

Judges 19:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.

Analysis

And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent—the consequences of delayed departure (v. 8) now materialized. **Jebus** (Yevus, יְבוּס) was Jerusalem's pre-Davidic name, controlled by the Jebusites until David's conquest (2 Samuel 5:6-9). The phrase **the day was far spent** (hayom rad me'od, תָּאַת יוֹם) literally means "the day had descended greatly," indicating late afternoon approaching sunset. This created an urgent decision: seek lodging immediately or continue in gathering darkness.

The **servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.** The servant's practical wisdom—**turn in** (nasurah-na, נָסַרְתָּנוּ) and lodge in the nearest city—represents sound judgment. Jebus was close, fortified, and available. However, the Levite's response (v. 12) reveals ethnic prejudice overriding prudence: he refused lodging in "a city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel," preferring to reach Gibeah, a Benjaminite city.

This exchange carries profound irony: the servant showed more wisdom than his master, and (as events proved) the "pagan" city would have been safer than the Israelite town. The Levite's assumption that covenant people necessarily meant safe people demonstrates the period's spiritual bankruptcy. The same error appears throughout Scripture—assuming religious identity guarantees righteousness. Jesus warned that many claiming "Lord, Lord" would hear "I never

knew you" (Matthew 7:21-23). Paul cautioned that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9:6). External covenant membership without heart transformation produces not safety but judgment.

Historical Context

Jebus/Jerusalem's location made it a natural stopping point on the route from Bethlehem north to the hill country of Ephraim. The city occupied a defensive ridge with steep valleys on three sides (Kidron, Tyropoeon, Hinnom), making it virtually impregnable until David's forces entered through the water shaft (2 Samuel 5:8). During the judges period, Jerusalem remained a Jebusite stronghold, never conquered despite Judah's partial victory mentioned in Judges 1:8 (which resulted in burning but not permanent occupation, as Judges 1:21 confirms).

The Jebusites were Canaanite people descended from Canaan, son of Ham (Genesis 10:16). They controlled Jerusalem from at least the Middle Bronze Age (c. 2000-1550 BCE) through the judges period (c. 1200-1050 BCE), approximately 1,000 years. The Amarna letters (14th century BCE) mention Urusalim (Jerusalem) and its king Abdi-Heba, confirming the city's Canaanite control during this era. Archaeological excavations have found Jebusite fortifications, pottery, and structures confirming continuous occupation.

The servant's practical suggestion contrasts with the Levite's ideological rigidity. While God commanded Israel to drive out the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 7:1-5), the immediate concern was safety for the night. The Levite's refusal reflects misplaced priorities—ethnic purity over wisdom, ideology over prudence. This same error characterized Pharisees who strained gnats while swallowing camels (Matthew 23:24), keeping ceremonial laws while violating justice and mercy.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. When have you made unwise decisions based on ideological assumptions about "safe" or "unsafe" people that proved incorrect?
2. How does this passage challenge the assumption that religious affiliation or covenant identity guarantees godliness or safety?
3. What does the servant's practical wisdom versus the Levite's poor judgment teach about humility in receiving counsel from those we consider subordinates?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר מְאֹד כִּי יְמִין וְמִן
H1992 H5973 And when they were by Jebus H2982 the day H3117 spent H7286 was far H3966 said H559

וְאַתָּה לְכָה אֶל הַעֲרָה וְאַתָּה לְכָה אֶל הַעֲרָה
and the servant H413 unto his master H113 H1980 H4994 I pray thee and let us turn in H5493

בָּהָרֶה וְאַל יְמִין עִיר אֶל
H413 into this city H5892 of the Jebusites H2983 H2063 and lodge H3885 H0

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