessed me much more than I could ever deserve. But in the light of that blessing, when we go back over several years of my life, this is what has happened:

My son was unfairly expelled from high school - we know it was unfair because the school board apologized years later.

A few years after that, our daughter at age 15 was raped.

A few years after that, our other daughter bought a condominium and it burned down, and she had to come live with us.



A while later, my wife who works at a bank, was robbed at gunpoint twice in 13 days by the same person and she suffered from PTSD.

The same daughter with the condominium got married, bought a house and a tree fell on it. She and her husband had to come live with us.

Then a tornado tore through our neighborhood, ripping up large trees and leaving it looking like a war zone. It required a great deal of cleanup.

Two years later, another tornado destroyed my office.

I am the most blessed person I know because God's hand and providence was in every one of those experiences, and we grew and we learned. By God's grace, we are here. When someone tells me they are cursed, I say, maybe God's providence is really blessing them but they are just not looking. We often get what we look for.

Do not look at difficulties in our lives as curses; this is not a Christian approach.



Are there real curses in our world, outside of what the Bible describes as loathing or separation from God?

Are there things that happen by the powers of darkness?

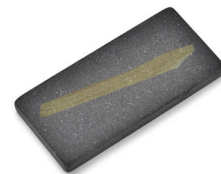
Absolutely! We need to always remember the power of Jesus thoroughly overrides demonic influence. We do not need to worry about these powers if we are following Jesus.

This powerful example is when Jesus cast out the demons from one man:

Mark 5:6-13: (NASB) ⁶Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before him; ⁷and shouting with a loud voice, he said, What business do we have with each other, Jesus, son of the Most High God? I implore you by God, do not torment me! ⁸For he had been saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit! ⁹And he was asking him, what is your name? And he said to him, My name is Legion; for we are many. ¹⁰And he began to implore him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. ¹²The demons implored him, saying, Send us into the swine so that we may enter them. ¹³Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

There were many demons here - hence the name *Legion*. Do not torment me - they beg Jesus to not "torment" them. The word for *torment* means "touchstone." These fallen angels were saying: Do not test us before the time (the time of judgment). Who is stronger in this event? Jesus.

Being in torments: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon a touchstone, which is a black siliceous stone used to test the purity of gold or silver by the color of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with either metal.



They begged him to not *send them out of the country*, meaning space or territory. Who is stronger? Jesus. Then he gave them *permission* to go into the swine. Who is running the show here? Jesus.



The point is that the powers of darkness are bigger than we are. However, they are NOT stronger than our Lord Jesus. He has the ultimate power. He showed it way back then as a human begotten by God's spirit. Imagine how powerful he is now in his glorified state!

We rely on the power of Jesus by using the tools God has given us to be safe and victorious as we face foes beyond our abilities:

Ephesians 6:10-12: (NASB) ¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

We are overmatched by Satan and his minions and can barely survive unless we put on the armor of God in a godly and righteous way. That is why we are told to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of HIS might. We need to arm ourselves with God's armor and He will protect us. This is how we avoid all of Satan's machinations.



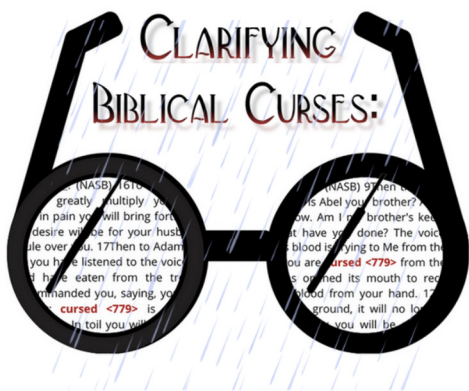
Check out our CQ Kids videos:
WHAT IS THE ARMOR OF GOD?
christianquestions.com/youtube

The end result of sin and curses:

Revelation 22:1-3: (NASB) ¹Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, ²in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³There will no longer be any **curse** <2652>; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his bond-servants will serve him;

Curse: Strongs Exhaustive Concordance #2652 *katanathema*; an imprecation: - curse

There will no longer be any curse - why? Because Jesus bought the human race! The life, death and resurrection of Jesus put it all back in order. What we will see when we look back at all the darkness humankind has had to go through is the *blessing* of being educated by these experiences. We will see life unfold eternally without the darkness and without the curse of sin.



