

# Critical Issues Commentary

A Biblically based commentary on current issues that impact you

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teachers with access to millions of hearers.

## Error # 1 — Who Pronounces the Curse? God or the Devil?

We must first be very clear — God is in charge. The danger in the blessing and cursing teaching is that Christians will get the idea that life is a dualistic battle between them and the devil with God sitting on the sidelines, waiting to see if we get the right revelations, and make the right utterances to scare off the devil. If not, he simply lets the devil put curses on us because hundreds of years ago, unknown to us, pagan idolaters had done their thing on the property we now own. Current faithfulness to God would not help in such a case. Likewise if a great-grandfather was a notorious sinner, we may be under an unknown curse and the devil has every right to attack us, whether or not we are Christian. This view clearly gets us away from the central theme of the Old and New Testaments, which is our relationship with God.

The Old Testament told us that individuals, no matter what their background, could turn to God and be blessed, and that without uttering statements to the devil to break his curses. For example, in **Ezekiel 18**: “*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?’ ‘As I live,’ declares the Lord God, ‘you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore’*” (**Ezekiel 18:2,3**). The rest of this chapter clearly teaches that if a wicked man has a son who chooses not to walk in his father’s ways, that son will live and will not be punished for his father’s sins. Ironically, Marilyn Hickey quotes this saying from Jeremiah 31:29, either unaware of or ignoring the passage in Ezekiel.<sup>8</sup> Are we blessed because of our relationship with God? — or only if we have revelation knowledge and tell the devil the right things to get him to leave?

## Are Christians Cursed? by Bob DeWaay

“*Thus says the Lord, ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the Lord. . . Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose trust is the Lord.’*” (**Jeremiah 17:5,7**)

“*Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’. . . Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’*” (**Matthew 25:34,41**)

Popular television faith teacher Marilyn Hickey has published a book entitled *Break the Generation Curse* that claims to help Christians break curses that are coming upon them.<sup>1</sup> It begins with a testimony from a Christian farm family who discovered that their many woes, from poverty to weeds, were caused by spiritual curses. First, the family experienced failure after failure until revelation knowledge informed them that their land was cursed. Why? Because generations before Native Americans had worshiped other gods there.<sup>2</sup> Second, Leviticus 19:19 showed them that God, “wanted man to know how important it was to maintain strict segregation of everything, even His cattle.”<sup>3</sup> It turns out that their ranch was also cursed because they owned cross-bred cattle.

According to Hickey, human problems such as fear, feet trouble, headaches, migraines, heart disease, inferiority complex, insomnia, multiple sclerosis, negative self-image, nervous condition, strokes, poverty, rebellious children, unsaved family, worries, etc.

are curses.<sup>4</sup> Through the course of the book, nearly every conceivable human difficulty is attributed to a curse that could be broken if we just knew what was going on. For example, “Have you ever seen a family where every single one of them wears glasses? From the father and mother down to the littlest child, all are wearing glasses, and usually those really thick-lensed kind. Those poor people are under a curse, and they need to be set free from it!”<sup>5</sup> Given her parameters, there are seemingly few Christians who are not cursed. Not only that, they can be so without apparent reason: “Most Christians really try to walk in the light of God’s Word, and they often check on themselves to see if they’re sinning against God in some way or another. Then you realize that you can come under a curse for which you are personally not responsible but have inherited, either through your ancestors or through someone else. That’s bad news!”<sup>6</sup>

The questionable answer, of course, is the knowledge offered by Hickey’s book. We determine by revelation where the curse came from and break it by “binding” Satan and invoking the blood and name of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> Although the book contains some good and helpful advice, such as repentance of bitterness and forgiveness of others, the central thesis of the book is in error and is likely to cause more harm than good.

