

Joshua—Joshua 20--21

Cities of Refuge and Cities for the Levites

I. Additional Scriptures/Notes...

1. The Levitical cities, cf., Numbers 35:1-8...

THE LEVITICAL CITIES		
Levitical Clans	Location of Cities	Number
Family of Aaron	Judah-Simeon (9) Benjamin (4)	13
Others of Kohath Besides the Family of Aaron	Ephraim (4) Dan (4) Manasseh West (2)	10
Gershonites	Issachar (4) Asher (4) Naphtali (3) Manasseh East (2)	13
Merarites	Zebulun (4) Reuben (4) Gad (4)	12
Total Levitical Cities ----->		48

[Data for Chart from: James E. Smith, *The Books of History*, p. 107]

2. Cities of Refuge... cf., Deut 19:1-13. /// “When Israel entered Canaan, they appointed six locations to be “cities of refuge” (Josh 20:2; Num 35:13-14). These cities were intended to stop the emergence of blood feuds, since the custom of blood revenge was long-standing (Gen 9:6). They were places where someone who had killed another by accident (Josh 20:3) could go in order to escape the quick revenge of the dead person’s family. these cities were not places where justice could be avoided, but places where further bloodshed could be prevented while an investigation took place (20:6).
3. 21:4... Judah, Simeon, & Benjamin—“These tribes furnished more habitation to the Levites, in proportion, than any of the other tribes, because they possessed a more extensive inheritance, agreeably to what Moses had commanded ([Num 35:8](#)). It is worthy of remark, that the principal part of this tribe, whose business was to minister at the sanctuary, which sanctuary was afterwards established at Jerusalem, had their appointment nearest to that city; so that they were always within reach of the sacred work which God had appointed them.” [TSK].

II. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: Period of the Conquest.

III. Summary.

These two chapters give to us the names of the Cities of Refuge and also the cities given to the Levites as their inheritance. All six of the Cities of Refuge were given to the Levites. In addition, there were 42 more. While it is not precisely so, this rounds out to about 4 cities per tribe. The tribes who had greater inheritance gave more cities.

IV. Outline.

1. Explanation of the need for Cities of Refuge (Josh 20:1-6).
2. The six cities listed (Josh 20:7-8).
3. A restatement of the purpose of Cities of Refuge (Josh 20:9).
4. Cities of the Levites (Josh 21:1-8).
5. Cities of Aaron’s descendants (Josh 21:9-19).
6. Cities of Kohath’s descendants other than Aaron’s family (Josh 21:20-26).
7. Cities of Gershon’s descendants (Josh 21:27-33).
8. Cities of Merari’s descendants (Josh 21:34-42).
9. The Lord’s promises fulfilled (Josh 21:43-45).

V. Questions.

True or False

01. _____ Cities of Refuge served as safe zones for murderers.
02. _____ The Lord delivered the enemies of Israel into their hands.
03. _____ The ones who fled to the Cities of Refuge had to stand trial.
04. _____ There were forty-two cities given the Levites in addition to the Cities of Refuge.
05. _____ Ramoth-Gilead was one of the Cities of Refuge.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ The person who could flee to the Cities of Refuge was one who had slain someone: (a) unawares; (b) unwittingly; (c) a & b; (d) none of these.
07. _____ How many of the good things God had promised the children of Israel failed to materialize: (a) only one; (b) not many; (c) not aught.
08. _____ Which of these Cities of Refuge was on the West side of Jordan: (a) Golan; (b) Kedesh; (c) Bezer.
09. _____ Which tribe gave the fewest cities for the Levites: (a) Naphtali; (b) Benjamin; (c) Manasseh.
10. _____ The Gershonites received how many cities: (a) nine; (b) fourteen; (c) thirteen.

Fill in the Blanks

11. “... the Lord _____ by the hand of _____ to give us _____ to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle.”
12. _____, _____, and _____ were Cities of Refuge on the western side of the Jordan River.
13. The person who sought refuge at one of the cities listed in chapter 20 would not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he _____ the _____.
14. The Levitical clan which received more cities than any other was the _____.
15. Ramoth-Gilead was given by the tribe of _____.

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week’s handout

ANSWERS to Lesson 01-80 ... [01—True, Josh 13:7; 02—False, Josh 14:13; 03—True, Josh 15:8; 04—False, Josh 16:10; 05—True, Josh 17:3-6; 06—c, Josh 18:2-4; 07—b, Josh 19:50; 08—a, Josh 13:33; 09—b, Josh 14:12; 10—a, Josh 16:10; 11—children, of, Joseph or Ephraim, Josh 17:14; 12—cast, lots, before, Josh 18:10; 13—end, dividing, Josh 19:51; 14—commanded, did, Josh 14:5; 15—lot, firstborn, Josh 17:1.]

