

ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE AND MOVE ON LESSON 16

Series Subject: Accept the Challenge and Move On!

Lessons 11-16: The Inheritance and Division of the Promised Land Josh. 13:1-21:45

Lesson 16: Cities of Refuge/Cities for the Levites Josh. 20:1-21:45

Today's Study: Josh. 20:1-21:45

1. Shelter from Judgment Josh. 20:1-6
2. Six Cities of Refuge Josh. 20:7-9
3. Special Cities for the Levites Josh. 21:1-2
4. Stewardship of Ministry Josh. 21: 3-42
5. Source of Spiritual Rest and Victorious Life Josh. 21:43-45

Time is available only for a brief discussion of review questions from previous lesson.

Introduction

1. Highlights from Lesson 15 (Josh. 18 and 19)

(a) **Six strong lessons on the believer's behavior noted in Joshua chapters 16 and 17. . . . *(Repeated for emphasis highlights from Josh. 16 and 17).***

- (1) **Josh. 16:1-4:** God's abundant blessings to the faithful and obedient believer.
- (2) **Josh. 16:5-10:** Showing the need to live together as one people.
- (3) **Josh. 17:1-2:** Examples of the marginal, those who have not gone all the way; and the faithful, those who endure to the end.
- (4) **Josh. 17:3-6:** An example of faith in that which was promised.
- (5) **Josh. 17:7-13:** An unfortunate situation of failure, compromise, and evil association with worldly neighbors.
- (6) **Josh. 17:14-18:** Pride and seeking "to be at ease in Zion"—and the necessity to be steadfast and zealous.

(b) **Joseph's blessings flowed over to his descendants (Josh. 16)**

- (1) "The children of Joseph" (16:1) refers to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh and next to Judah they received the largest inheritance of land.
- (2) The location of these tribes was very desirable.
 - It was composed of a district that was both fertile and beautiful.
 - Beside the sacred valley of Shechem, it included some of the finest parts of Palestine, the mountain of Ephraim, and the great and fertile maritime plain of Shechem.
 - **One might say the lot of the children of Joseph reflected the favor of God for the courageous father of these tribes.**

(3) Ephraim did not drive out the enemy from their inheritance instead they lived among them (Josh. 16:10)

Ephraim's history teaches the danger of lingering sin:

- These people became weak and slothful concerning God's will.
- They became profit seekers rather than prophetic preachers; they had the Canaanites "served under tribute" (Josh. 16:10).
- They became so spiritually weak that the temptation of idolatry and immorality overcame them.
- They entered into the spiritual darkness in which "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

(c) **Compelling Witness Josh. 18:1**

(1) The Tabernacle was a powerful, irresistibly effective and a strong witness that required acute admiration, attention, and devotion of the Israelites to the true and living God.

- The Tabernacle was not only pitched in the center of the Israelites camps (Num. 2:17); it was meant to be their centralized focus. Their lives were to be structured by the principles and laws of the holy God they served and whose Tabernacle was in their midst.
- This center of worship, an insignia and dwelling place of the very presence of the true and living God was a way to help make and mold the Israelites lifestyle by holy standards.

(2) Although they moved the Tabernacle from Gilgal (Josh. 4:19) to Shiloh (Josh. 18:1), and each tribe were now occupying their inheritance in the Promised Land, the Tabernacle was still in a centralized location. The worship of the LORD could be regularly observed here, as the land was conquered.

(3) **Every opportunity was provided for these people to retain a proper relationship with God. Joshua has always given the highest priority to spiritual interest; to do otherwise is to fail to give major attention to major issues.**

(4) The Tabernacle was a special place, a unique place, a place of awe!!

- The excellence of the Tabernacle, both in Material and workmanship was a reflection of the excellence of God.
- The Tabernacle was a holy place because abiding in it was a holy God (Ex. 40:34-38).

(5) **The Tabernacle was God's first dwelling-place on earth.**

- He walked in the company of Adam in Eden.
- He visited Abraham at Mamre, but no dwelling place there.
- In the Tabernacle, He comes down to dwell with His redeemed, and from then till now, He had a dwelling place on earth.
- Jesus' coming brought major difference; in Christ, God was manifested in the flesh: "the Word became flesh and tabernacle among us" (John 1:14 Amplified Bible Classic Edition)

- Next came the Church—a spiritual house, a holy temple, built of living stones.
 - This is the present dwelling place of God on earth.
 - For example, see 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16.

(d) **Complacency Rebuked/Action Taken** (Josh. 18:2-10)

(1) Sluggishness rebuked and the needed action was taken.

- Joshua reproved those tribes which were still not settled in their inheritance because they did not make an effort to occupy what God had promised them.
 - An attitude of complacency and sluggishness had settled in; apathy, lethargy, and indifference had controlled them.
 - They were satisfied with where they were and lacked zeal and dedication to lay claim to God’s wonderful gift, the inheritance of the Promised Land.
- Joshua’s question to the leaders of these tribes was pointed, purposeful and powerful.

“How long will you neglect to go and possess the land . . .?” (Josh. 18:3).

 - Here were people who had been given land to possess, but were too contented with the initial conquest to focus on realizing their desired goal.
 - During the conquest of the land in the midst of that activity they were fully active. Now that the individual battles had to be fought, the enthusiasm was gone and sluggishness had set in.

(2) Twenty-one men, three from each of the seven tribes, were chosen and instructed in surveying the land; upon completion they would report to Joshua.

- Joshua’s plan put the tribes in a position to settle the need themselves. It was a plan to take them from an inactive position ... it would help them to overcome the stagnation that had overtaken and possessed them.
- Upon receiving the surveyors’ report, Joshua went before the LORD and sought His will in dividing the remaining land among the seven tribes.
- It is noted that Joshua’s action sets a pattern for success in God’s work.
 - He first planned his work by accumulating the needed facts.
 - When the facts were obtained, he worked his plan on the basis of the facts obtained and totally depended on God’s guidance.

(e) **Circumference and Cities of the Seven Tribes**

Due to time, I will be highlighting only three of the tribes; please review Lesson 15 if so desired.

(1) Tribe of Benjamin . . . Note two of its cities (Josh. 18:11-28).

- **Jericho**, was the scene of Israel’s first great victory in the Promised Land (Josh. 6).

