

The Conquest of the Jebusites

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

Written By: Pastor John T. Anderson

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This week there have been more reminders that this earth is “getting old like a garment,” along with tragedies of other types, namely the explosion in the coal mine in West Virginia that took the lives of at least 25 people. Is God’s angel “shaking Peter” to wake us up from our slumber and prepare for deliverance? Is the thought of His coming first and foremost in our minds each day?

Last Sabbath we had a special program of music and Scripture entitled, “The Victory of Christ,” celebrating His victory in the Garden, on the cross, through the tomb and over the grave, Thursday through Sunday of Passion week. As a part of our program, one of our members drew a lovely picture in pastel chalk of Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (see attachment). The drawing of the picture added immeasurably to our program.

But something happened in conjunction with that, which was an incredibly beautiful and accurate representation of the Gospel. We all saw it, but it didn’t dawn on me till later in the day. It struck me that what she was doing was a parable of life. Did you know to what I’m referring?

As we’ve noted many times, when God made Adam and Eve, they were made in His image, His likeness. His “picture,” if you please, was drawn in their hearts with perfect accuracy. But then sin entered and marred the picture. Mankind’s character became selfish and ugly. However, through the Gospel, God proposes to do what? To draw again in our hearts the picture of His likeness, His image; a picture of surrender to His will, the picture of Jesus praying, “Not My will, but Thine be done,” similar to the picture that was drawn during the service last week. The restoration of the likeness of God in our characters is the purpose of life.

Here’s the interesting thing about what happened last Sabbath. Our member had drawn the picture during the previous week, just to be comfortable with the scope of the task. Another of our members took a photo of that picture, so that we could hand out a copy of it to each person after the service as a memento. She used the picture she had drawn during the week before to trace on her new canvas the outline of what she would draw during the church service.

Because of sickness, some of those who were going to participate in the program couldn’t be there and our program turned out to be shorter than expected, and the project a bit bigger than anticipated. Even though we allowed time for people to share their testimonies after the music was done, the picture was still not completely finished. When we were singing the closing hymn,

“Christ the Lord is Risen Today,” I noticed something. Something caught my eye that later that day became meaningful. Our artist, seeing the service was about to end, removed the nearly finished piece on which she had been working and replaced it with the finished one done previously, so that all could see what it would look like when completed. Did you notice that? Did that have any meaning for you?

I saw in that set of circumstances an incredibly accurate and encouraging representation of the Gospel. Like our artist, God is drawing the picture of Christ in our characters. It is traced in our hearts, copied from one done previously, even the life of Jesus Himself. During the service last Sabbath at our church however, the picture was not completed. Was that because she ran out of chalk? No. Was it because her arm became impotent or paralyzed and couldn't draw anymore? No. Was it because she became bored or lost interest in the project? No. What was the reason the picture wasn't finished? It was simply because time ran out. And when time ran out, the unfinished was replaced by the finished, so that all could see what it would have become had time allowed. Do you see the lesson there?

God's purpose is to draw in our hearts the picture of Jesus. To all who are willing, this process of the restoration of God's likeness is taking place. For some, the clock of life runs out before this can reach full completion, and the grave cuts short the drawing of the picture. In kindness and love, God removes it from the easel and replaces it with the One that had been finished before, so that all can see what the picture would have become had time allowed.

This leads us to a question as we begin our study today. Does God call us to victory or defeat? Success or failure? He calls us to victory and success in the Christian warfare, doesn't He. Through Him we are “more than conquerors.” Romans 8:37. But some sins seem to be harder to battle than others. The devil seeks some foothold, that cherished idol, that unconquered outpost, from which he can wield his strategies.

The Bible refers to these, in the KJV, as “besetting sins.” “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1, 2.

The “Battle of the Besetting Sin” is a story that is illustrated by an experience recorded in the Old Testament, in David's conquest of the Jebusites. We're going to take a quick tour of some passages that deal with the nations which occupied Canaan before Israel's entrance in 1405 B.C. Pay attention to the order of the nations as they are given in these lists.