VI. Lessons & Applications.

1. **The Lord also spake unto Joshua, saying** (Josh 20:1). If James E. Smith's numbering is correct, this is the fourteenth direct address to Joshua. It is good for us to keep in mind that Joshua was the leader of the children of Israel, but he received his instructions from the Lord. Joshua has been a good leader in that he has listened to the word of the Lord and has carried out His instructions. It is vitally important for us to recognize that God has always required faithfulness of His people. It is true in the Period of the Church as well as it was in the Period of the Conquest. We must listen to God in order to receive the blessings He has promised to us (Eph 1:3).
2. **...Appoint out for you cities of refuge ... they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood** (Josh 20:2-3). In order for there to be orderly society, there would need to be regulation of matters such as this. These Cities of Refuge supposedly would be so scattered amidst the land that a person could arrive at one of them after one day's journey. God is a JUST God and He made provision for justice to be dispensed among His people. This was not like some of the temple areas of the heathen Greeks which actually served as a safe harbor for all manner of criminals. These were cities where trials were conducted to determine guilt or innocence regarding manslaughter cases. Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2:13-17, we are taught that civil government is ordained of God and we are to be submissive to such law. Anarchy is in no one's best interest. It behooves the Christian to obey all of the laws of the land barring one which would cause him to violate God's laws (Acts 4:19-20).
3. **And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the Lord, these cities and their suburbs** (Josh 21:3). The cooperative spirit of the people with the will of God is worth noting here. When we begin to think about giving land to someone of another group (tribe, here) is the time when usually all kinds of opposition and greed and other such like emotions come into play. Not so, here! Thankfully, the children of Israel knew that it was the Lord's will that provision be made for the Levites and they voiced no objection to God's plan. This is a remarkable and special time in the history of the children of Israel. They were desirous of following the commands of the Lord and the Lord was blessing them as a result. What a wonderful provision had been made for them! Can we be any less thankful for the salvation we have in Christ and the future prospect of our own Promised Land?
4. **There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass** (Josh 21:45). The Lord is a promise-keeping God. In connection with this statement, it is good to notice a statement from Deuteronomy 11:24, which is sometimes referred to as "The Extended Land Promise." Some premillennialists believe that this promise has never been kept and that it will be kept when the Lord returns to this earth to live and reign for a thousand years. However, the Extended Land Promise was kept and 1 Kings 4:21 is the fulfillment of it. There is nothing that is owed to the Jews of our day regarding an inheritance. All that has been promised has been fulfilled and there will be no time in the future when the Lord will come to reign on this earth!

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.

K E D C V F R T C I T I E S T G B N H G
 E Y H N B G T R F V C D E W S X Z A O Q
 D W S X C D E R F V B G T Y H N M L J U
 E I K L O P Y S F L E E V F R T A B G T
 S E D C W S E B E Z E R X C V N N H Y U
 H Y H N B R V F R E D C X W S A Z Q C V
 N H Y U A A M K I O L P U Y T R S E D C
 X S W W Q A V Z X S W E D C V F H R T G
 B N A H Y U J E M I O U J Y H N E B G T
 R N F V C D E W G E D C V F R T C T G B
 U N H Y U J M K O E I Y H N D R H F V H
 C K I L L E T H C D R E R O V B E Y H T
 X S W E D C V F R T G B O N H Y M U J O
 M J U I K T G B V F R T E D C S W X A M
 Q A Z X S E W E D C S N V F R T G B B A
 N H Y U I U N T I L U J O B G T Y H N R
 C D E D E D C V F R T G B R N H Y U J M
 Y T T R F V C D E W S X Z A B Q W E D P
 O O L I K M J U Y H N B G T R E F V C E
 N E D C V F R T G B N H Y U J M H D R L

[The highlighted words can be found above. They may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. DRL]

Joshua 20:7-9--⁷And they appointed **Kedesh** in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and **Shechem** in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is **Hebron**, in the mountain of Judah. ⁸And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned **Bezer** in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and **Ramoth** in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and **Golan** in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh. ⁹These were the **cities** appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever **killeth** any person at **unawares** might **flee** thither, and **not die** by the hand of the **avenger** of blood, **until** he **stood** before the congregation.