- **Jerusalem**, on the border between Judah and Benjamin, it became the chief city of Palestine; a holy city for the Christians, Jews, and Muslims (2 Chron. 6:6).
- (2) Tribe of Simeon . . . note two facts (Josh. 19:1-9).
- As far as we know, Scripture never mention a significant person ever from this tribe.
 - Simeon's lot was within Judah (Josh. 19:1), who had more than what was needed and was willing to share (Josh. 19:9).
- (3) Tribe of Zebulun . . . note two important places (Josh. 19:10-16).
- **Mount Tabor**, . . . it was on this mount Jesus was transfigure (Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36).
 - **Sea of Galilee (or Sea of Tiberias . . . a Lake)**
From this location Jesus Christ preached many of His sermons and wrought many miracles (Matt. 4:18-22; 14:22-23; Mark 2:1-28; etc.)
- (f) **Conspicuous Lifestyle/Joshua** (Josh. 19:49-51)
- (1) Dividing the Promised Land into lots was beneficial (19:49).
- The boundaries gave each tribe ownership of an area, promoting loyalty and unity that would strengthen each tribe.
 - The boundaries specified areas of responsibility and privilege which helped each tribe to develop and mature.
 - The boundaries reduced conflicts that might have broken out if everyone had wanted to live in the choicest areas.
- (2) Joshua was a considerate, caring and compassionate leader (Josh. 19:49-51).
- He was last to receive his inheritance.
 - He made sure that the other tribes and individuals were taken care of first.
 - Joshua was a selfless leader, a leader who willingly gave so that his people were cared for first, even before himself.
 - Despite all the facts about who he was, he did not desire to have first settlement for himself and his family.
 - His attitude and action showed that he sought the good of his country and was not driven by private interest of his own.
 - Despite his authority, he would not act as if only his needs and opinions mattered; he would acquire his inheritance under God by the grant of the people.
- (3) In regards to Joshua's choice (Note v. 50), one scholar noted:
"He asked for Timnath-serah, a city in the hill country of his own tribe Ephraim, on the north side of the mountain of Gash (Judges 2:9), not a paradise rich in fertility or beauty, but a place to be built up and to dwell in and to die in (Judges 2:8-9)."

2. Introduction to Josh. 20:1-21:45

Joshua chapter 20 is a short chapter regarding the cities of refuge. The cities of refuge have been mentioned in the writings of Moses: Num. 35:9-28; Deut. 4:41-43; 19:1-13.

Levites of Levitical priests lived in the cities of refuge. They were established to provide refuge for a person who accidentally committed murder. Stating it another way, a city of refuge in ancient Israel provided a place of asylum for unintentional murderers.

We will be looking at two things in this chapter: (1) the necessity for these cities; why the law of God made provision for them (Josh. 20:1-6); and (2) we have the names and location of these cities (Josh. 20:7-9).

Joshua chapter 21 . . . in essence we have an account of the Levites receiving their towns (cities) and adjoining pasturelands and as observed in Josh. 21:10, priority was given to the priestly families.

*The coverage in this lesson will be a **brief presentation** in comparison to the volume of information involved in regards to the Levitical Priesthood.*

As we have seen in other lessons, the Levites were not give an inheritance with the other brethren; that is, no particular part of the country was assigned to them as it was with the other tribes (Josh. 13:14, 33; 14:3; 18:7). Some have wondered why they were not given an inheritance in the Shiloh area where the Tabernacle was located, and according to those scholars this location (Shiloh) would be appropriate. However, God had orchestrated His plans which was and is always best!

The Levites were not losers, that's far from the real facts, God had plans for them and such would be fully realized by His servants. As we have seen in other lessons it was necessary to have the Levites among the people to guide them in the ways of God.

In this chapter (Josh. 21) we have observed three things: (1) the Levites made it known to have their **cities** assigned to them according to God's appointment (Josh. 21:1-2). (2) A general report of the cities assigned (Vv. 3-8) and a comprehensive report of the forty-eight cities assigned (Vv. 9-42). (3) The chapter closes with the acknowledgment of God's faithfulness to His children (Vv. 43-45).

Josh. 13:33 NASB

"But to the tribe of Levi, Moses did not give an inheritance; the LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as He had promised."

Excerpts from Joshua chapters 20 and 21 (Josh. 20:1-6; 21:1-3, 41-42, 43-45 NIV study Bible)

“Then the LORD said to Joshua: ‘Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed you through Moses, so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood. When they flee to one of these cities, they are to stand at the entrance of the city gate and state their case before the elders of the city. Then the elders are to admit the fugitive into their city and provide a place to live among them. If the avenger of blood comes in pursuit, the elders must not surrender the fugitive, because the fugitive killed their neighbor unintentionally and without malice afore-thought. They are to stay in that city until they have stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at the time. Then they may go back to their own home in the town from which they fled!

... ..

Now the family heads of the Levites approached Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the other tribal families of Israel at Shiloh in Canaan and said to them, ‘The LORD commanded through Moses that you give us towns to live in, with pasturelands for our livestock.’ So as the LORD had commanded, the Israelites gave the Levites the following towns and pasturelands out of their own inheritance:

... ..

The towns of the Levites in the territory held by the Israelites were forty-eight in all together with their pasturelands. Each of these towns had pasturelands surrounding it; this was true for all these towns.

... ..

So the LORD gave Israel all the land He had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as He had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hands. Not one of all the LORD’S good promises to Israel failed, everyone was fulfilled.”

A. Sheltered from Judgment Josh. 20:1-6

1. Preface

The following is a quote from The Preacher’s Outline and Sermon Bible.

“The cities of refuge were set aside to handle cases of murder through the land. Note that the cities of refuge were immediately designated right after the Promised Land had been divided among the twelve tribes. This is significant, for it shows that murder is a serious crime in the eyes of God. In fact, murder is so serious that one of the Ten Commandments prohibits taking of another life, and God says that the very ground where the body fell is defiled whenever murder goes unpunished (Num. 35:33-34). In the Holy Scriptures, the *sanctity of life* for both man and animal is stressed. The sanctity of life is to be revered (Gen. 9:4-6).

Capital punishment is demanded by God when deliberate, premeditated murder is committed. However, there is a clear distinction between intentional, premeditated

murder and accidental murder. The cities of refuge were set up for those persons who were guilty of manslaughter. As cities of refuge, they are a clear picture of Christ who shelters us from coming judgment. The grace and mercy of God are clearly seen in setting up these cities of refuge.”

2. Place of Refuge (Josh. 20:1-2)

Please Note: As we continue to explore Joshua 20, some facts will be repeated as is necessary.

- (a) It was the desire of God to have these cities of refuge.
 - (1) He commands Joshua to establish the cities of refuge (Josh. 20:1-2).
 - (2) It should also be noted that God had earlier instructed Moses to have these cities established as a place of sanctuary for the need mentioned (Num. 35:6-28; Deut. 4:41-43; 19:1-13; note also Ex. 21:13).
- (b) Now that Israel was taking possession of the promised inheritance, they were reminded to reserve some of the cities for the use as they were commanded (Josh. 20:1-2).
- (c) The cities were designed to typify the relief which the gospel provides for the penitent sinners, and their protection from the curse of the law and the wrath of God, in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom believers run to for refuge.

3. Purpose for the Cities of Refuge (Josh. 20:3)

(a) “. . . refuge from the **avenger of blood**” (Josh. 20:3 KJV).

(1) The Hebrew word for “*avenger of blood*” is translated:

- “*guardian-redeemer*”, note **Ruth 2:20b**
 - **KJV:** “. . . one of our close relatives.”
 - **NIV:** “. . . one of our guardian redeemer.”
 - **ESV:** “. . . one of our redeemer.”
 - You will also come across the word “*goel*”, the participle of the Hebrew “*gaal*” or “*galal*”, which also falls in the above category.
- We also used the word “**kinsman**” or “**kinsmen redeemer**”. These are all translations of the same Hebrew word.
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology defines “kinsman-redeemer” as:

“Male relative who, according to various laws found in the Pentateuch, had the privilege or responsibility to act for a relative who was in trouble, danger of need of vindication.”
- Note carefully Lev. 25:25-28, 47-55, NB v. 25.