The Jebusite is introduced as being the third son of Canaan, who was the grandson of Noah. Genesis 10:16. When the Lord made His covenant with Abraham, the closing words of His promise were: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the

River Euphrates--the Kenites, the Kenezites, and the Kadmonites; the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Rephaim; the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.” Genesis 15:18-21. Five times in the Bible, the place where they lived was referred to as “Jebus.”

When Moses was commissioned to lead Israel from Egypt to Canaan, he was promised that if they would cooperate with divine power, the nations of Canaan would be driven from them. However, if they became slack in this endeavor, the pagan nations who dwelled there would become as “thorns in their sides,” and “thorns in their eyes.” The Lord said, “I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.” Exodus 3:17.

We have the list of these nations given again a few chapters later, just as they were about to leave Egypt. “And it shall be, when the LORD bring you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites,...” Exodus 13:5. And again at the foot of Mt. Sinai, “My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off. Exodus 23:23.

As Israel approached the borders of Canaan at the conclusion of the 40 years of wandering, from Moses’ final speech we read: “When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you,” then they should destroy them. Deuteronomy 7:1.

As Israel stood on the shores of the Jordan River, about to enter Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, he said, “By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites.” Joshua 3:10.

Just before his death, Joshua repeated the history of the conquest: “Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you--also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand.” Joshua 24:11.

However, this was not a complete victory, for we later read, “So the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites.” Judges 3:5.

What did you notice about the placement of the Jebusites on these various lists? They were listed last, weren’t they. Hmm. I wonder if that could have been prophetic. It seems they were a particularly stubborn group of people, who persistently resisted any attempts to uproot them. They were like a “besetting sin” in Israel’s experience. Notice how they are described in the book of Joshua: “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." Joshua 15:63. Likewise in the book of Judges: "But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day." Judges 1:21.

If you've been paying close attention, you've noticed two things. First, the Jebusites were almost always the last to be listed among the nations to be conquered, which seemed to be appropriate since they were the last to be conquered. Secondly, if you've made a mental connection with the information the Bible gives, you've realized that the territory they occupied was called Jerusalem.

Think about this for a moment! God led His people from Egypt to Canaan with a mighty hand and awesome miracles. They came, according to His promise to the land flowing with milk and honey. But because they did not cooperate with the divine plan, all of the pagan nations were not driven out as God had desired. There were stragglers, remnants of the old Canaanites still living among them for centuries!

And right in the middle of "their" country was a stronghold maintained by the warlike tribe of the Jebusites, as an ulcer, a cancer to the peace and success of their country. How could they claim that the promise made to Abraham 8 centuries before, had been fulfilled when right in their midst the Jebusites flaunted their rebellious existence! What a reproach! What an embarrassment!

After four centuries had elapsed since the entrance of Israel into Canaan, David aspired to do something about this. Soon after he was anointed king over all Israel, "The king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, 'You shall not come in here, but the blind and the lame will repel you,' thinking, 'David cannot come in here.'" II Samuel 5:6. Ponder well the words we've just read: they contain vital lessons for us in our battles against the enemy.

When David mounted an attack against them, the Jebusites laughed at him. They said, "You're not coming in here. You can win your other battles if you like. You can humble the Philistines and the other nations, but you're not coming in here. Uh, uh! If you try, we could send out, not our top troops, not our commandos, but we could pull men off the sick gurneys and they would whip you. We could put bows and arrows in the hands of the blind and they would defeat you. We could march out against you those who are crippled and they would put you down. We've been here for many centuries; four centuries since you came on the scene and you haven't been able to get rid of us yet, and you're not going to conquer now." So the Jebusites mocked David and his army. "You're not coming in here."

Is this not the policy of Satan as it relates to us individually? Does this story not speak to you and to me today? Like Israel, we begin the Christian journey. We leave spiritual Egypt with its atheism, when we didn't believe in God at all, and begin the wilderness sojourn. There are skirmishes and scuffles, there's combat and conflict with the enemy. Victories through Christ are achieved; higher

ground is attained. But there seems to be one weak area; one fortress of evil that remains; one “besetting sin” that still hinders; one “Jebus” in our character.