This article will explore four areas of error and confused theology found in *Break the Generation Curse*. Please note that this teaching is not confined to this one book. Similar, unbiblical teachings about blessings and cursings were taught twenty five years ago. They confused and mislead many Christians then. It is saddening that the error continues and is being promoted through the electronic media by

Yet modern teachers like Hickey claim that sincere Christians who have not forsaken the Lord are afflicted with these curses and that the devil is the operative party. This is an inexcusable misuse of the scriptures. She tells us how to get rid of the curses: "We say 'Hey devil, wait a minute! My generation doesn't belong to you because I bind you in the name of Jesus, and you're not going to do it!'"<sup>9</sup> Where in the Bible does it teach us to talk to the devil in this manner?<sup>10</sup> Sadly, though the Bible everywhere teaches that faith and trust in God is the key issue, many Christians end up spending much of their time talking to Satan instead of God, as if he were the one who held their destiny in his hands. Do we not believe that God is sovereignly in control of His own universe? "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (**James 4:7**). This says nothing about repeating utterances that supposedly bind Satan.

Marilyn Hickey has nothing to say about the idea of covenant faithfulness in the matter of blessings and cursings. Strangely, though quoting from sections of scripture where God promises blessings for covenant keepers and curses on covenant breakers she makes the unwarranted assumption that the devil is the operative party in the curses. She references the covenant blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 27 and 28, but then goes immediately to Matthew 12:29 to "prove" that the devil brings the curse and needs to be "bound."<sup>11</sup> This approach ignores the obvious issue of covenant faithfulness to God. Notice how the Lord describes the matter:

*Then the Lord will single him out for adversity from all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the law. Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the Lord has afflicted it, will say, 'All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning*

*waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.' And all the nations shall say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?' Then men shall say, 'Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.' (**Deuteronomy 29:21-25**).*

This says nothing about the devil. In **Deuteronomy 28:20**, which introduces an extended section detailing the curses, it says: "*The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me.*" Dozens of times in the following verses of Deuteronomy 28 it says that "The Lord will smite. . ." Clearly Deuteronomy teaches that God's covenant people, Israel, would be the subject of these curses for one reason, "*because you have forsaken Me.*" Clearly it teaches that God himself would bring the subsequent curses.

## Error #2

### Confusion of Covenants

The testimony that sets the stage for the rest of the book makes some amazing claims. The couple claimed that God showed them that it was a sin to have cross-bred cattle, based on Leviticus 19:19 (though they never quoted the last half of the verse). This verse says: "*You are to keep My statutes. You shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together.*" Clearly if Christians are cursed because they own cross-bred cattle they are also cursed if they wear cotton-polyester blend clothing or if they transgress any other of the six hundred and some Levitical laws. Ironically, Paul cursed those who

**commanded** that Christians must keep these laws: "*As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed*" (**Galatians 1:9**). The false gospel that was being received by the Galatians was that they must be under the law (**Galatians 4:21**). Among the false teachings coming to them, was that they must be circumcised: "*Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you*" (**Galatians 5:2**). Yet the Levitical law commanded circumcision: "*And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised*" (**Leviticus 12:3**).

Circumcision was more central to the Jewish understanding of the Old Covenant than was cross-bred cattle, yet Paul said that to demand that Gentile converts to Christianity be circumcised was preaching a false gospel and was tantamount to going back into bondage. How then can we teach Christians that maladies and difficulties that may come upon them do so because they have broken one of the laws of a covenant they are no longer under? How could they ever figure out which law was causing the curse? This teaching is clearly unbiblical and cannot result in anything but confusion and bondage. Peter said, "*Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?*" (**Acts 15:10**).

## Error #3

### Logical Fallacies

*Break the Generation Curse* makes unwarranted assumptions and often commits logical fallacies that ultimately lead to erroneous conclusions. For example, Marilyn Hickey claims that Noah's son Canaan committed a homosexual act with his father.<sup>12</sup> She then says that Sodom and Gomorrah were descendants of Canaan and makes the following conclusion: "From whom did the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah descend? They descended from Canaan. Canaan was the first homosexual, and that's what the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were

involved in.”<sup>13</sup> It is true that homosexual behavior is sinful. But jumping from the questionable premise that Canaan was a homosexual, which the Bible does not say, and considering him the source of Sodom and Gomorrah’s behavior is problematic.

