

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

וְנָתַתְּךָ	יְהוָה ה	לְרֹאשׁ	וְלֹא א	לְזֶנֶב ב	יְהוָה ית
shall make	And the LORD	thee the head	H3808	and not the tail	H1961
H5414	H3068	H7218		H2180	
כָּךְ	לִמָּעַל	וְלֹא א	תַּחְתִּי ה	לִמָּטָה	
H7535	and thou shalt be above only	H3808	H1961	and thou shalt not be beneath	
	H4605			H4295	
כִּי	תִשְׁמָע	אֵל	מִצְוֹתַי	יְהוָה ה	אֱלֹהֶיךָ
H3588	if that thou hearken	H413	unto the commandments	And the LORD	thy God
	H8085		H4687	H3068	H430
אֲשֶׁר	אֲנִי י	מִצְוָה	הַיּוֹם	לִשְׁמֹר	וּלַעֲשׂוֹת:
H834	H595	which I command	thee this day	to observe	and to do
		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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