(2) Ways the kinsman-redeemer served (Briefly Noted):

- To provide an heir for a brother who had died (Deut. 25:5-10)
- To redeem land that a poor relative had sold outside the family (Lev. 25:25-28).
- To redeem a relative who had been sold into slavery (Lev. 25:47-49)
- To avenge the killing of a relative (Num. 35:19-21).

- (b) The avenger of blood.
- (1) Blood-revenge, or revenge for bloodshed, was regarded among ancient Jews, as well as other nations, which regarded not only a right but even a duty, which developed upon the nearest relative of the murdered person (Ex. 21:14, 24-25; Num. 35:16-21, 26-29, 31).
 - (2) The custom of blood revenge was long standing (Gen. 9:6). The **cities of refuge** (Josh. 20:2) were established to give asylum to those who had **unintentionally** (v. 5) killed another person (Deut. 19:1-12; Num. 35:10-15, 22-25). This provision of cities of refuge prevented blood feud excess.
- (c) The fundamental objective for the cities of refuge was to provide a refuge for the people guilty of accidental, unintentional murder (manslaughter).
- (1) As noted before, it was regarded not only a right but the duty of the “kinsman” to avenge the death of the person killed.
 - (2) These cities provided for the safety of the murderer until appropriate measures were taken to determine the true situation regarding the murder.
4. **Precondition** (Josh. 20:4-6)
- (a) There were conditions to be met before a final outcome was decided on for the murderer.
 - (b) Observe carefully, verses 4-6 and note the legislations that governed the cities of refuge and the fugitive who was guilty of accidental, unintentional murder.
 - (1) The fugitive or manslayer was to flee to a city of refuge and state his case to the judges.
 - Once the fugitive entered the city gate he was secured from the “avenger of blood”.
 - “. . . the gate of the city” (v. 4), the civil courts of the Hebrews were normally held at the city gates (2 Sam. 15:2; Ruth 4:1; Amos 5:10-15).
 - The fugitive flee to a city of refuge in order to be given a fair trial, and was safe until the judges determined his guilt or innocence.
 - (2) When the manslayer arrived at a city of refuge he was to be accepted by the city officials.
 - The city leaders were to provide him a place to live within the city.
 - Some scholars believe that the manslayer was also provided with a job in order to earn a livelihood.
 - (3) The fugitive was never to be turned over to the “slayer of blood” (v. 5) . . . (*at least not until a trial was conducted ... noted below*).
 - The fugitive’s account is that the murder was an accident and there was no malice or forethought to hurt his neighbor.
 - The fugitive was to remain safe because he was innocent of murder until proven guilty.
 - (4) The accused was to remain in the city until the trial before the city officials who were thus delegated.

- The accused must prove that he did not have murderous intent.
- **Josh. 20:6a NKJV**
 “And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the one who is high priest in those days.”
 - If the tribunal determined that the killer was guilty of premeditated murder, he was to be delivered to the “avenger of blood” (Deut. 19:12).
 - If it was decided that he was guilty of manslaughter, or unpremeditated and unintentional killing he was to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest.
 - The death of the high priest established a sort of “statute of limitations” and the killer could then return to his home without being in danger of reprisal. The accidental death was, so to speak, expunged from the record.
(“statute of limitation”: a law that sets the maximum amount of time that parties involved in a dispute have to initiate legal proceedings from the date of an alleged offense, whether civil or criminal)

B. Six Cities of Refuge Josh. 20:7-9

1. Designated Cities (Josh. 20:7-8)

- (a) The cities of refuge were in six specified locations.
- (b) The cities selected were located almost at equal distance from each other.
 - (1) They were also located in order that the fugitive would be able to reach one quickly.
 - (2) As noted before, these cities were prepared as a haven for the manslayer.
 - (3) It was the manslayer’s responsibility to flee into one of these cities where he would be safe from the “avenger of blood” (Vv. 7-8).
- (c) The location of the six cities:
 - (1) Joshua himself assigned three cities west of Jordan (Promised Land) (v. 7).
 - **Kedesh** in Naphtali
 - **Shechem** in Ephraim
 - **Hebron** in Judah

NOTE: *The KJV uses “mount” and “mountain” (v. 7), thus referring that these cities were located in the “hill country” as translated in the Amplified Bible, the RSV and other translations.*
 - (2) Moses had already assigned three cities on the east side of Jordan (Deut. 4:41-43; Josh. 20:8)
 - **Golan** in Bashan-Manasseh
 - **Ramoth-Gilead** in Gad
 - **Bezer** in Reuben

NOTE: To give easy access to all who needed protection, these cities were located in the north, center and south on both sides of Jordan.

(3) The city of Kedesh was “set apart” (v. 7a)

KJV: “And they appointed Kedesh.”

NIV: “So they set apart Kedesh.”

Amplified Bible: “And they set apart and consecrated Kedesh.”

- In plain and simple language, they “consecrated Kedesh”.
- The cities of refuge were all Levitical cities (towns), and the Levites were “set apart” for the spiritual development and holy lifestyle of the nation of Israel (Ex. 28:1-4; 29:44-46).
- This reverential and godly environment, that was evident in the cities of refuge, was of great benefit for the “manslayer” (guilty or innocent of willful murder) because their lives would be impacted by the Levites to the glory of God!!

2. Door of Opportunity (Josh. 20:9)

(a) The cities of refuge were openly available places of refuge (v. 9).

(1) Anyone who had accidentally killed a person, whether he was an Israelite or a foreigner could flee to a city of refuge.

(2) This open opportunity is a proof of equal protection granted to foreigners living in Israel (Lev. 19:33-34; Deut. 10:18-19).

(b) This open opportunity demonstrates the mercy and grace of God.

(1) This is a clear picture that any person can flee to Christ for refuge, from the avenger of death and receive a warm welcome, into the refuge He provides from judgment to come.

(2) God’s message of mercy, was and continues to be available to the whosoever will!! Indeed, mercy there (was) is great and grace free!! Rom. 10:10-13; etc.

*(We will continue **briefly** discussing this thought below).*

3. Definite Facts Regarding the Cities of Refuge

The account concerning the cities of refuge emphasizes some important truths.

(a) God took the initiative in providing these cities.

(1) Note Josh. 20:1-2

“... the LORD spake unto Joshua saying ... appoint out for you cities of refuge.” (KJV)

(2) The sympathetic understanding God has for man’s frailties is made obvious in this act.

(b) God made a very clear distinction between willful murder and accidental homicide (Num. 35:9-21, 22-28).

(1) This fact indicates that man is to be judged primarily in the light of his motive rather than in the light of his performance.

(2) The importance of one’s motive continues to be the principle that is still basic in legal procedures today.

(c) God wants the innocent protected!!

- (1) He declared that these cities of refuge be easily accessible to all who needed security.

Josh. 20: 9a NKJV

“These were the cities appointed for **all the children of Israel and stranger who dwelt among them.**”

- (2) Men were not protected because they were Israelites but because they were innocent of willful murder.

4. **Divine Deliverer . . . Practical Lesson.**

“When the Israelites were settled in their promised inheritance, they were reminded to set apart cities of refuge, whose use and typical meaning have been explained in Numbers 35.