The logical fallacy is to conclude, without warrant, that if one thing preceded another it must have been its cause. This ignores the obvious fact that there is more than one possible cause for the same observed effect. The logic behind the blessing and cursing teaching goes like this:

A) Curses are caused by sin.

B) These things are listed in the Bible as curses.

C) Conclusion: If any of these things are happening to you it is because you are cursed because of your sin — or that of one of your ancestors, or of some other person — thus giving the devil a right to put a curse on you.

The way it plays out in this twisted theology is to assume that sick people are cursed. The reasoning is that because God said that if Israel broke covenant and rejected God, He would bring diseases and physical maladies upon them (**Deuteronomy 28:59-60**), then every person today who is sick or deformed must have sinned against God or be under a curse from their ancestors. The disciples of Jesus were subject to this kind of thinking: “*And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him’*” (**John 9:2,3**).

The fact is that the whole human race is cursed because of sin. The curse of sin is death. Freedom from eternal death is found in the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. To compare one person to another and to assume that the one who has more sicknesses, weaknesses or is poorer is under a curse because of sin and the better off one is not is wrong. Even the most healthy, wealthy and happy person who lives until a ripe, old age is

cursed by sin and will end up in hell if he does not turn to Christ.

Ironically, this thinking is even applied to Job: “It looks like Job’s weakness was already known to the devil because he was able to exploit that weakness so thoroughly. Job’s own fearfulness contributed to the virulence of the curse the devil brought on him.”<sup>14</sup> However, the book of Job nowhere says that Job was cursed. It does, however, say he was blessed (**Job 1:10 & 42:12**). The mistake his comforters made was to compare their situation with his when things were at their worst for Job, and assume that they were in God’s favor and Job was not. But this is the very logical fallacy we have been discussing. Just because calamity can be the result of the curse of God on covenant breakers, it does not logically follow that every person with adversity in his life is particularly cursed by God. Job was not, he was blessed. Listen to Jesus’ words: “*And He answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans [those killed by Herod - Luke 13:1] were greater sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish’*” (**Luke 13:2,3**). We dare not jump to these kind of conclusions.

#### Error # 4

#### A Pagan World View

The blessing and cursing teaching, divorced as it is in Hickey’s book from the Biblical understanding of covenant relationship with a sovereign, loving God, falls into a pagan view of reality. The pagans were always running about trying to pacify fickle “gods” who were wont to wreck havoc on humans for no apparent reason. They invoked religious formulas and incantations thinking that saying the “magic” words or making the right sacrifice would appease the “gods” and perhaps forestall calamity.

In the midst of this world of superstition, the true Creator God chose to reveal himself to Abraham and his descendants, not only to bless him, but all the families of the earth: “*And*

*I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* (**Genesis 12:2,3**). Blessing was based on God’s sovereign choice of Abraham and the ensuing relationship. The key to walking in blessing was covenant faithfulness. This faithfulness is anchored in the faithfulness of God.

This is a stark contrast to the pagan idea that multiple gods had to be appeased based on discovering secret knowledge. God loves His people and promises that in all things, He will never leave us nor forsake us.<sup>15</sup> When Balaam went to put an occult curse on Israel, he could not do so because God had blessed them: “*Behold, I have received a command to bless; When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it. He has not observed misfortune in Jacob; Nor has He seen trouble in Israel; The Lord his God is with him, And the shout of a king is among them”* (**Numbers 23:20,21**). Why could not Balaam curse Israel? — because they were perfectly keeping every law and their fathers and grandfathers had not sinned and started generational curses? Hardly. These were the same obstinate people who were continually failing God. They were blessed because of God and their relationship with Him, not because of their own worthiness. “*Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians”* (**Exodus 6:7**). What God asked of them was that they stay faithful to Him, as in a marriage relationship. When they did, they were blessed. When they left the Lord for other gods, they came under a curse.

