

THE JEBUSITES

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WHO WERE THE JEBUSITES?

- They are obviously mentioned in the Bible for a reason. Let’s try to understand why.
- Genesis chapter 10 is called “The Table of Nations”. It tells us what happened to the descendants of Noah. Everyone on earth, as you know, is a descendant of Noah. The Jebusites were descendants of Noah through Ham and Canaan (Gen. 10:15).
- When the Hebrew people came out of Egypt the Jebusites were one of seven nations inhabiting the Promised Land. All of them were “larger and stronger” than the Israelites, and all of them were evil (Deut. 7:1).
- God promised to send an angel before the Israelites to drive out all of these evil tribes, including the Jebusites (Ex. 33:2; 34:11).
- The Jebusites lived in the hill country (Nu. 13:29; Josh. 11:3), but their principle location was Jebus, which was also known as Jerusalem (Josh. 15:8; 18:28; Jud. 19:10; 1 Chron. 11:4).
- Jerusalem was once a holy city. In the time of Abraham it was called “Salem”. Melchizedek was their king and he was also the priest of “God Most High” (Gen. 14:18-20).
 - When Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings he paid tithes to Melchizedek.
 - This fact was mentioned in Heb. 7:11-22 to prove the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek over that of Aaron.
 - Since Jesus came from the tribe of Judah He could not be a priest according to Jewish Law. Instead He was a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. The priesthood of Melchizedek is therefore superior to that of Aaron (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6; 6:10).
- After the days of Melchizedek Jerusalem drifted into idolatry. Note that the Jebusites and the others were so evil that God commanded that they all destroyed. This was to be done so that the Israelites would not learn from them to worship their gods and do their detestable things (Deut. 20:17).
- Abraham lived around 1,900 B.C. and Joshua lived around 1,400 B.C. Thus about 500 years separated them. This was plenty of time for Jerusalem to become ungodly and corrupt.
- Illustrative of their corruption is a story from the period of the Judges. At that time a Levite, his concubine, and his servant didn’t want to spend the night in Jerusalem, because it was a Jebusite city. They continued on to Gibeah which was a city in Benjamin. Unfortunately, the Benjamites had become as wicked as the Jebusites. These evil men raped the Levite’s concubine until she died (Judges 19:9-30). It seems they learned this wickedness from the Jebusites.
 - Lot’s two daughters had children from an incestuous relationship with their father (Gen. 19:30-38). They evidently learned to behave this way by living in Sodom.
 - The tribe of Benjamin had been living with the Jebusites since the days of Joshua (Jud. 1:21). **“Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Cor. 15:33)**. This is precisely why God wanted the Jebusites destroyed, lest they “teach you to follow the detestable things they do” (Deut. 20:17).
- Adoni-Zedek was the king of Jerusalem during the time of Joshua (Josh. 10:1). When he heard that Gibeon had made a treaty with Israel he formed a coalition of some 8 other kings and attacked Gibeon. Since Joshua had made a treaty with Gibeon, he marched all night and defeated those pagan kings (Josh. 10:1-15);

- During this historic battle God helped Joshua by hurling large hailstones against those kings. In fact, the hailstones actually killed more of the enemy than Joshua did (Josh. 10:11).
- It was also during this battle that the sun stood still over Gibeon and the moon over the Valley of Aijalon (Josh. 10:12,13). Truly God is indeed a miracle working God!
- Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Jebusites in Jerusalem were not conquered during the days of Joshua, and not even for hundreds of years afterward. Remember our text! **“Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the people of Judah” (Josh. 15:63).** Nobody else could either!
- As we shall discover, however, that the Jebusites were finally conquered by King David some 400 years later.