God’s spiritual Israel have, and shall have in Christ and heaven, not only rest to repose in, but refuge to secure themselves in. These cities were designed to typify the relief which the gospel provides for penitent sinners, and their protection from the curse of the law and the wrath of God, in our Lord Jesus, to whom believers flee for refuge, Hebrews 6:18.” (Matthew Henry Bible Commentary Concise)

(a) **Jesus Christ is our refuge!**

- (1) Jesus Christ is our refuge, our protection from sin and judgment to come.
- (2) The undisputed fact remains, we have all sinned (Rom. 3:23) and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). However, because of the mercy and grace of God, we can find refuge in Jesus Christ (Rom. 5, NB Vv. 1-11; 8:1-11).
- (3) Based on the Word of God, we have strong consolation and hope because we **have fled for refuge to lay hold of hope set before us** (Heb. 6:18b NKJV).

- Similarly, as the murderer is guilty before God, so we are guilty of sin (Rom. 3:9-20)

Rom. 3:10 ESV

“As it is written: none is righteous, no not one.”

- The penitent sinner who flees to Jesus Christ finds refuge in His righteousness (Psa. 18:2; 46:1-3; 91:2; John 3:16)
- See also Isa. 28:14-16, NB Vv. 15-16

Isa. 28:16 Amplified Bible

“Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am laying in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tested Stone a precious Cornerstone of sure foundation; **he who believes (trust in, relies on, and adheres to that Stone) will not be ashamed** or give way or hastened away [in sudden panic]. [Psa. 118:22; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-6].”

(b) Our righteousness is of Jesus Christ

Please Note: *The following are limited highlights . . . details are not possible at this time.*

- (1) Man is limited and unable to live a righteous life without God.

- Man is helpless to save himself (Isa. 64:6)
 - Salvation, deliverance from everlasting doom, is not earned by man's works (Eph. 2:9). The believers are Christ's workmanship (Eph. 2:10).
 - **In Christ** we are regenerated (2 Cor. 5:17; Titus 3:5 and **only as He abides in us and we abide in Him** that we will grow and produce Christian character (John 15:1-11)
- (2) Beloved, **we are found in Christ not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, the righteousness that we have is through faith in Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:9).**
- At the judgment we will be in right relationship with God because we accepted God's provision by our faith in Jesus Christ.
 - Our righteousness is solely of God, in which we are forgiven, justified and accepted by God as a gift.
- (3) Being found "in Christ" means that Christ is our sanctuary, our refuge from death and the coming judgment of God.
- (4) **If a person is to escape death and judgment, he must flee to Jesus Christ. Christ alone has been appointed by God to give refuge and safety from death and judgment.**
- (5) See Gal. 1:4; 3:13; Heb. 2:9, 14-15; 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18.

C. Special Cities for the Levites Josh. 21:1-2

1. Priesthood/Levitical (v. 1).

In previous lessons (Lessons 3A, 11 and 12), brief references were made in regards to the Levites. There were instances where the "Levites" were referred to in general terms as it relates to them as the descendants of Levi. At this time, I will add limited information regarding the Levites in their role in the Levitical Priesthood. This is another great subject that covers a wealth of information and further study is recommended if you so desire.

(a) Israel's priests

In pagan countries surrounding Israel, such as Egypt and Babylon, priesthood was closely connected with magic and superstition. The priesthood in Israel was not built on pagan practices but took into account another dimension in the religious world, that of supernatural revelation by the true and living God.

The office of priesthood was vested in the tribe of Levi. The Levitical priesthood began with Aaron, the older brother of Moses (Ex. 28:1-3). Aaron's descendants served as priests in Israel, ministering in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple, primarily as mediators between man and God. Among the Levites there were three families: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari (the three sons of Levi) (Gen. 46:11).

(1) Kohath's son Amram was the father of Miriam, Aaron and Moses and their mother was Jochebed the daughter of Levi (*she was their mother and aunt*).

(2) **It was the "Kohath's" family from whom the priest of Israel came.**
(See the "Three Divisions of the Priesthood" below).

The primary function of the Levitical Priesthood was to maintain and assure, as well as reestablish, the holiness of the chosen people of God (Ex. 28:38; Lev. 10:7; Num. 18:1). The priesthood mediated the covenant of God with Israel (Mal. 2:4; Num. 18:19; Jer. 33:20-26).

In early Israel, an important function of the priests was to discover the will of God by means of the ephod (1 Sam. 23:6-12). The priests were constantly occupied with instruction in the law ((Deut. 31:9-13). Their duties also included offering sacrifices. Early priests were guardians of the sanctuary and interpreters of the oracle (**oracle: prophecy ... the spoken word of God ...** 2 Sam. 16:23; Hab. 1:1; Mal. 1:1; **Acts 7:38**). Instructions in the law belonged to the priests (Hosea 4:1-10). The priest acted as judge, there was great reliance on him to give relevant answers for legal and other questions (example Ex. 33:7-11).

Please note the following quote from Lesson 12, page 10:

“A priest is a ministering servant, a bridge-builder; Israel was to be the bridge between God and the nations of the earth. The way for this to be done was to be a holy people.”

(b) Three Divisions of the Levitical Priesthood.

The Levitical priesthood was divided into three groups (1) the High Priest (2) ordinary priests, and (3) Levites. As a reminder, all were descended of Levi. **All priest were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.**

(1) The lowest order of priesthood was the Levites who cared for the service of the Tabernacle.

- These services also varied . . . it is believed that services were rendered by:
 - **The family of Gershon** (descendants of Levi eldest son): their duty was in regards to the outer of the Tabernacle, including the tent and its screens, doors and hangings.
 - **The family of Merari** (descendants of Levi’s youngest son): they were in charge of transportation and care of the structural components of the Tabernacle (**components of the Tabernacle: framework and other structure, example: vertical studs, etc.**).
- The Levites also served as teachers and maintaining the cities of refuge.
- In the Book of Ezra, they were responsible for the construction of the second Temple and also translate and explain the **Torah** when it was publicly read.

(“Torah”: basically mean teaching, direction, guidance and law.

Outstanding are the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, also referred to as “The Pentateuch”. It can also involve other books, believed to be 24 books).

- (2) The sons of Aaron were the ones who were **set apart for the special office of priests**, and they were above the Levites.
- The priest had responsibilities over aspects of Tabernacle and later Temple worship
 - They served as mediators between the Israelites and God.
 - They were the ones that performed animal sacrifices on behalf of the people; they also served as instructors of the law; guardian of the Tabernacle and acted as judges.
 - It was only the priests who were permitted to enter the Holy Place in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple.
- (3) The highest order of the priesthood was **The High Priest.**
- The first High Priest was Aaron, the brother of Moses.
 - Aaron's sons and their descendants were to serve as future High Priest of the nation of Israel (Ex. 28 and 29).
 - The High Priest, powerfully represented the high point of the purity of the priesthood.
 - He bore the names of all tribes of Israel on his breastplate into the Tabernacle, thus representing all the people before God (Ex. 28:29).
 - Only the High Priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple and this was only once per year on the Day of Atonement (i.e. to make seek forgiveness for the sins of the entire nation).

