

• Luz

Luz, later known as Bethel, was destroyed with the help of a man who betrayed the city in the same way that Rahab betrayed Jericho ¹. But unlike Rahab he seems to have had no faith in the God of Israel. He did not join Israel but went elsewhere and built a new Luz. Rahab acted from faith; this man acted from compulsion and no more.

¹ 1:22–26

• Failure to drive out the Canaanites

The Canaanites were not totally driven out by Israel. The tribe of Manasseh failed to conquer the territory offered to it ¹ and allowed Canaanites to live Manasseh's territory. The same policy was followed by Ephraim ², Zebulon ³, Asher ⁴, Naphtali ⁵.

¹ 1:27–28

² 1:29

³ 1:30

⁴ 1:31–32

⁵ 1:33

The case of the Danites was even worse. For a while the people of the tribe of Dan were prevented from occupying their lowland territory ¹; later the 'Joseph - tribes' grew in power ² and the Amorites (another name for Canaanites) were confined to the areas mentioned in 1:36.

¹ 1:34–35a

² 1:35b

There are several aspects to Israel's backsliding ways.

1. Failure to follow through is a serious matter

1. **It is a serious matter to fail to follow through with what God has ordered.** They **could** have utterly exterminated the Canaanites. They were commanded to do so. It was a unique case in the story of the world. Israel were to be God's executioners. They had been commanded to annihilate the Canaanites altogether. But they failed to do so.

• Success was possible but through disobedience was not achieved

God brought them out of Egypt. There was a possibility of success for them. God said 'I brought you up...' ¹. Israel's being brought into Canaan was the result of the mighty working of God. He had brought them out of Egypt, and had brought them into Canaan. He told them of His intention that the Canaanites should be destroyed ². But Israel disobeyed the Lord in that they failed to follow through with what God had done for them.

¹ 2:1

² 2:2

• The third generation should have completed the work and 'entered into rest'

The Israelites were saved by the blood of the lamb but then they were to achieve the conquest of Canaan. The first generation were redeemed by the blood of the lamb. The second generation conquered the main highways and fortresses of Canaan. The third generation should have completed the work and 'entered into rest'. 'Entering into rest' means to reap the great blessing of achieving God's will for one's life. It comes at the point where, after persistent faith, God says 'Now I know that you fear me; I have sworn; I will bless you' ¹. It does not mean to experience salvation; it does not mean to get to heaven. It means to reap the blessings that come through achieving God's will by faith and patience. But the third generation failed to enter rest; there was a failure to follow through with what God had ordered. David was to finish the task centuries later ².

¹ see Genesis 22:12, 16, 17

² see 2 Samuel 7:1

2. Sin gets punished by the sin itself

2. **Sin gets punished by the sin itself.** When God's people sin, it is because they do not think the sin will make much difference to them. But they eventually will get to see that the sin has damaged them, weakened them, and prevented them from achieving as much for God as they could have done.

• For the half-hearted getting the desires of their heart is a punishment

God said to Israel, in effect, 'Since you don't want to get rid of the Canaanites I will let you keep them nearby!' God lets His people have what they want. He gives them the desires of their hearts – but sometimes this is a punishment. If God's people are half-hearted about getting rid of their spiritual enemies, God leaves them with their enemies! If they do not want to exercise faith, and if they do not persist in the

struggle to get rid of the enemies to salvation, then God will leave those enemies where they are – but this will only cause trouble for the people of God. The sin of half- heartedness will bring its own punishment. *‘They shall be adversaries to you’*¹ says God [☞]¹.

[☞]¹ 2:3

• *Failure to drive out the remaining sins in our lives will bring distress – God’s chastening*

• *If they did not conquer – they would be conquered*

Failure to drive out false religion, failure to drive out the remaining sins in our lives – perhaps arrogance, boastfulness, deceit, envy, gossip, impatience, jealousy, negativism, obstinacy, prayerlessness, quarrelsomeness, resentment, spite, tale- bearing, unbelief, vindictiveness, or whatever – will result in God’s chastening by letting that very sin bring distress upon us. *‘Their gods shall be a snare to you’* said God. They tolerated the filthy paganism of the Canaanites; soon they would be tempted into the very sins of the Canaanites. If they did not conquer the enemy, the enemy would conquer them. They would become **accustomed** to the sinful ways of their neighbours and then become **attracted** to the sinful ways of their neighbours.

3. They accepted God’s rebuke but their repentance came too late to change the situation

3. They accepted God’s rebuke but their repentance came too late to change the situation. The ‘angel of the Lord’ – an angel representing God Himself– appeared at Gilgal. Gilgal was the place where the angel had appeared once before to Joshua to give Joshua assurance that Canaan could be conquered [☞]¹. Now the angel moves through the land to Bochim (near Bethel, or perhaps the same as Bethel) – presumably because the tabernacle was now at Bethel. God announces His verdict: the Canaanites will be left to harass Israel. It is a ‘day of visitation’. For a generation God has called them to remove the Canaanites. But they would not. From now on they will no longer be able to do so. When God’s people tolerate a situation that is not God’s will, eventually they are rebuked by God by their not being able to change the situation. Their sin is forgiven – but the situation remains as a permanent rebuke. The first generation of Israelites were forgiven for their rebelliousness in not entering Canaan [☞]² but God’s rebuke continued. They **could** not do what at first they **would** not do [☞]³. The point in Judges 2:4–5 is not that repentance is ineffective or that tears may be insincere; the point is that repentance might bring forgiveness but come too late to avert God’s discipline.

[☞]¹ see Joshua 5:13–15

[☞]² Numbers 14:20

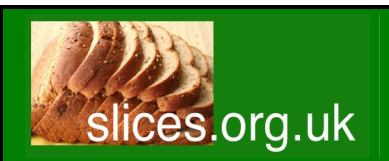
[☞]³ see Numbers 14:39–45

• *They could not do what at first they would not do*

• *God’s discipline*

Note

1 I follow the reading sarim, ‘adversaries’, rather than the Massoretic siddim, ‘sides’, which does not seem to make sense. See Numbers 33:55; Joshua 23:13.



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