THE CONQUEST OF THE JEBUSITES

- Remember! When David killed Goliath he cut off his head and carried it to Jerusalem: **“David took the Philistine’s head and brought it to Jerusalem, and he put the Philistine’s weapons in his own tent (1 Sam. 17:54).**
 - Taking the head of Goliath to Jerusalem was a warning to the Jebusites.
 - Putting Goliath’s weapons in his tent would be a constant reminder to David that he was God’s anointed.
- Going to Jerusalem was a lot of trouble for the distance between the Valley of Elah where Goliath died, and Jerusalem is some 20 miles.
- While no one else had been able to dislodge the Jebusites, David did. He warned them in advance that just as God enabled him to defeat Goliath, God would also help him to defeat them.
- Remember! When David defeated Goliath he was “only a boy” (1 Sam. 17:33). He didn’t become king until years later when he was 30 years old. After becoming king David reigned in Hebron for 7 years before conquering Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:4). The Jebusites therefore had many years to heed the warning given to them by David. Unfortunately, they didn’t heed that warning.
- As we have pointed out, the Jebusites were a powerful people who lived in the midst of the Israelites for hundreds of years and could not be dislodged. Our text comes from the book of Joshua, but the same conditions continued also into the period of the Judges. Note: **“The Benjamites, however, failed to dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the Benjamites” (Jud. 1:21).**
- When David finally attacked Jerusalem the Jebusites were so confident of victory that they said to David: **“Even the blind and the lame can ward you off” (2 Sam. 5:6).**
- David knew better. He said: **“Anyone who conquers the Jebusites will have to use the water shaft” (2 Sam. 5:8).**
- David also said: **“Whoever leads the attack on the Jebusites will become commander in chief” (1 Chron. 11:6)**
- **“Joab son of Zeruiah went up first, and so he received the command” (1 Chron. 11:6).**
- The Jebusites were completely defeated. Afterward, David took up residence in the fortress, and Jerusalem became known as the “City of David” (1 Chron. 11:7).

- All of the Jebusites were not killed. After their defeat, however, there are only a few references to them in the Bible.
- One notable reference to a Jebusite involves the punishment God gave to Israel because David sinned in taking a census. When an angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem the Lord intervened. He sent the prophet Gad to tell David to build an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam. 24:18). This just happened to be where the angel was standing at that time (2 Sam. 24:16).
 - Araunah the Jebusite had changed. He was no longer a threat to the people of God. He was even submissive to David and bowed down before him with his face to the ground (2 Sam. 24:20).
 - Araunah even offered to give his threshing floor to David along with oxen for a burnt offering, and threshing sledges and ox yokes to make a fire for a burnt offering (2 Sam. 24:22, 23).
 - David, however, insisted on paying because he wouldn't offer a sacrifice to the Lord that cost him nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).
 - Thus David bought the threshing floor and the oxen of Araunah the Jebusite and then built an altar and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the Lord (2 Sam. 24:24, 25). David's offering stopped the plague from destroying his people.
 - This would later be the very spot where Solomon would build the temple. Note: **“Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David.” (2 Chron. 3:1).**
- The last 3 references to Jebusites in the Bible are Ezra 9:1 and Zechariah 9:7 around 520 B.C. and Nehemiah 9:8 around 444 B.C.
- Zechariah provides this insight into what happened to the Jebusites. While listing the judgement of God on the enemies of Israel he wrote: **“Foreigners will occupy Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. I will take the blood from their mouths, the forbidden food from between their teeth. Those who are left will belong to our God and become leaders in Judah, and Ekron will be like the Jebusites” (Zech. 9:6, 7).**
 - Ekron was a border town in the tribal territory allotted to Judah (Jud. 1:18). The Philistines, however, continued to live in Ekron as the Jebusites continued to live in Jerusalem. Note also that when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant they sent it to Ekron (1 Sam. 5:10). When David killed Goliath the Philistine soldiers were slaughtered all the way from Gath to Ekron (1 Sam. 17:52). The defeat of Ekron was still going to happen.
 - The statement that **“Ekron will be like the Jebusites”** apparently indicates that it will be ultimately be conquered and absorbed into Israel just as the Jebusites were.

WHY DOES GOD TELL US ABOUT THE JEBUSITES?

