

## Joshua Chapter 20

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V: 1 The Lord is still speaking to Joshua, guiding and directing him.

- This is in part because Joshua is willing to be guided and directed, Joshua has been obedient thus far; God speaks to those who would listen and obey.
- If we only want to hear God speak to us so that we can then decide or judge whether we will be obedient or not – then we probably shouldn't expect to hear from Him.

**2 Chronicles 16:9** “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him...”

V: 2-6 Appoint the cities of refuge that Moses spoke of.

- Cities of refuge: a safe place / safe haven where those who had committed manslaughter – the killing of another by accident, unawares, un-wittingly, or without malice.
- In various primitive cultures, revenge killing is a common place practice. If someone killed a person in my family, then I would be honor bound to avenge that death by either killing the person who did it, or someone else in their family.
- Our tour guide in Israel could not, would not go to Jordan for this reason because of his military experiences.
- We're called not to take these matters into our own hands:

**Romans 12:19** “Dearly beloved, avenge not ourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

- Here we see that God made a provision for those who killed someone else by accident to protect the innocent.
- **Manslayer responsibilities:**
  1. Get to the city of refuge.
  2. Declare his cause to the elders.
  3. Remain in the city for the hearing and until the death of the High Priest. Leaving prior to that meant that they were fair game.
  4. After the death of the High Priest he's free to go home.
- **Elders of the city responsibilities:**
  1. Receive the manslayer.
  2. Give him a place to stay.
  3. Conduct an investigation and trial.
  4. Protect the manslayer pending the outcome.

- **Avenger of blood responsibilities:**
  1. Obey the law / forgive.
  2. No circumstances ever justify abandoning God's law.
  3. There is never an excuse for sin.

V: 7-9          Six cities were appointed, spread out over the promise land so the manslayer had a decent chance of getting there before being caught by the avenger of blood.

- The roads leading to these cities were well maintained, there were well marked with signs directing them to the "city of refuge".
- The idea was that a man involved in a fatal accident could get a fair trial and obtain mercy. If it turned out that the man slayer had a grudge against the victim or if there was the discovery of some other malicious intent, then he would be turned over to the avenger of blood and killed.
- Some see the city of refuge as a type of Jesus our refuge to whom we run when we're in trouble.
  1. Kedesh in Galilee. Kedesh = **holy**, City of refuge, Jesus the Holy One.
  2. Shechem in Ephraim between Mt. Ebal & Mt. Gerezim. Shechem = Shoulder, represents **strength**, Jesus our strength.
  3. Hebron in Judah. Hebron = communion or **fellowship** – our refuge in is communion and fellowship with Jesus.
  4. Bezer, across the Jordan to the South. Bezer means fortification or defense, safety, Jesus is our fortress and our defense, our strong tower, our safety.
  5. Ramoth, across the Jordan in the middle. Ramoth = "heights", exultation, uplifting. Jesus is the lifter of our head.
  6. Golan, across the Jordan to the North. Golan = "**Rejoicing**", happiness – in Christ Jesus we rejoice.
- Before leaving this theme, there is another application to the nation of Israel and to us:
  1. To those who are guilty of the blood of Jesus, guilty of killing Him on the cross.
    - Jews – Romans – all of us.

When Jesus prayed on the cross:

**Luke 23:34** "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do"

2. Jesus was declaring them and us of being guilty of manslaughter as opposed to murder.

3. The way was opened to their forgiveness and ours – now we could run to Jesus for refuge from the avenger.

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## *Joshua Chapter 21*

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- After appointing the cities of refuge, next would be the designating the cities for the Levites to dwell in.

V: 1-8           The Levites were not given an inheritance in the land, or of the land because the Lord was their inheritance, the sacrifices were their inheritance – but they did need a place to live, so they are assigned cities and suburbs.

- There were three main families within the Levites: Kohath: which included Moses and Aaron, Gershon, and Merari:
- They each camped around the Tabernacle and they each had responsibilities relating to the Tabernacle.
- The cities were assigned according to the lot drawn: Moses of the tribe of Levi, of the family of Kohath drew lots like everybody else, neither did Joshua seek to set up a dynasty – God determined their inheritances.
- The lot that fell to the families of the Kohathites: Cities within Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.
- The High Priest came from this family, and they would come out of Judah – they would live in the same precincts as Shiloh and later Jerusalem.
- Gershon: Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, ½ tribe of Manaseh.
- Merari: Ruben, Gad, ½ tribe of Manasseh.
- The Levites being spread out to shepherd the nation of Israel, to minister to their spiritual needs and instruct them in the ways of the Lord.

