

God has a lot of plans.

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Joshua / chapter 15

One of my all-time favorite Bible verses has always been Jeremiah 29:11—"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." I always thought that the "plans" meant a whole series of sequenced events, intended to make my life into a sweeping, glorious tapestry from start to finish. And perhaps that's exactly what it means.

But I saw it in a different light today as I read the end of Joshua 15: "Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the people of Judah." (vs 63) I thought I remembered who the Jebusites were (although there *are* a lot of "ites" in the Bible!), but I was curious so I went back to do a little study to refresh my memory.

Ah, yes. The Jebusites were indeed just one of the "ites" listed with all the other people of Canaan, whom God promised time and again would have to relinquish their land to the Israelites. In fact, a very quick concordance study yielded at least *three* different things that were supposed to happen to these Jebusites.

Exodus 23:23. My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and **Jebusites**, and *I will wipe them out*.

Exodus 34:11. Obey what I command you today. *I will drive out before you* the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and **Jebusites**.

Deuteronomy 20:17. *Completely destroy them*—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and **Jebusites**—as the Lord your God has commanded you.

However, in the end, *none* of those things happened to the Jebusites. In fact, Judges 3:5 says "The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites." It seems like many of the Canaanite peoples didn't end up facing the annihilation we so frequently associate with the Israelite conquest of Canaan. Instead, the Jebusites continued to live (and rule) in Jerusalem until King David managed to take over the city. Even then, the Jebusites weren't killed or driven out. In fact, David ended up buying the land for the temple in Jerusalem from a Jebusite.

So, what are those "plans" that God has for us? In light of this, I'm almost inclined to think of that verse as meaning something more like, "I know the plans I have for you—Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, Plan D, and however many plans we need!" The Bible doesn't say why the Israelites were unable to dislodge the Jebusites. Perhaps it was due to a lack of trust in God; or perhaps, when the time came, conditions were such between the two nations that God knew the

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Jebusites could benefit from staying in Jerusalem.

Regardless of why, I am so glad that God is so flexible and that He has so many different plans for us. If we choose not to take His Plan A, He doesn't get disgusted with us and stomp off in frustration. Instead, with infinite patience, He moves us on to Plan B. If we reject that, He'll have something else up His sleeve. Indeed, He knows the plans He has for us—and He has a lot!

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