2. **Petition Presented** (Josh. 21:1-2)

(a) Introduction

The designation of special **Levitical cities**, together with the surrounding suburbs (or pastureland) (Vv. 1-3), carries out the previous Mosaic provisions (Num. 35:1-8). Since some forty-eight of these were established throughout the land, spiritual help would be near and available to all Israelites. Having the priests mingling with the people was of utmost importance and as noticed from our text the priestly families were given the precedence (see Vv. 4-10, NB v. 10).

By observing the Levites, it is obvious that they had a strong devotion to God and His call, and they were committed to serving the people. Their presence among the people was a key factor in the nation acquiring and maintaining the lifestyle required by God. The Levites were aware of this basic need and desired to be dispatched among the nation in order to fulfill the will of God.

The Levites were committed to God's call, so they immediately wanted to get to the task and begin their work. No doubt, it was this need that motivated them to take the initiative in laying the claim upon God's promises—His promise that cities and pasturelands would be provided for them.

(b) Leadership made their claim.

“Then the heads of the fathers’ houses of the Levites came near to and they spoke to . . .” (Josh. 21: 1-2 NKJV).

(1) These men approached the “Division of Land Committee”, Joshua, Eleazar and the heads of each tribe, and claimed the promise God had commanded through Moses, that they receive special cities and pasturelands (Num. 35:1-8).

(2) These leaders approached Joshua and the committee on their own.

- They had a strong initiative, zeal and faith in claiming God’s promises.
- They reminded Joshua and the committee of God’s promise to them (v.2)

(3) Sharp contrast in comparison with the seven tribes noted in Josh. 18:2-10.

- The seven tribes (Josh. 18:2-10) were satisfied where they were, overcome by complacency and sluggishness, and failed to claim that which was promised to them.
- The Levites were wholeheartedly committed, displaying zeal and faith in God’s promises.

(4) **There is an inheritance provided for all the saints, the royal priesthood, but they must petition for it!**

- **Matt. 7:7-8 Amplified Bible**

“Keep on asking and it will be given you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking [reverently] and [the door] will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives; and he who keeps on seeking finds; and to him who keeps on knocking, [the door] will be opened”
(Also Luke 11:9-10)

- See also John 15:7; Phil. 4:6-8; James 4:3; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15.

(c) The basis of their claim (*the Levites for their cities promised by God*)

(1) Their claim was built on a good foundation!!

- It was not built upon their own merits nor service rendered, though highly commendable, but solely upon God’s goodness.
- We can rely on God’s goodness
 - A. W. Tozer states:
“The goodness of God is definitely more wonderful than we will ever be able to comprehend.”
 - Source for the following “unknown”:
“**I believe in God** not because my parents told me, not because the church told me, but because I’ve experienced His goodness and mercy myself.”
- Like the Levites we can **always** look to God and claim His blessings (Psa. 34:5-8; 136:1-3; Jer. 29:11-12; Lam. 3:22-26; etc.)

(2) The Levites, ministers of God, were well taken care of . . . note the following:

“The maintenance of ministers is not an arbitrary thing, left purely to the good-will of the people, who may let them starve if they please; no, as the

God of Israel commanded that the Levites should be well provided for, so the Lord Jesus, the King of the Christian church, ordained, and a perpetual ordinance, it is that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14), and live comfortably.” (Matthew Henry)

3. **Patience, Modesty and Humility** (Josh. 21:1-2)

(a) The timing of their claim (Vv. 1-2)

- (1) They waited until all the other tribes were provided for after which they immediately made their claim.
- (2) There was a reason for such delay in making their claim. It was necessary for the other tribes to be settled in order for them to be able to determine what cities were to be given to the Levites.
- (3) As noted before it was necessary for the Levites to live among the people in order to nurture in the ways of God and for holiness to be realized. This would be possible because the Levites were given cities within the inheritance of each tribe.

(b) Humility, modesty and patience.

- (1) The Levites waiting until after other tribes were settled was also an outstanding example of humility, modesty and patience.
- (2) It was important for the Levites to be living examples of such highly valuable virtues as their lifestyle would greatly influence the people.
- (3) They were willing to be served last and they never feared for the worst of such delay. They knew the God that they served and His promises to them.
- (4) As a reminder, Joshua’s situation was different, his qualities were truly outstanding as indeed he was last to receive his inheritance (Josh. 19:49-50). The Levites were given their cities and pasturelands within the inheritance of the other tribes. Both situations are exemplary and worthy of our attention.
- (5) Note the following quote:
 “Let not God’s ministers complain if at any time they find themselves postponed in men’s thoughts and cares, but let them make sure of the favor and the honor that comes from Him, and then they may well enough afford to bear the slights and neglects of men.” (Matthew Henry)

D. **Stewardship of Ministry Josh. 21:3-42**

1. **Preface**

Moses had set the tribe of Levi apart for the priesthood and had given them charge of the Tabernacle (Sanctuary) with its services of worship (Num. 1:47-53; 3:6-13; 8:5-22). For this reason and because they were to serve as teachers and pastors to the nation, they were not allowed a single tract of land as it was with the other tribes, but were scattered among them (Num. 35:1-8).

The three Levitical clans (families) which were distributed among the tribes of north Palestine and Transjordan were: **Kohath** (v. 5), **Gershon** (v. 6), and **Merari** (v. 7).

The cities given to the Levites were scattered throughout the land because God wanted His ministers serving the families of every tribe. Every family was to have a minister within the community. The priest or minister was to teach the people the law and lead them to live holy lives, to minister to their needs, to lead them to worship, and to be a strong witness for the LORD.

Consequently, early in the history of the Israelites, those who served God in full-time service were set-apart. It was expected that they would serve more effectively if they were relieved of normal economic pursuits and anxieties. For their labors they received a tithe of the substance of the other tribes. God arranged so that they were within easy reach of all the people; the expression **“the lot came out for ...” (v. 4 KJV)** shows how God designed the habitation for the Levites as truly as for the other tribes. It was supremely important that the people be instructed in the knowledge of divine law, and that they be edified by godly example. **The Levites living among the people were stewards of the will of God for His people!!**

It's important to note that two passages of Scripture discuss the Levitical cities (Josh. 21:1-45; 1 Chron. 6:54-81). The names do not always agree, but we must remember the names often change down through the years. Moreover, there is a possibility that over the years, some priests may have abandoned some cities and moved to other cities.

2. Prompting

I am hereby noting a few reminders.

- (a) Levi had three sons, Gershon the eldest, Kohath the second son, and Merari the youngest (Ex. 6:16; Num. 3:17).
- (b) Kohath's son Amram was the father of Miriam, Aaron and Moses.
- (c) All priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests.
- (d) It was from the Kohath's family from whom the priests of Israel came; in particular, the sons of Aaron, they were set apart for the special office of priest.
- (e) The lowest order of the priesthood were the other Levites, and referred to as Levites, who cared for the services of the Tabernacle.

(See information above for a brief explanation of the functions of each of the Levites' families).

3. Petition Granted (Josh. 21:3)

- (a) The Levites petition was granted immediately.
 - (1) There was no hesitation by the leadership in-charge of the land distribution to grant the cities to the Levites.
 - It was an urgent and most essential need that must be attended to promptly.
 - Now that the other tribes were settled, it was necessary to have the ministers of God among them in order to nurture the nation in the ways of God.

