

THEISM

God is Faithful

A faithful person is steadfast, loyal, dedicated, and unchanging in his or her commitments and in relationships with others. Scripture characterizes God's relationship to others – whether of the world generally, of Israel in the Old Testament, or of Christians in the New Testament – as that of faithfulness. To say that God is faithful is to say that God is trustworthy. God can therefore be relied upon to keep his promises. Assurance that God keeps his promises regarding the future may be obtained by realizing that God kept promises he made in the past.

Here are but a few promises God made and kept in the Old Testament. God promised Adam that disobedience would result in death (Genesis 2:16-17), which it did (Genesis 5:5; Romans 5:12). After the great flood of Noah's time, God promised to put a rainbow in the sky as a reminder of God's promise that he would not again destroy the earth by water (Genesis 9:16-17), which he has kept. God promised Abraham that his descendents would be strangers in another land, but that they would thereafter inherit the land of Canaan (Genesis 15:13-16), which they did (Deuteronomy 7:7-9). God promised Sarah when she was old that she would have a son (Genesis 18:10), which she did (Genesis 21:1). God promised Abraham that his descendents would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens (Genesis 15:5), which they were (Deuteronomy 10:22). God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendents (Genesis 13:15; 17:8). That promise was renewed to Jacob (Genesis 28:13; 35:12), and to the sons of Jacob (Exodus 6:4-5; Leviticus 23:10; 25:38; Nehemiah 9:8). All these promises were fulfilled (Deuteronomy 9:5; Judges 2:1). "Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass" (Joshua 21:45). God promised the Israelites that obedience would result in prosperity and security (Deuteronomy 7:9-8:10; 28:1-14), but that disobedience would result in poverty and destruction (Deuteronomy 8:11-20; 28:15-45). And that's what happened on numerous occasions. God promised prosperity whenever the Israelites followed his word (Joshua 1:8). Whenever Israel turned from God, they were oppressed by other nations (e.g., Judges 2:11-15). God promised David that his descendents would be heirs to his throne (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 132:11) which they were. God promised that wickedness would bring the destruction of Israel (Amos 7:14-17; 9-10), which it did (2 Kings 17:6-24). God promised to preserve the righteous (Psalm 5:12; 34:17; 37:39; 58:11; Proverbs 12:21), but to destroy the wicked (Psalms 37:20, 28; 2 Chronicles 25:14-16). When the wicked repented they were then preserved, as was the city of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-10). When the righteous became wicked, they were then destroyed, as were the kingdoms of Israel (2 Kings 17:6-24) and Judah (2 Kings 24:1-25:21). God promised that the southern kingdom of Judah would go into Babylonian captivity for seventy years, but that they would afterward be returned to their native land (Jeremiah 29:10), which is what happened (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1, 2; 7:7; Nehemiah 7:6-66). God is always faithful in keeping his promises.

Because God keeps his promises, many have heralded his faithfulness. Moses declared that God "will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them" (Deuteronomy 4:31). He said, "Know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9). Moses encouraged the Israelites to "be strong and of good courage" because God "is the one who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6). Samuel declared that "the Lord will not forsake His people" (1 Samuel 12:22). The Psalmists often heralded God's mercy, truth, and faithfulness (Psalm 9:10;

37:28; 40:10; 89:1, 2, 5, 8, 24, 33; 92:2, 15; 98:3; 119:65, 90). Daniel and Nehemiah said that the Lord was a “great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments” (Daniel 9:4; Nehemiah 1:5). Hosea observed that “Judah still walks with God, Even with the Holy One who is faithful” (Hosea 11:12). Ezra observed that although “we were slaves, yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem” (Ezra 9:9).

God’s faithfulness may also be realized by the constancy of His character. That constancy gives assurance that He will remain forever faithful. There is no variation in His holiness, truth, love, goodness, mercy, etc. He changes not. He is forever the same (James 1:17). And so also is his son (Hebrews 13:8). We may therefore expect God to keep his word by fulfilling promises related to salvation through Jesus Christ. Some of these promises have already been fulfilled, while others have yet to be fulfilled. For example, God promised to send a savior (Genesis 3:15; 12:3; Deuteronomy 18:15-18), which he did (Matthew 1:21; Acts 3:22-25; Galatians 3:8; 29).

Just as Old Testament writers testified to the faithfulness of God, so also do New Testament authors. Paul wrote “For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?” (Romans 3:3) “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9). “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24). “The Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3:3). “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. . . . Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2:13, 19). The author of Hebrews wrote, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23). “Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19). John wrote, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Believing that God is faithful, Christians are thereby encouraged to live faithfully for the Lord. Because we realize that God has fulfilled some promises, we may be assured that in God’s own time he will fulfill other promises.

Some of God’s promises – because they are related to the final judgment day and eternal destiny – have not yet been fulfilled. To those who believe and obey, God promises eternal salvation (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38). However, to those who do not obey, God promises eternal destruction (Matthew 7:21-23; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). Christ promised to come again (John 14:3; see also Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). When Christ comes again, this present world will be burned up (2 Peter 3:7, 10). God has promised to judge the world through Christ (Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:16; 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15). Those that are in Christ will be ushered into the heavenly realm to be with God (1 Thessalonians 15-17), whereas those who are not in Christ will be condemned eternally to hell to be with Satan and his angels (1 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 10:26-29; Matthew 25:34-46). Since we may expect God to be faithful in keeping his word, should we not believe and obey, in order that we may receive God’s blessings rather than his curses.