As we stated at the beginning, there is obviously a reason! **“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).**

Perhaps one reason why God tells us about the Jebusites is to remind us that the Gospel is for **“every nation, tribe, language and people” (Rev. 14:6)**. Jesus specifically commanded His apostles to make disciples of **“all nations” (Matt. 28:19)**. He told them to **“Go into all the world and preach**

the good news to all creation” (Mk. 16:15). No one in any nation is too ungodly to be saved, not even the Jebusites!

Focus again on the story of Araunah the Jebusite. He repented of his rebellion and played a key role in stopping a plague in Israel. As a point of interest, of all the many references to Jebusites in the Bible, Araunah is the only Jebusite who is mentioned by name. Please consider:

- Araunah is mentioned 5 times in the Bible (2 Sam. 24:16, 18; 1 Chron. 21:15, 28; 2 Chron. 3:1).
- Some versions call him “Ornan” which is a Hebrew variant of “Araunah”.
- Nothing negative is ever said about this man.
- He owned a special piece of ground. It was apparently was the place where Abraham was going to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:1-19). That’s where Araunah chose to build his threshing floor (1 Chron. 21:15).
- An angel from God chose to stand at his threshing floor to destroy Jerusalem (1 Chron. 21:16).
- David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem (1 Chron. 21:16). This was evidently right over Araunah’s threshing floor.
- The Lord commanded the angel to withdraw his hand (1 Chron. 21:15).
- The angel ordered the prophet Gad to tell David to build an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (1 Chron. 21:18). By sacrificing on that altar the plague would be stopped. The plague had already killed 70,000 men of Israel (1 Chron. 21:14).
- David “went up” in obedience to the word of Gad and spoke to Araunah who was threshing wheat with his four sons (1 Chron. 21:20). His sons hid themselves.
- Araunah was no longer an enemy. As we mentioned, he had changed. He was submissive to King David and even bowed down before him with his face to the ground (1 Chron. 21:21)
 - Araunah offered to give the site to David, together with oxen for the burnt offering, threshing sledges for the wood, and wheat for the grain offering (1 Chron. 21:23).
 - Araunah’s generous offer reflected complete commitment. He was not only willing to give his land to God, but also his oxen to plow the ground, the wheat he had harvested, and the equipment he needed to make a living. He was willing to give everything he had to God.
 - David paid the full price to Araunah for he didn’t want to sacrifice a burnt offering to the Lord that cost him nothing (1 Chron. 21:24).
 - So **“David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the Lord, and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. Then the Lord spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath” (1 Chron. 21:26, 27).**
- As we have previously pointed out, Solomon built the temple on this land that once belonged to Araunah the Jebusite. Please consider: **“Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David. He began building on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his reign.” (2 Chron. 3:1, 2).**

CONCLUSION

Not only do we live in a divided world, we live in a divided universe. Someday, however, all wars will cease and the entire universe will be united under “one Head, even Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:10).

This has been the plan of God since before the foundation of the world (Eph. 3:1-11). God did not just love Israel, God loves the whole world (John 3:16). This, of course, includes the Jebusites. God does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

There are many nations on earth just as evil as the Jebusites. The Scythians, for example, were a warlike people who would drink the blood of their victims and cut off their heads as trophies. The scalps of their victims were sewn into their clothing, and the skulls of prominent enemies were turned into wine goblets. Yet, even the Scythians could be saved and become part of the Body of Christ. Note what Paul wrote about the church: **“Here there is no Greek, or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all” (Col. 3:11).**

Or consider the example of Corinth. When Paul went there to preach the Gospel it was one of the most corrupt cities on earth. They worshiped Aphrodite. She was the goddess of sex and 1,000 women prostituted themselves around the clock in her service. To this day an “aphrodisiac” describes something that stimulates sexual urges and activity. Yet, even in Corinth, God had many people (Acts 18:10). Please consider these inspired words to the church at Corinth: **“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.” (1 Cor. 12:12-14).** Yes! God had many people even in Corinth.

Maybe this is one reason why God told us about the Jebusites. Perhaps He wanted us to find someone good in every nation. So, the next time you see someone that you think is so evil that they are beyond the reach of redemption, remember Araunah the Jebusite!

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