- (2) The granting of cities to the Levites was absolutely necessary for two reasons:
- As noted before, there was a need for the Levites to live among the people, within their communities so that they could minister to them.
 - The giving of towns and pastureland to the Levites was to provide a place for them, their families and livestock. To state it simply: “They needed a place to live!” (Lev. 25:32; Josh. 14:4; 1 Chron. 13:2; Ezra 2:70; etc.).
- (b) The people’s willingness tested . . . **NOTE Num. 35:8a NKJV**
 “And the cities which you will give shall be **from the possession of the children of Israel . . .**” (Note also Vv. 1-5, highlight Vv. 1-2).
- (1) God tested the people’s generosity and the result was to His praise and glory.
- The people gave willingly and they gave some of the choicest areas.
 - They were also very careful not to give any location that was too far a distant from them.
- (2) The Israelites willingly provided for the Levitical priest, the servants of God among the people of God.
- God’s people are to take care of God’s ministers and provide a livelihood for them.
 - **1 Tim. 5:17-18 NKJV**
 “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, ‘*You shall not muzzle an ox . . . and **The laborer is worthy of his wages.***’”
- (c) The assigning of cities was commanded by God.
- (1) They were given a command by God and were focusing on that command, wholly complying as were required.
- (2) **Note:**
- **Num. 35:1-2 NKJV**
 “And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, saying ‘Command the children of Israel that they give the Levites to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession, and you shall also give the Levites common-land around the cities.’”
 - **Josh. 21:8 NKJV**
 “The Israelites gave by lot to the Levites these with their pasturelands (suburbs), as the Lord commanded through Moses.”
- (d) The amount of land to be given was also dictated by God (Num. 35:4-5).
- (1) They received about 15 square mile or about one-tenth of 1 percent of the land of Canaan.
- (2) In a society where farmland was an important resource, this small fraction of land meant that the Levites certainly had to depend on the generosity of the other tribes among whom they lived for their wellbeing.
- (3) Our study passage noted that forty-eight cities were given to the Levites (Josh. 21:41-42).

(4) The following pointers were taken from Lesson 11.

- “With no land (*great quantity of land*) of their own, the Levites were not able to farm. Additionally, their duties may have prevented them from investing themselves in working a trade. They were supported through tithes and other gifts. Every Jewish farmer gave a tenth of his produce to the Levites. The priests serving in the Temple would also receive portions of animals and other offering brought to the Temple.”
- “The Levites were not to be entangled with the affairs of this life, looking after property and finances and managing the purchases and selling of land, livestock and produce.”
- “The priest was to give his—life, all of his attention and energy and work—to the LORD. He was to focus upon the LORD and upon ministering to the people of God. **The LORD and the people of God were to consume his very life!**”

4. **Presenting the Cities Assigned to the Levites** (Josh. 21:4-42)(a) **Please Note**

(1) When the forty-eight cities were assigned they were divided into four lots.

(2) Note how the lot are presented in our text:

- **First**, we are given the overall breakdown of the cities given to the Levites (Vv. 4-7).
- **Second**, we are presented with an individual listing of the cities given to each of the family within the tribe of Levi (Vv. 9-42).

(3) Other important reminders:

- The Levitical priests were all of the tribe of Levi and served in three groups (a) The High Priest of which there was only one serving at a given time (b) The special office of priest . . . the sons and descendants of Aaron (c) The others were referred to as Levites.
- Levi had three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. It was the Kohath’s family who supplied the priests of Israel.

(b) The overall breakdown of the cities assigned:

(1) **Kohathites** . . . Aarons family (priests only) (Josh. 21:4, 9-19)

. . . Thirteen cities were located in Judah, Simeon and Benjamin.

(2) **The rest of the Kohathites** (Josh 21:5, 20-26).

. . . Ten cities were located in Ephraim, Dan and the half-tribe of Manasseh which lay next to Benjamin.

(3) **Gershonites** (Josh. 21:6, 27-33)

. . . Thirteen cities located in Issachar, Naphtali and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

(4) **Merarites** . . . (Josh. 21:7, 34-40)

. . . Twelve cities were located in Reuben, Gad and Zebulun.

E. Source of Spiritual Rest and Victorious Life Josh. 21:43-45

Introduction Josh. 21:43-45

These verses present a concluding statement of how the LORD fulfilled His sworn promise to give Israel the Promised Land (Canaan) (See Gen. 15:18-21). The occupation of the land was not complete (See Josh. 23:4-5; Judges 1-2), but the national campaign was over and Israel was fully established in the Promised Land. No power was left in Canaan that could threaten to dislodge Israel.

God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:13, 18-21) had been realized, **but only** in the terms that God had stipulated—that the Israelites would, by faith, take possession of their own inheritance (cf. Josh. 14:12-15). These verses do not, as some suggest, exhaust God's pledge to Abraham.

The promise of the Promised Land is part of God's unconditional covenant with Abraham (cf. Gen. 13:14-17; 15:18-21; 17:8; 24:7; 26:3; 28:4; 50:24), but realization of the promise in any era is depended on an active appropriation of it by faith (Josh. 1:5-9; 13:1-6; 17:12-18; 23:3-13).

1. Trustworthiness (Josh 21:43)

(a) God had promised to give the seed of Abraham the land of Canaan for a possession (Gen. 13:14-17; etc.).

(1) The Promised Land was God's and for Him to give as He so desired.

- The earth is His, He is the divine owner (Ex. 19:5; Lev. 25:23; 1 Chron. 29:14; Psa. 24:1).
- We are all accustomed to the granting of inheritance to family members or charitable institutions, even so it is with God, He gives freely and abundantly to His people.
 - God gives the inheritance of the promised Land to His beloved people, to those who believed and followed Him, faithfully promoting His work.
 - God made a promise of the Promised Land to Abraham and his descendants if they would believe and obey Him (Gen. 12:1-3; 24:7; 26:3; etc.).

(2) **Deut. 1:8 Amplified Bible**

“Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give to them and their descendants after them.”

(b) It was not a smooth process for Israel getting to this point in their history.

(1) Israel had often forfeited the benefit of the Promised Land and God had long delayed the realization of that promise (for example see Num. 32:6-15; etc.).

(2) However, now all the difficulties were conquered and Canaan was their own.

(c) Victory was experienced by a generation of Abraham's descendants who were faithful in following God and obeying Him.

- (1) The result of their commitment was overwhelmingly wonderful, the Promised Land was theirs!!
- (2) **Their victory also proved that God is trustworthy, faithful and true to His Word!!**

(d) **“Great is Thy Faithfulness”** (*Verse 1*)

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father
 There is no shadow of turning with Thee
 Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
 As Thou has been Thou forever wilt be
 Great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy faithfulness
 Morning by morning new mercies I see
 All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
 Great is Thy faithfulness Lord, unto me.

- (e) **Beloved, the promise of the heavenly Canaan is as sure to all God’s spiritual Israel, for it is the promise of Him who cannot lie!!**

2. **Tranquility** (Josh. 21:44a)

Josh. 21:44a NKJV

“The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers.”

- (a) God promised Israel rest, and this is applicable to ALL who commit their lives to Him!!

