

They Could Not Drive Them Out

The beginning of Joshua chapter 15 explains the territory Joshua is dividing for the tribe of Judah obtained through their conquest and God's promise. At the end of the chapter, there is a subtle mention in the last verse that this was not completely accomplished. *"As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day"* (15:63). One could read past that verse and possibly miss the magnitude of what verse 63 means. However, it causes me to ask "why?"

I have known for many years that Jerusalem was not conquered until later by David, but why didn't the tribe of Judah conquer Jerusalem when it should have been given to them? We know that Jerusalem was a walled-fortified city and the Jebusites would use their forces to strongly defend their last territory. But Jericho was also walled and God gave them that city. What happened to the promise God gave them in chapter 3?

God was not giving an unconditional promise in Judges 3:10. It was conditioned on the faithful obedience of the people to God and to their leader Joshua. We know that the people were not entirely faithful and obedient. Achan sinned and kept back the spoils from the city of Jericho (Joshua 7). We also read that the tribe of Judah allowed the Jebusites to live with them as the verse says "to this day". Despite this, God renewed the promise to (eventually) drive out the non-Jews. Unfortunately, because of the stubbornness and disobedience of the people, the complete victory was delayed for several generations.

Perhaps we can gain a lesson from this one verse. We all have a tendency to press forward with God's plan until we decide we've done enough. We have done most of what it takes to live a Christian life, but perhaps Satan attacks us using a particular weakness. Is it something we can't dislodge from our lives? Have we allowed that sin to live there with us to this very day?

Maybe it's time for us to drive out the "Jebusites" that stand in our way of being complete in Christ.

For the elders,
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