It might be something different for every one of us. For one it might be a lifelong struggle against appetite. For another it might be the sin of gossip, for another a battle against pride. For another it might be faithfulness in returning God’s tithes and the giving of offerings. For another it might be a challenge of the correct usage of time, or what it is that is fed to the mind by music, reading or TV. Whatever it is, Satan knows the point of weakness, the aneurism of Christian living. He studies well to know what it is in your life; what it is in my life. He desires to maintain that one foothold, that one outpost fortress so that he can control the destiny.

We launch an attack in the Lord’s name against that area of weakness, and Satan laughs and says, like the Jebusites of old, “You’re not coming in here. This is my territory. You can win your little battles down in the valley, but up here this is mine. You’re not driving me out. You’re too weak. It can’t be done.” That’s what he says to you and to me, isn’t it?

What happened back there in David’s day? “*Nevertheless* David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David).” II Samuel 5:7. “Nevertheless.” That’s a strong word! It means “you can forget what you just read, something different is going to happen.” And it did! A great change came! David, through the power of God, defeated the Jebusites. And get this: Not only did David conquer them, he made that place “his city,” and it became the capital of the empire.

Satan’s strategy is to humiliate and defeat, and to sport and ridicule when one is subjected to his slavery. Thus Samson, the one mighty in power, was overcome and was taken where? To Gaza. Why did they take him to Gaza? Oh, that’s the place where he had removed the gate posts and carried them miles away when they thought he was captured. Gaza was the place of one of Samson’s greatest victories. You have to believe that there was irony and spite in their bringing blind and shackled Samson to Gaza, of all places. That’s where they brought him forth to mock him and make sport of him. A message was being given by the Philistines bringing Samson to Gaza.

On the other hand, we have the strategy of Christ, who delights to encourage and empower to victory. On a personal level, in those areas of our lives where Satan thinks he has a stronghold, Jesus can give victory. He is the “Son of David,” replicating David’s victory over the Jebusites in our hearts. Satan may say, “You’re not coming in here. You’re not going to remove that cherished sin, that remaining idol,” but the record of our lives will be that of the Bible story. “Nevertheless” Christ will give us victory. Christ is stronger than the devil.

How is that done? How can the “Jebus” in our lives be defeated? What did we read earlier from Hebrews? “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus* the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right

hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1, 2. What is the method by which victory against the “Jebusites” of our lives can be obtained? It is by “looking unto Jesus.”

It is by looking at His struggle in Gethsemane on Thursday when He offered the prayer, “Not My will, but Thine be done.” It is by looking to His sacrifice on Calvary on Friday which reveals His infinite love. It is by looking to His rest in the tomb on Sabbath, demonstrating our need to rest in His ability to save us. And it is by beholding Him coming forth from the sepulcher on Sunday, exhibiting the grave-breaking power of God. When we “look to Jesus” He can conquer the Jebus, the besetting sin, the weak area of our lives.

On a global level, this planet Earth has been the Jebus of the universe. It has been the holdout of rebellion. Of all the other worlds, and the celestial realms in which God has exercised His benevolent control, only this sphere has resisted. This earth became the Jebus of the universe. Satan has flaunted his powers and said to the Almighty, “You’re not coming in here; this is my territory.”

“Nevertheless” He did! Jesus, the *Son of David*, not only came to this planet Earth, but He came to that very spot where the Jebusites had mocked David! During His life, He conquered Satan at every step, never yielding once to his temptations. His was a complete and total victory! And now, what is God’s plan? Just as David made the former foothold of the Jebusite “his city,” his capital, So God will make this earth, the “new earth” His dwelling. He will make this planet, once rebellious and the cancer of the universe, His eternal capital.

“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and *He will dwell with them*, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.’” Revelation 21:2, 3. What had been the stronghold of sin will be God’s capital city! What had been the “Jebus” of the universe will be His dwelling place!

As we close today, there are some questions I ask you to solemnly consider. Is there a “Jebus” in your life? Is there a “besetting sin” that has stubbornly held on? Is there an area of weakness in your Christian walk that seems impossible to conquer? Are you willing to ask Jesus to give you complete victory in your battle against the evil one? Are you willing to let go of every weight that is holding you back in your journey with God? Are you willing for Him to complete the drawing of His picture, His likeness in your heart, so that when people see you they see a picture of Christ?