(1) **The presence of God guarantees rest!**

- In the Pilgrimage of Life (Ge, 28:15)
- His presence Gives Courage in Life’s Battles (Deut. 20:1)
- It Gives Comfort in Trials (Isa. 43:2)
- His Presence will be to the End (Matt. 28:20)

- (2) His assurance to Moses, also applies to us!

Ex. 33:14 NKJV

“And He said, My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

- (3) Israel was guaranteed rest from their years of wanderings in a land of ultimate blessing (Deut. 11:8-12: 31:19-23, NB v. 20; etc.)

- (4) Later in their history they experienced exile because of their apostasy and even then the compassionate, caring God reached out to them with much assurance, promising rest (for example see Isa. 14:1-3, NB v. 3; etc.).

- (b) God promised rest to Israel, rest in the Promised Land (Gen. 15:7; 17:1-8; etc.).

- (1) Israel had experienced a long period of being pilgrims and sojourners (as noted before).

- They owned no land which meant they could build no homes, or have their own farms, etc.
- They were also slaves in Egypt for more than four hundred years.
- After their deliverance from Egypt they wandered in the wilderness for forty years.

- (2) They too (Israelites) could also testify that through it all they learnt to trust in God and to depend on His Word!!
 - (3) God had promised them rest, rest of body and rest of spirit.
 - (4) Rest in the land of milk and honey, a land of unbounded wealth; Israel would no longer experience a time of bitterness and barrenness.
 - (5) Rest from fatigue of their travel through the wilderness tedious march.
 - (6) Rest from their wars in Canaan and from the insults of their enemies.
- (c) Note a few quotes on “Tranquility”.
- (1) “Peace begins within, if you are not peaceful inside, the world you see will be chaotic.”
 - (2) “Your life become a masterpiece when you learn to master peace.”
 - (3) “A contented heart is a calm sea in the midst of all storms.”
 - (4) “May the God of hope fill you with all **Joy and Peace**. As you trust in Him, so that you may **Overflow**. With hope by the **Power of the Holy Spirit**.”
 - (5) See Psa. 4:7; Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15; etc.

3. **Triumph** (Josh. 21:44b)

Josh. 21:44b NKJV

“And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.”

- (a) God promised rest resulting from their victory ... the people experienced victory and peace.
- (1) God Himself gave rest, physical and spiritual rest, rest of body and of heart!
 - (2) God gave rest to His beloved people after years of toiling and stressful situations; now they were saying: “Peace, peace, wonderful peace; Coming down from the Father above!”
 - (3) Israel was no longer living in expectation of receiving the Promised Land but were in possession of it!!
 - (4) God was faithful in providing them rest.
 - The enemy had been conquered and the land was theirs!
 - The former things were passed away and Israel was now settled and experiencing day to day rest and tranquility by the providence of the true and living God.
- (b) Victory over the enemies!
- (1) From the outset of Joshua’s leadership, victory over all enemies was assured by God (Josh. 1:1-9, NB Vv. 3-7).
 - (2) It was God who helped them conquer the enemies, even those who though they were unconquerable.
- #### **Josh. 21:44b Amplified Bible**
- “Not one of all their enemies withstood them; the Lord delivered **all** their enemies into their hands.”
- (3) God’s people was now in control of the Promised Land.

- The great alliance of the south and the mighty alliance of the north that intended to keep Israel out of Canaan were defeated.
 - God is mighty in battles (Psa. 24:8); He fought the battles of His people (1 Sam. 17:45-47, NB v. 47), He fought with and for Israel (Josh. 5:13-6:5; 8:1-2, 18; 10:8-14; 11:6-8). For the remaining smaller enemy forces remaining in Canaan God had guaranteed His help (Josh. 13:6).
- (4) God's faithfulness had given victory to the people of Israel and such is an assurance to all His people today, no matter what the challenge may be, victory is in Jesus Christ!!
- (5) There are so many songs of victory flooding my mind . . . I will partially quote **"Victory is Mine"**
- Victory is mine
 Victory is mine
 Victory today is mine

I told Satan to get thee behind
 Victory today is mine.

(c) **Victorious Christian Life!**

At this point in the history of Israel (Josh. 21) we are witnessing a period of great triumph, a time of blissful joy as they gave thanks for God's abundant blessings. This glorious victory didn't happen overnight but it was a process that included acts of failures, delays and great set-backs.

Israel's victory was realized by a generation (as noted in the Book of Joshua) that displayed commitment, obedience and faithfulness to God.

*(We will have time to highlight **a few pointers** in regards to a "Victorious Christian Life").*

- (1) As followers of Jesus Christ, we all want to live a triumphant Christian lives. The Bible assures us that God and His Son, Jesus Christ, are Victors and the believers can share in their victories: **"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57 NKJV).**
- (2) Our life must be built upon and centered in Jesus Christ.
- He paid the price for our sins and in Him we experience spiritual birth (born again) (1 Peter 1:18-19; 2 Cor. 5:17).
 - Oh Beloved! our victory is in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:35-39; 1 Cor. 15:57; 1 John 5:4).
 - We will be fruitful only as we **abide in Him and He abides in us** (John 15:1-11; 1 John 2:6, 28; 3:6).
 - As children of God we must walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6; Col. 3)
 - The old self must die and our new life must reflect Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:17-32)

- (3) We must feed on God’s Word in order to mature but so many are falling behind when it comes to this requirement (*but we will not get to that issues today*) . . . see for example (Jer. 15:16; Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15; **1 Peter 2:2**).
 - (4) We must be dependent on, controlled and fully guided by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8; Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5:16-17; Eph. 5:18).
 - (5) We need the influence of a local church:
 - Fellowship is important (Heb. 10:25)
 - The church is where we are:
 - Admonished (Rom. 15:14; 2 Tim. 3:16).
 - Edified (Eph. 4:29; 2 Cor. 13:10).
 - Nurtured (1 Thess. 5:14-15; 1 Peter 5:1-3)
 - (7) Here is an example of an exemplary church (Acts 2:41-47)
 - (6) The victorious Christian life triumphs over the world—the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16)
 - (7) It is conquering fear and knowing God’s peace (John 14:27; 16:33).
 - (8) To be victorious requires that we persevere through the troubles or hardships or famine or nakedness or any other adverse circumstances (Rom. 8:28-39, NB Vv. 35-39).
 - (9) As we travel this pilgrim’s journey, Satan’s attacks will continue but we **MUST** continue in faith and remain focused on Jesus Christ!! (Rom. 1:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 John 5:4-5).
- 2 Tim. 1:12b ESV**
 “. . . But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.”
- (10) Beloved, we can shout it loud and clear: **“Victory in Jesus, my Savior forever!!”**

4. Taken Care of (Josh. 21:45)

Josh. 21:45 Amplified Bible

“There failed no part of any good thing which the Lord had promised to the house of Israel; all came to pass.”

(a) The LORD fulfilled every good promise He had made to Israel.

(1) Not a single promise failed! No not one!!

Josh. 21:45 NIV

“Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to Israel failed; everyone was fulfilled.”

(2) In his address to Israel this was a part of Joshua’s testimony:

Josh. 23:14 NKJV

“Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them failed.”

(3) See also 1 Kings 8:56; Jer. 33:14.

Oh! Beloved, we have so much to be thankful for . . . Oh! may we be truly appreciative!! Bless His Holy Name!! Hallelujah!! Hallelujah!! Bless His Holy Name!!

