

Deuteronomy 28:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:

Analysis

The promise 'the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail' uses imagery of leadership versus subordination. 'Above only, and... not beneath' emphasizes superiority and blessing. This isn't promising arrogant domination but covenantal precedence—Israel was to be God's showcase nation, demonstrating the benefits of knowing and serving the true God. The condition is explicit: 'if that thou hearken unto the commandments... observe and do them.' The promise is certain but not unconditional. Christ, as the ultimate obedient Son, is supremely 'head' (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22), and believers share His exalted status (Ephesians 2:6).

Historical Context

Israel's headship was realized during Solomon's reign when surrounding nations sought wisdom and alliance (1 Kings 10:1-13, 23-24). However, Israel more often experienced subjugation: Egyptian slavery, Philistine oppression, Assyrian/Babylonian exile, Persian/Greek/Roman domination. Their disobedience brought the promised reversal—becoming 'tail' rather than 'head.' The prophets longed for Israel's restoration to covenant blessing (Isaiah 60-62). In Christ, the New Israel (the Church) is exalted above spiritual principalities and powers, though not promised temporal political dominance.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How should spiritual 'headship' in Christ shape your self-perception and service to others?
2. What evidence of being 'above only' (spiritual blessing and authority) versus 'beneath' (defeated by sin) appears in your life?
3. How can you live in the reality of your exalted status in Christ without arrogance or worldly triumphalism?

Interlinear Text

וְהִי יְתִיבָה	לִבְנֵב	לִבְנֵב	וְנִתְבְּנֶב	יְהִי הָרָאשָׁ	אֵל אַל	לְרָאשָׁ	וְנִתְבְּנֶב	וְהִי יְתִיבָה
shall make	And the LORD	thee the head		H3808	and not the tail			H1961
H5414	H3068	H7218			H2180			
בְּכָל	לֹמַעַלְהָ	אֵל	תְּהִי הָרָאשָׁ		לֹמַעַלְהָ			
H7535	and thou shalt be above only	H3808	H1961		and thou shalt not be beneath			H4295
	H4605							
כִּי	תְּשִׁמְעֵ	אֵל	מִצְוֹתָה	יְהִי הָרָאשָׁ	אֱלֹהִים יְהִי			
H3588	if that thou hearken	H413	unto the commandments	And the LORD	thy God			
	H8085		H4687					
רְאֵשֶׁת	אֲנֵךְ	מִצְבָּה	לְשָׁמֶן	רְאֵשֶׁת	אֱלֹהִים יְהִי			
H834	H595	H6680	H3117	H8104	H6213			

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 28:1 (Word): And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

Philippians 1:27 (Parallel theme): Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

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