

# WHEN JUDAH FAILED

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Joshua 15:63 says, “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.” This is an interesting statement. Does it mean that these wicked people were too strong for God to drive out of the city of Jerusalem? Of course not! A study of God’s word reveals an important lesson in this situation about how God works with His own children when they are not following Him like they should.

## **God’s promises to Israel regarding their enemies**

Without doubt, the Jebusites were *not* too strong for God to drive out of Jerusalem. Joshua 15:63 clearly says that *Judah* could not drive these people out. It does not say that *God* could not do it. In the covenant given to Israel by God through Moses, God had promised certain blessings and curses for Israel based upon whether or not they kept His commandments. God had said, “*And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God*” (Deut 28:1-2). One of the specific blessings God promised was: “*The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways*” (Deut 28:7). In contrast, God also promised, “*But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee*” (Deut 28:15). One of the specific curses was the exact opposite of the aforementioned blessing: “*The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth*” (Deut 28:25). Therefore, Judah’s problem with the Jebusites in Joshua 15:63 was not one of physical weakness, but was one of *spiritual weakness*.

## **When God fought for Israel**

As long as the tribes of Israel trusted in God and obeyed Him, then God was with them and they prevailed over their enemies in every situation (Deut 7:16-24). Throughout the book of Joshua and the conquest of Canaan, God kept His promise and defeated the enemies of Israel. But this

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was *because* Israel had believed in and obeyed God (Josh 24:31; Judg 2:7). As long as they did that, no enemy was big enough or strong enough to resist God for any length of time. Jericho's mighty walls fell without a fight (Joshua chapter 6), and Ai was utterly destroyed (Joshua chapter 8). God used great hailstones and caused the sun to stand still in order to destroy five Amorite kings (Joshua chapter 10), because "*the Lord fought for Israel*" (Josh 10:14,42). What Israel was capable of with God's help is expressed in Joshua 23:10: "*One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fights for you, as he has promised you.*" God fought for Israel because Israel was obeying Him. God destroyed all the other kings of the land (Josh 11:1-20), including all the giants that lived in the land (Josh 11:21-22; 15:13-17). The same power that God used to make Jericho's walls fall, to make the hailstones rain down and to make the sun and moon stand still, to make all the cities and kings and nations of Canaan be destroyed, including the giants, was certainly able to handle the Jebusites of Jerusalem. God was quite able to give Judah the victory over the Jebusites. In fact, righteous David's first major act as king over all Israel was to finally drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:6-9; 1 Chr 11:4-8). David was able to do this "*for the Lord God of hosts was with him*" (2 Sam 5:10; 1 Chr 11:9).

## **Failure is with man, not God**

As in the case of David when he prevailed over the Jebusites, whenever God is described as being "with" any of the children of Israel in their battles, they always prevailed without exception (see also Josh 1:1-9; 6:27; 14:12-14; 24:2-13; Judg 1:19,22-25). Therefore, any failures on the part of the children of Israel were due to God *not* being with them (see Josh 7:1-13; Judg 1:27-2:5). God was always with them when they trusted and obeyed Him. Whenever Israel failed in battle, it was always due to their lack of faith and obedience (Deut 7:16-24). Therefore, Judah's inability to overcome the Jebusites was because of their own lack of faith in God, and, consequently, God did not bless them. The weakness was within Judah, not God. God works by the same principle in the lives of His people today. Without him, we can do nothing (John 15:5). But we can do all things through Christ's strength (Php 4:13). "*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*" (Eph 3:20-21).