- We have seen that in ALL of Scripture, there is NO evidence that humans are given the authority or power to curse others.
- Specific family lines are not cursed.
- When God "cursed" someone or something, it was an expression of His loathing for sin. There were always fair, just consequences attached to these loathings.
- Biblical prophecies of future consequences were not magical curses.
- Powerful, demonic forces exist that can influence humankind to do evil things. Living a life doing the will of God by following in the footsteps of Jesus is our best protection.

As Christians, let us hold to these truths and forcefully reject all other ideas.



*So, can Christians be cursed and curse others?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on October 4, 2021
Ep. 1198: Am I Passionate or Complacent About Jesus?

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

Bonus Material and Study Questions follow

The New Testament uses nine Greek words translated as “accursed,” “curse,” “cursed” or “cursing” in English.

Greek Word	Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance	Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon	Where Used	Notes
anathema (noun)	<p><331> from <394> a (religious) ban or (concretely) excommunicated (thing or person):—accused, anathema, curse, great</p> <p>Outline of biblical usage according to online Strong’s Concordance:</p> <p>1. a thing set up or laid by in order to be kept</p> <p>a. specifically, an offering resulting from a vow, which after being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of the temple, or put in some other conspicuous place</p> <p>2. a thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed, and if an animal, to be slain; therefore a person or thing doomed to destruction</p> <p>a. a curse</p> <p>b. a man accursed, devoted to the direst of woes</p>	<p>1. properly, a thing set up or laid by in order to be kept; specifically a votive offering, which after being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of his temple, or put in some other conspicuous place:</p> <p>2. a thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed, and, if an animal, to be slain [Leviticus 27:28, 29]; therefore a person or thing doomed to destruction, Joshua 6:17; Joshua 7:12, etc.; a thing abominable and detestable, an accursed thing</p>	<p>Six occurrences:</p> <p>1 Corinthians 12:3</p> <p>1 Corinthians 16:22 (twice)</p> <p>Galatians 1:8-9</p> <p>Romans 9:3</p> <p>Acts 23:14</p>	<p>The Apostle Paul uses this to mean “the expulsion of someone from the Christian community.”</p> <p>The most common modern usage is in secular contexts where it is used to mean something or someone that is detested, shunned or vehemently disliked.</p> <p>Example: “Disrespecting the Bible is anathema to me.”</p>
anathematizō (verb)	<p><332> from <331> to declare or vow under penalty of execration: - (bind under a) curse, bind with an oath.</p>	<p>To devote to destruction</p>	<p>Four occurrences:</p> <p>Mark 14:71</p> <p>Acts 23:12,14,21 (three times)</p>	
ara	<p><685> properly, prayer (as lifted to heaven) that is (by implication) imprecation: curse</p>	<p>1. a prayer, a supplication</p> <p>2. An imprecation, curse, malediction</p>	<p>One occurrence:</p> <p>Romans 3:14</p>	<p>Paul quotes from <u>Psalm 10:7</u> as part of a list of Psalms he uses to prove his point. The Hebrew of this is ‘ālâ <423>: an imprecation: - curse, cursing, execration, oath, swearing</p>
epikataratos	<p><1944> derivative of <2672> imprecated that is execrable: accursed</p>	<p>Accursed, execrable, exposed to divine vengeance, lying under God’s curse</p>	<p>Three occurrences:</p> <p>John 7:49</p> <p>Galatians 3:10,13</p>	<p>epa = upon + <i>kataratos</i> = cursed, thus “under a curse, doomed to punishment”</p>
kakologeo	<p><2551> to revile: - curse, speak evil of</p>	<p>1. to speak evil of, revile, abuse</p> <p>2. to curse</p>	<p>Two occurrences:</p> <p>Matthew 15:4</p> <p>Mark 7:10</p>	