For the pagans, the issues were fate and knowledge. For God’s people the issues are faith and trust. Sadly, modern teachers like Marilyn Hickey have missed this point and directed Christians away from the truth. For example, she quotes Hosea 4:6 out of context, “*My people are destroyed [perish]*

for lack of knowledge. . .” She uses this to illustrate how a family with a genetic deficiency that led to early blindness was “perishing,” because of lack of knowledge about generational curses and her teachings about how to break them.<sup>16</sup> This shows little regard for God’s Word. In Hosea, what knowledge were the people lacking? — “Listen to the word of the Lord, O sons of Israel, For the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land” (**Hosea 4:1**). **They did not know God!** The Bible sees faithfulness and knowledge of God as the key issue. Modern faith teachers pervert this into a semi-pagan idea: that devils bring maladies into the lives of Christians because they lack special revelation knowledge that they have to get from supposed “anointed” teachers. Genetic weaknesses are seen as spiritual curses coming on Christians, to destroy them because they don’t have knowledge of teachings (such as verbally binding Satan) that, ironically, are found nowhere in the Bible.

This can only lead to confusion. If one considers all the possible sources of curses — ancestors, genetics, previous property owners, having unwittingly broken one of the Old Testament Laws, having made a wrong utterance (like Job supposedly did), or simply being poor — how could anyone ever have assurance that another curse was not just around the corner. Hickey even asserts that having unsaved loved ones is a curse.<sup>17</sup> As far as I can see it, according to her standards every Christian is cursed. Are we to suppose that if we only had access to the unique spiritual knowledge to which Hickey and her cohorts claim to be privy, we could always be totally healthy, have no genetic weaknesses, always be wealthy, and every family member or other loved one would be saved? All this based on making utterances to the devil that are informed by special revelation knowledge? Of course, even if one achieved this exalted status, he or she could hardly rest secure, for another curse could be just

around the corner.

## The Real Issue

I began this article with some passages of scripture that show what the real heart of the matter is. Those who put their hope and trust in God are blessed (**Jeremiah 17:5**). Those who put their trust in man are cursed (**Jeremiah 17:7**). There are two distinct eternal destinies waiting for those who are either blessed or cursed — heaven or hell. The issue is not between us and the devil, with special knowledge tipping the scales one way or the other. The issue is between humans and God. Will we love, trust, believe, and follow God with our whole heart? If so, we are blessed, whether rich or poor, sick or healthy, from a happy family ancestry, or from a long line of notorious sinners. God shows no partiality. He will bless, for all eternity, those who put their trust in Him by believing upon Jesus Christ who became a curse that we might inherit (not earn) the blessings of Abraham (**Galatians 3:13,14**).

### End Notes

1. Marilyn Hickey, *Break the Generation Curse*, (Denver: Marilyn Hickey Ministries, 1988).
2. Ibid. 10,11.
3. Ibid. 7; citing Leviticus 19:19.
4. Ibid., 137-155.
5. Ibid. 46.
6. Ibid. 15
7. Ibid. 40.
8. Ibid. 86.
9. Ibid. 27.
10. I address the issue of “Binding and Loosing” in Issues 1 & 2 of Critical Issues Commentary, April and May of 1992; available by request.
11. Op. Cit. Hickey, 26.
12. Ibid. 19.
13. Ibid. 20.
14. Ibid. 93.
15. Hebrews 13:5
16. Op. Cit. 78,79.
17. Ibid. 154.

## Audio Tape Available

- ☞ Message by Bob DeWaay
- ☞ “**The Sins of the Fathers**”
- ☞ Issue — What do the verses about “visiting the iniquities of the fathers to the third and fourth generation” mean?
- ☞ Cost — \$4.00; Send check to Critical Issues Commentary in enclosed envelope and request the tape.

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