(b) From this special time in Israel's history, we can note four important lessons.

(1) **God is faithful to His promises.**

- The assurance was given to Israel of victory, possessions and rest.
- It is on God's faithfulness that man builds his faith. Without faith in God man has no foundation for confidence (Heb. 11:6)

(2) **Delay is not failure**

- Abraham waited many years before a son was born to him.
- Israel spent four-hundred years before they were liberated from Egyptian slavery.
- They spent forty years wandering in the wilderness before they crossed the River Jordan
- During those years, God was not unfaithful . . . He was still there!! Indeed He was there all the time!! Glory to His name!
- God's faithfulness prevailed and in the fullness of time and as the author of Joshua states: **"All came to pass" (Josh. 21:45 KJV).**
- **Do not cave-in, God is faithful, He will see you through!** Our belief in God leads to courage and our courage leads to strengthening us and our God given strength leads to victory!! **(Psa. 27:14)**
See also: Psa. 62:5; 123:2; Isa. 40:31; 41:10.

(3) **The Lord both makes promises and fulfills them!!**

- In Josh. 21:43-45 reference is made to the Lord's promises of land, rest, and victory, and other good things. All of these assurances are declared fulfilled.
- Israel was to remember that the God of truth and love is the God of the ages . . . He is without limits!!

Psa. 37:40 NKJV

"And the Lord shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, And save them, Because they trust in Him."

(4) **The conquest by Israel of the Promised Land was complete and incomplete.**

- As noted earlier, the national campaign was completed (Josh. 10:40-42; 11:23; 12:7-24) but the occupation was not completed (Josh. 13:2-6; 14:12; 17:12-18; 23:5).
 - God was faithful to Israel in fulfilling His promises. . . . **"all came to pass Josh. 21:45).**
 - The major armies were defeated by Joshua and the smaller cities remaining were the responsibility of each tribe to conquer.

- Each tribe had to do their part in faithfully obeying the covenant, or they would fail to possess the land completely (Josh. 1:6-9; 23:6-14).
- Likewise, under the new covenant, God will faithfully fulfill His promises to us as believers.
 - God has done His part and man has his obligation to be faithfully obedient to God's will in order to fully possess God's promises and kingdom (See Luke 12:31)
 - If receiving God's promises falls short, the failure lies with us, not with our LORD. It is God's desire to give His people the kingdom!

Luke 12:32 Amplified Bible

"Do not be seized with alarm and struck with fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

(c) The song: **"He Never Failed Me Yet"** ... Cece Winan (*Partial Quote*)

God is not like men who lie
 Nor like the son of men who die
 His truth will always be alive
 It never will be dead

So try Him for yourself and see
 Those who believe, they shall receive
 I pray that day, you too can say
 "He never failed me yet"

Can you help me?

He's never failed me yet
 He's never failed me yet
 He's never failed me yet

I'm grateful for those simple words
 That I so often overheard
 Though many memories drift like birds
 Some still I can't forget
 They come back ringing on time
 Like bells so heavenly, they chime
 That old-time phrase, now—oh mine
 "He never failed me Yet"

2 Tim. 2:15 Amplified Bible

“Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of truth.”

LESSON 16 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Complete the following:

“The Tabernacle was a (a) _____, (b) _____ effective and a (c) _____ witness that required (d) _____ admiration, (e) _____ and (f) _____ of the Israelites to the true and living God.

2. Complete each of the following:

The Tabernacle was God’s first dwelling place on earth.

- (a) He walked in the company of _____.
- (b) He visited Abraham at Mamre, but no _____.
- (c) In the Tabernacle, He comes down to dwell with His redeem, and from then till now, He had a _____.
- (d) Jesus’ coming brought major difference; in Christ, God was manifested in the flesh: “the Word became flesh and _____” (John 1:14 Amplified Bible Classic edition).
- (e) Next came the Church—a spiritual house, a holy temple built of living stones. This the present _____ (See 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16).

3. In what way was it an effective plan, when Joshua assigned representatives from each of the seven tribes to survey the remaining land (Josh. 18:2-10)?

4. As noted in Lesson 15, commenting on Josh. 19:49-51; what were the benefits derived when Israel divided Canaan, in lots for each tribe?

5. Complete the following:

“Capital (a) _____ is demanded by God when (b) _____, premeditated (c) _____ is committed. However, there is a clear (d) _____ between (e) _____, premeditated murder and (f) _____ murder.”

6. In what way were the cities of refuge were symbolic of Christ’s ministry?

7. (a) Answer True or False. (b) Explain your answer.

“The cities of refuge were first introduced during Joshua’s administration.”

8. (a) What other terms were used for the “avenger of blood”? (b) Briefly define the term “avenger of blood”.

9. What were some specific areas in which the “kinsman-redeemer” served?

10. What was the fundamental objective for the cities of refuge?

11. According to Josh. 20:4-6, what were the legislations governing the cities of refuge?

12. List the six cities of refuge and their locations, with references.

13. Complete by choosing the correct answer:

The cities of refuge were openly available as a place of refuge (v. 9).

“ _____ killed a person, whether he was an Israelite or a foreigner could flee for refuge in a city of refuge.”

- (a) Anyone who had intentionally
- (b) Anyone willingly and secretly
- (c) Anyone in rage purposely
- (d) Anyone who had accidentally

14. What are some fundamentally important truths to be noted concerning the cities of refuge (as it relates to the availability of mercy and justice? *Briefly*)

15. In regards to the cities of refuge, we noted two practical lessons of the “Divine Deliverer”. Note these two pointers with brief explanation.

16. As noted in our lesson, what was the difference between the priesthood of Israel and pagan countries?

17. Complete the following:

"If a person is to (a) _____ death and (b) _____, he must (c) _____ to Jesus Christ. (d) _____ alone has been (e) _____ by God to give (f) _____ and (g) _____ from death and (h) _____.

18. (a) List the three divisions of the Levitical Priesthood. (b) Note which of the Levite's family served in each division. (c) Note two areas of services, ministered by each group.

19. Why was it important for the priests of Israel to live among the Israelite nation?

20. In regards to claiming their inheritance, identify difference in attitude between the seven tribes (Josh. 18:2-10) and the Levites (Josh. 21:1-2)?

21. Complete by choosing the correct answer:

"The goodness of God is definitely more wonderful than we will ever _____
_____." (Statement by A. W. Towzer in regards to God's
goodness).

- (a) be able to desire
- (b) be able to comprehend
- (c) live to truly enjoy
- (d) read in the Scriptures

22. In regards to the Levites making their claim, briefly explain: (a) why it was important and necessary for such delay? (b) What outstanding example was displayed?

23. In granting these cities for the Levites, in what way was the willingness of the other tribes was tested?

24. Complete the following:

“The priest was to give his—(a) _____, all of his attention and (b) _____ and work—to the (c) _____. He was to (d) _____ upon the LORD and upon (e) _____ to the people of God. The LORD and the (f) _____ of God were to consume his very (g) _____.”

25. Briefly explain Josh. 21:44b:

“And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand” (NKJV).

26. We have discussed Israel’s years of wandering, etc., as well as the realization of **all** God’s promises. What are four important lessons can be learnt from this special time in Israel’s history, noted in our lesson?
