

Joshua 8:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law.

Analysis

He read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings—Joshua fulfilled Moses' command (Deuteronomy 27:11-26, 31:9-13) to publicly proclaim the entire Torah at Shechem. The Hebrew word for 'blessings' (ברכוּת, berachot) and 'cursings' (קֶלְלוֹת, qelalot) emphasized covenant conditionality: obedience brings life, disobedience brings death (Deuteronomy 28).

This comprehensive reading occurred before 'all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers' (v. 35), democratizing God's word across all social boundaries. Unlike pagan religions with esoteric priest-only knowledge, Israel's covenant was publicly accessible. The pattern anticipates Ezra's law-reading (Nehemiah 8) and finds ultimate fulfillment in Christ, who embodies both blessing (becoming a curse for us, Galatians 3:13) and the complete Word made flesh (John 1:14).

Historical Context

The public reading of the law was required every seventh year at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:10-13). Joshua's immediate implementation upon entering the land established covenant faithfulness as the foundation for conquest. The ceremony at Shechem occurred between two mountains, creating a natural amphitheater where the entire assembly could hear—a remarkable feat before modern sound amplification.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why did God require public reading of both blessings and curses rather than emphasizing only the positive?
2. How does the inclusion of 'women, little ones, and strangers' in the assembly challenge cultural hierarchies in God's kingdom?
3. What does Joshua's immediate obedience to covenant renewal teach about prioritizing spiritual foundations before pursuing further victories?

Interlinear Text

וְאַפְרִי		כִּי	קְרָא	אֶת	כָּל	דְּבָרִים	בְּרָכָה:	הַתֹּוֹךְ	בְּרָכָה
And afterward	H3651	he read	H853	H3605	all the words	H1697	of the law	the blessings	
H310		H7121				H8451			H1293

וְכָל	וְכָל	וְכָל	וְכָל	וְכָל	וְכָל	וְכָל	וְכָל	וְכָל	וְכָל
and cursings	H3605	according to all that is written	H3789	בְּקָרְבָּן	בְּקָרְבָּן	בְּקָרְבָּן	בְּקָרְבָּן	בְּקָרְבָּן	בְּקָרְבָּן
H7045									

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 13:1 (Parallel theme): On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;