



## Israel's Downfall

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

Joshua 23 - Judges 3



In the book of Joshua, we saw a faithful people receiving the blessings and protection of the almighty God. Sadly, it did not take long for the next generation of Israelites to forget their God and His wonderful promises. By their tragic example, we learn that we must each have our own personal relationship with God.

## Day #1: "If, then"

Joshua was a faithful leader for the Israelites. He followed God with his whole heart (Numbers 32:12) He knew that if the Lord was with them, there was absolutely nothing to fear (Numbers 14:5-9). Joshua did everything that the Lord had instructed (Joshua 11:15).

God had made an "If - then" promise to His people. **If** they followed His commandments, and worshipped only Him, **then** He would bless them (Deuteronomy 28:1-12). God promised to do miraculous things that no one had ever seen before (Exodus 34:10-11). During the time that Joshua was their leader, the Israelites followed God and obeyed His commands (Judges 2:7). God certainly kept His promise! God blessed His people by protecting them, handing their enemies over to them, and giving them a wonderful land to live in.

**The Lord fought on Israel's side, so Joshua and the Israelite army were able to capture these kings and take their land.** - Joshua 10:42 CEV

Think of an "If - then" promise that your parents might make with you. ("If you wash the car, then we will go for ice cream," or, "If you clean your room, then you can watch your favorite television show.") How would you feel if you did the *If* part, but your parents did not follow through with the *then* part? You would be very disappointed. People are human, and they might fail to follow through on a promise. But you can rest assured, God NEVER fails! He ALWAYS keeps His promises!

Parents, make an "If - then" promise with your child this week. As you do this activity, remember that God always keeps His promises (Joshua 23:14).

## Day #2: Final Words

Joshua had been a great leader, and lived to be 110 years old. Just before he died, he called the Israelite leaders together for his final words. Do you think someone's very

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last words would be important? Anyone who knows he is about to die will give his most important advice to the people he loves.

Joshua reminded the Israelites that God had kept all of His promises to them:

*The Lord has driven out great and powerful nations to make room for you. To this very day no one has been able to fight against you and win. One of you can chase a thousand away. **That's because the Lord your God fights for you, just as He promised He would.*** - Joshua 23:9-10

Joshua helped the people remember God's blessings. Remembering is very important to God (1 Chronicles 16:12). Then Joshua encouraged them to love and obey God:

*Be sure that you carefully obey everything written in the Book of the Law of Moses and do exactly what it says. Don't have anything to do with the nations that live around you. Don't worship their gods or pray to their idols or make promises in the names of their gods. Be as faithful to the Lord as you have always been.* - Joshua 23:6-8 CEV

1. Obey God's word.
2. Stay pure from the people around you.
3. Don't worship false Gods.
4. Remain faithful to God.

Joshua was faithful to the end. In his final words, Joshua encouraged His people to follow God.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us to, "Encourage each other and build each other up." This is God's instruction to us. Think of at least one way to give godly encouragement to someone *in the next 24 hours*. Maybe that means giving a Bible verse to a friend, or writing a thank you note to a teacher. Pray and ask God who that person should be. Look for opportunities to build others up every day.

## Day #3: Bumpy Road Ahead

What are some warning signs we see every day? (Stop signs, curvy road signs, "Beware of Dog" signs) These warnings are there to keep us safe. Take a minute to draw some warning signs. They can be real signs or ones you make up.

Along with encouragement, in his final words, Joshua also had a very big WARNING for the Israelites:


*But suppose you go and serve other gods. And you bow down to them. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you. You will quickly be destroyed. You will be removed from the good land He has given you.* - Joshua 23:16b

### Day #3 continued:

This warning was the other side of God's "If - then" promise to the Israelites (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). **If** they did NOT obey Him and follow only Him, **then** He would NOT protect them or bless them. They would be defeated by their enemies because God would not fight for them. They would lose their land because God would no longer hand it over to them (Joshua 23:13).


