

Judges 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

Analysis

And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

Benjamin's failure contrasts sharply with Judah's earlier temporary conquest (v. 8). Jerusalem sat on the border between Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15:8, 18:16, 28), creating shared responsibility that neither tribe fulfilled. The Jebusites' continued occupation "unto this day" (ad-hayyom hazzeh, הַיּוֹם מִצְדָּקָה עַד) indicates the author wrote before David's conquest (2 Samuel 5:6-9). This phrase appears throughout Scripture indicating events preceding the text's composition, providing chronological anchors.

Jerusalem's unconquered status symbolizes the incomplete conquest theme. Despite divine promises and initial victories, Israel failed to possess their full inheritance. The Jebusites' persistence resulted from Israel's failure, not God's—He had given the city (v. 8 shows it could be taken). This incomplete obedience created ongoing problems: foreign peoples remained stumbling blocks (Judges 2:3), leading to intermarriage (3:5-6) and idolatry (2:11-13).

Theologically, Jebusite Jerusalem awaited David, the man after God's own heart, to complete what others couldn't. This foreshadows how Christ accomplishes what all others fail to do. Where Israel's incomplete obedience left enemies unconquered,

Christ's perfect obedience achieves complete victory (Colossians 2:15). Jerusalem's conquest by David, its elevation as capital and temple site, and eventual importance in redemptive history all point toward the New Jerusalem where God dwells eternally with His people (Revelation 21:1-3).

Historical Context

Jerusalem's Jebusite period lasted from before Abraham (the city appears as Salem in Genesis 14:18) until David's conquest (c. 1003 BCE). Archaeological evidence shows continuous occupation of the southeastern ridge (City of David) from Bronze Age through biblical periods. The Jebusites fortified the city with massive walls and towers, with access to water via Warren's Shaft connecting to the Gihon Spring. These fortifications enabled the Jebusites to taunt David's forces: 'You will not come in here, but the blind and lame will ward you off' (2 Samuel 5:6).

The Jebusites' ethnic identity remains uncertain. They appear in Canaanite people lists (Genesis 15:21, Exodus 3:8) as one of seven nations to be displaced. Extra-biblical sources don't definitively identify them, though some scholars connect them to Hurrian populations. Their king Abdi-Heba appears in Amarna letters (14th century BCE) requesting Egyptian help against 'Apiru raiders, possibly indicating early Israelite activity.

Benjamin's failure had lasting consequences. Jebusite presence contributed to the tribal disunity characterizing the judges period. When David finally conquered Jerusalem, he wisely chose this border city as neutral capital, belonging to no tribe's heartland, helping unite north and south. This political wisdom, combined with spiritual significance (temple site), made Jerusalem central to Israel's identity. Yet even David's conquest proved temporary—Babylonian exile (586 BCE) and later destructions showed only the New Jerusalem represents permanent, unshakeable reality (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What unconquered 'Jebusites' in your spiritual life represent areas of persistent sin or compromise resulting from incomplete obedience?
2. How does David's later conquest of Jerusalem illustrate that God sometimes reserves certain victories for specific seasons or people?
3. What does the contrast between human failure (Benjamin) and divine faithfulness (eventual conquest under David) teach about sanctification?

Interlinear Text

וְאַתָּה	הַזֶּה	יְשֹׁוֹב	לֹא	בֵּיר	וְשָׁלֹם	וַיֵּשֶׁב	בַּיּוֹם	וְאַתָּה	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	וְאַתָּה	בְּנֵי	וְאַתָּה	בְּנֵי	
H853	but the Jebusites	dwell		Jerusalem		H3808	did not drive out		H3423			H854	And the children		
H2983		H3427		H3389				H2983			H1121			H1121	
And the children	of Benjamin	dwell	but the Jebusites												
H1121		H1144		H3427		H2983									
of Benjamin	Jerusalem	H5704	unto this day			H2088									
H1144		H3389				H3117									

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 15:63 (References Jerusalem): 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 unto this day.