katanathema (noun)	<2652> from <2596> and <331> an imprecation: - curse	curse	<u>One occurrence:</u> Revelation 22:3	
katanathematizō (verb)	<2653> to imprecate: curse	to declare one's self-labile to the severest divine penalties	<u>One occurrence:</u> Matthew 26:74	Notice "curse" and "swear" are different. Swear <3660> means to affirm, to take on an oath; to swear by
katara	<2671> imprecation, execration: - curse(-d -ing)	to be under a curse, i.e., liable to the appointed penalty of a curse Re: Galatians 3:13: to redeem one exposed to the threatened penalty of a curse. One in whom the curse is exhibited, i.e., undergoing the appointed penalty of cursing. Re: Hebrews 6:8: to being given up to barrenness (the allusion to Genesis 3:17) Re: 2 Peter 2:14: men worthy of execration	<u>Five occurrences:</u> Galatians 3:10,13 Hebrews 6:8 James 3:10 2 Peter 2:14	
kataraomai	<2672> - to execrate; by analogy to doom: curse	to curse, doom, imprecate evil upon	<u>Six occurrences:</u> Matthew 5:44 Luke 6:28 Romans 12:14 Mark 11:21 Matthew 25:41 James 3:9,10	From kata = down + ara = a prayer, a curse) literally is to curse down and so to call a curse down upon someone. The idea is to imprecate (invoke) evil on someone saying that a supernatural power will cause harm to someone or something. A solemn appeal to a supernatural power to inflict harm on someone or something.

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1197: Can Christians be Cursed and Curse Others? Curses Series (Part III)

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1197-christian-curse/>

See:  CQ Rewind
SHOW NOTES

1. Explain how the words *anathema*, *anathematizō* *anathematizo* and *katanathematizō* are used in Acts 23 and Matthew 26. Why do you think dramatically declaring one's position on an issue is not necessarily good for a Christian to do? (See Acts 23:12-21, Matthew 26:73-75)
2. How does the Pharisees' use of "accursed" (*epikataratos*) expose their egocentricity? What should have been their role to the Jewish people? (See John 7:45-49)
3. What did Jesus teach us about how we are supposed to feel about our neighbors and our enemies (those who curse us)? How do you find empathy for those persecuting you rather than just feeling the persecution? (See Matthew 5:43-45)
4. How did the withering of the fig tree represent Israel's reception of Jesus as their Messiah? Did it (Israel or the fig tree) produce the fruit Jesus was seeking? (See Mark 11:12-14, 19-23)
5. In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, why does God separate the "accursed" (*kataraomai*) goats from the sheep? Why are the "goats" cursed? Does God send the goats into hellfire as a result of the curse? Does this curse represent a desire to bring harm, or are they for a different purpose? (See Matthew 25:31-33, 41-42, Episode 760)
6. How does the Apostle Paul use curses in his writings to the Jews and new Christians? Are the curses calling down "over the top" evil or harm? Explain. (See Galatians 3:10-14, Deuteronomy 27, Genesis 22:18, 1 Corinthians 16:21-22, Galatians 1:8-9, Hebrews 6:4-8)
7. How does Matthew 5 tell us to make our decisions or state our positions on issues? (See Matthew 5:34-37)
8. Do we have authority to wish evil, or curse, anyone? In James 3, what is "a restless evil and full of deadly poison"? What is this verse telling us? How did James and John violate this thought? (See James 3:7-11, 5:10-11, Luke 9:54-56)
9. If we have difficulties in our lives, are we cursed? Can we fight curses brought on by the spiritual powers of darkness? What are our options? (See Mark 5:6-13, Ephesians 6:10-12, Revelation 22:1-3)
10. Have you ever been afraid of curses? Has studying the biblical applications in the New Testament changed your thinking?