Let's look at it this way. Pretend you told your brother, "If you do my chores, I will give you a pack of gum." Your parents said it was fine with them, and both you and your brother agreed that this was a good promise. But what if your brother refused to do your chores? Would you still have to give him the gum? No. An "If - then" promise is *conditional*. That means that the first person has to do his or her part in order to receive what was promised.

It was the same with God's "If - then" promise. The Israelites had to do their part in order to receive God's blessing and protection. If they did NOT do their part, they would NOT receive God's blessing and protection. Because God loved His people, He gave them a clear warning about this.

 The next time you are riding in a car, point out all the warning signs you see. Discuss how each sign is there to protect you. Remember that God warned His people because He loved them.

## Day #4: Here Comes Trouble

The Bible says that the Israelites followed God as long as Joshua was alive. They even followed God as long as the leaders who served with Joshua were still alive.

 *The people of Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him - **those who had personally experienced all that the Lord had done for Israel.** - Joshua 24:31 NLT*

This generation remains one of the most blessed peoples of all time. But, tragically, the next generation did not follow God.


*Then those who were born after them grew up. **They didn't know the Lord.** They didn't know what he had done for Israel. They deserted the Lord, the God of their people. He had brought them out of Egypt. But now the people of Israel followed other gods and worshiped them. They served the gods of the nations that were around them. They made the Lord angry because they deserted Him. - Judges 2:10,12*

It took just **one generation** for the Israelites to go from living in God's incredible blessings to living in despair. We will see that this was the beginning of years and years of trouble for the Israelites.

We must look at what the difference was between these two generations. The Bible verses above tell us that Joshua's generation **knew God**. They had seen His miracles with their own eyes. They knew His power and received

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His promises. Just the opposite, the next generation **did not know God**. Even though their parents had been so close to God, this generation forgot what God had done for them. They did not think that time with God was important. They did not trust in the one, true God.

 The lesson for us is clear. We can't rely on our parent's or grandparent's relationship with God to make us right with God. Each one of us must have a personal relationship with God. Seek to know Him (Psalm 105:4). Pray and ask God to show Himself to you (Matthew 11:25-27). Read God's Word, the Bible (Psalm 119:11-16). The Bible promises that if you look for God with all your heart and soul, you will find Him (Deuteronomy 4:29).


## Day #5: In the World


Because the generation that followed Joshua did not value God and seek after Him, they were influenced by the people around them. In no time, the Israelites married the people of Canaan, the land God had given them. God had specifically warned them NOT to marry these people. In fact, God had clearly instructed the Israelites to destroy all the people they found in Canaan. These people worshipped false gods and the Lord knew that if the Israelites lived among these people, the Israelites would marry them and follow their false gods (Joshua 23:12-13). God wanted His people to be holy, to be set apart to worship Him (Leviticus 20:26).

Today, God still wants His people to be holy (1 Peter 2:9). However, followers of Christ are not instructed to be separated from other people. Instead, we are instructed to live among non-believers so that we can share God's truth with them (Acts 1:8). Because every Christian has the Holy Spirit living inside of him or her, we are able to remain pure even among people who are not pure.

Imagine for a moment, that you are visiting a large aquarium. And imagine that the aquarium keeper asks you if you want to go swimming inside a huge tank of fish! After he assures you that all the fish in the tank are perfectly safe, you enthusiastically agree to dive in. So, in you go. You are a person in a fishes' world. You can swim among the fish. However, you are not a fish. Just because you are in their world does not mean you will become a fish. You will not sprout fins and a tail. You will not eat fish food. You are **with** them. You are not **like** them.

In the same way, we are *in* the world, but we are not to become *like* the world. We are not to run after the praise of people, or seek to make our own name great. We were created to praise God and make Him known to others. The following verse is written to Christians:

 *But God chose you to be His people. You are royal priests. You are a holy nation. You are a people who belong to God. All of this is so that you can sing His praises. He brought you out of darkness into His wonderful light. - 1 Peter 2:9*

 Pray for God's grace to help you remain upright and godly in this world (Titus 2:12). Pray that you may be set apart to praise Him.