

PROMISES MADE, PROMISES KEPT

Can we trust God's promises?

Joshua 23:14 "You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed."

Willis had it all planned and he was excited. He had invited three of his pals to a sleepover at his house and he had everything ready for the party. His room was clean and the popcorn was popped. He wanted to be certain that everything was just right. Last Monday Willis sent his buddies invitations he made for the party. Each one of them said he was coming. It was almost seven o'clock and they should be arriving soon. Then the phone rang. It was Micky. He forgot that an extra basketball practice was added. He'd have to miss the party. Sorry! Within minutes the phone rang again. This time it was Joel. His family forgot to tell him they were invited out to eat. Sadly, he couldn't make it either. Sorry! By eight o'clock Willis hadn't heard from Randy. Willis knew he wasn't going to show up either. Each of his friends made a promise to come to Willis' party, and each one let him down. How would Willis feel the next time they promised him something? . . . No doubt he would have problems trusting them.

We all know that it is important to keep promises. Promises are related to trust. Those who keep their word are trustworthy. And those who don't keep a promise can't be trusted. Is there anyone who always keeps a promise? As we page through the books of the Bible, we find that it is filled with God's promises. In fact someone has tried counting them. How many were found? . . . 3,573 PROMISES! That's a lot of promises!

What would we think about God if we discovered that of those 3,573 promises, God only kept half of them? . . . What would we say about God now? . . . Then what would we think if we were told that God has and will keep all 3,573 promises? . . . Would we call God trustworthy? . . .

There are many people who want us to believe that we cannot trust God. They want us to think that God says things that are not true, that he has included some false stories in the Bible and that he doesn't keep his word. We know better. We have seen God's promises and we know we can hold him to his word.

In the Bible we discover many of God's wonderful promises. He promises to take care of us and to give us special wisdom. He promises to protect us and to help us overcome temptation. He promises peace and that he will listen to our prayers. He promises to send angels to watch over us and to give us restful sleep. God gave us these and many more promises, and he will keep every one of them.

There was a great Israelite hero named Joshua who wandered for forty years in the wilderness and then was called to lead God's people into the Promised Land. He knew that God always kept his promises. Listen to what Joshua said shortly before he died, *"You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed."* Joshua had total trust in God. He knew God always kept his promises.

But there are two more important promises God made. First, he promised, *"Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20), and second, he promised, *"I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am"* (John 14:3). We should rejoice knowing that the greatest promise keeper is our loving and faithful God!

IT'S ALL OR NOTHING

Can we choose the Bible parts we want to believe?

Revelation 22:19 "If anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll."

Do you like spelling class? . . . Some kids view spelling as a fun challenge. There's even a national spelling bee contest where children compete to be the best speller in the nation. Ananya Vinay of Fresno, California, won the 2017 Scripps National Spelling Bee. After 12 hours of spelling word after word, Ananya correctly spelled a word that beat her competitor. The word she spelled correctly was "marocain," a special kind of fabric. Her grand prize was \$40,000!

What would a teacher say if one day her students said they were only going to study the words they wanted to study? If they didn't like a word, they just ignored it and went on to the next one. That teacher would probably tell them to either learn the entire list or expect a failing grade. They have no right to take words away from the lists that are printed in the book.

Unfortunately, that is exactly what many people have done with the Bible, and especially the book of Genesis. There are many who would rather decide for themselves which parts of the Bible they want to believe and which parts they want to toss out. We need to respond, "That's not right. Either we accept all of the Bible or we really don't believe God's Word." Genesis is very important to keep untouched because it contains the foundation of everything that comes afterword. Every building needs a firm foundation on which to stand. If the foundation is weak, the building will collapse. That's the way it is with the first chapters of Genesis. If we remove that foundation from the Bible, the rest of God's Word collapses. Why is that?

Genesis is very important because in it we find the basics for our life and our values. There we find the details of how the universe was made. We see how God created everything out of nothing, and we learn that it was very good. In Genesis we also see how God made people different from the animals. We learn that people have souls that will live forever. Sadly, we also learn in those chapters about the first sin and the first mention of death. We find Adam and Eve in need of help because of their sins. But we also see God make a special promise to send a Savior who would forgive their sins by his death on the cross.

Genesis also explains why we live as God's children. It shows us God's plan for marriage and why we wear clothing. It also shows why we suffer from pains and troubles. Genesis shows us how families should live together, and why God sent a worldwide flood where God spared only Noah and his family. In Genesis we even learn about the rainbow promise to never destroy the world again by water.

In Revelation 22 God speaks to those who want to believe only the parts of the Bible they choose. He says, "*If anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.*" It's all or nothing. Either we take the entire Bible, including all of Genesis, as the inspired Word of God or in effect we toss it all aside. God does not let us believe what we want and throw out what doesn't suit us. Let's prepare to believe the whole Bible. We can begin with Genesis.