V: 9-26           We get to the specific cities given to the Kohathites:

V: 27-33          Levitical cities for the Gershonites:

V: 34-43          Levitical cities for the sons of Merari:

V: 44-45          God has kept his word, He gave Israel all that He said he would:

**Genesis 13:14-15** <sup>14</sup>“And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: <sup>15</sup>For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.”

- Now some 475 years later God has kept his word, standing at Bethel looking in every direction they possessed everything as far as the eye could see.
- God gave them rest, no enemy was able to stand against them.

V: 45 “<sup>45</sup>There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.”

Jesus tells us:

**Matthew 24:35** “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”

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## *Joshua Chapter 22*

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V: 1-4 Joshua gathers the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the ½ tribe of Manasseh and commends them for keeping their promise; for not leaving their brethren, for discharging their oath – mission accomplished.

- These tribes cut a deal with Moses to take possession of the land on the East side of the Jordan, promising to help their brethren take the West side.

**1 Timothy 6:12** “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

- After setting up their wives and children and leaving a smaller group of men behind, the majority of the men, their mighty men of valor accompanied and went before their brethren to help conquer the land West of the Jordan – and now that task is complete, they’ve done what they said they would do.
- It’s been 7 years, Joshua now releases them to return to their families and land.

**2 Timothy 2:3-4** “<sup>3</sup>Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

V: 5-6 Joshua admonishes them because he is concerned for their spiritual well being, he tells them to “take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law”. To walk in the ways of the Lord, cleaving unto Him, serving him with all their heart soul, and mind.

- Joshua is exhorting them: don’t make a half hearted effort, make a total commitment to the Lord!

Jesus says this is the greatest commandment:

**Matthew 22:37** "... thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

V: 7-9 Manasseh had men from both sides of the Jordan, they were all dismissed to their homes with the spoils of war to be distributed evenly within their tribes.

- Reuben & Gad also return to their families and land.

V: 10 As these tribes were returning to their land and as they cross the Jordan River, they stop to build a great altar.

V: 11-14 As the other tribes hear of this they are greatly disturbed – because there could be serious repercussions.

- It looked as if the children of Reuben, Gad, and the ½ tribe of Manasseh were rebelling against the Lord.
- The remaining tribes began to gather at Shiloh with the intent of going to war against Reuben, Gad, and ½ tribe of Manasseh.

**Proverbs 18:13** "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."

- We / they shouldn't be too quick to jump to conclusions.
- They sent a delegation of elders led by Phinehas, well known for his zeal for God.
- Phinehas is the one who stopped the plague against the children of Israel when they sinned by giving in to the temptation of the Moabite women, 24,000 died that day.

**Numbers 25:7-8** "<sup>7</sup>And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; <sup>8</sup>and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the women through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel."

V: 15-16 Why have you done this? Are you rebelling against the Lord?

**James 1:19** "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:"

- They were obviously getting ready to go to war if need be, committed to defending righteousness; but they were wise to send a delegation to ask some questions and investigate a little before they totally jumped to a conclusion.

V: 17-18 Didn't you learn anything from the sin of Peor? Referring back to the counsel of Balaam to king Balak of the Amorites – which killed 24,000 Israelites.

V: 19 If it is because of the land – then come back with us and we'll give you part of our land – only do not commit this trespass!

- God had been very clear about where the sacrifices would / should be made.
- The issue is are we going to worship God on our terms or His?

V: 20 Remember what happened to Achan at Ai? He didn't perish alone, he took his family with him.

V: 21-23 Their response:

- “**The Lord God of gods...**” the acknowledgment that He is King of kings and Lord of lords, invoking the Lord into the situation.
- The Lord knows our motives – and if it is for rebellion against the Lord then may the Lord not save us this day – wipe us out!
- God is our witness, we are not intent on rebellion.

V: 24-29 The altar was not for sacrifices but for a witness.

- Concerned that the Jordan river would cause more than just a physical division. Seems to be blame shifting, not taking responsibility.
- Concerned that their children on both sides of the river would forget that they were part of the nation of Israel so they built a replica of what was in Shiloh as a reminder to both sides.
- They affirmed their commitment to the Lord and to His ways.
- On one hand the children of Israel may have jumped too quickly to a conclusion; but on the other hand none of this would have occurred had the 2 ½ tribes been on the right side of the river to begin with.

V: 30-31 When Phinehas heard these words – it pleased them.

**James 3:17** “**But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.**”

- Delivered out of God's hand of judgment, very serious.

V: 32-34 The rest of the people were in turn blessed and they praised God.

- That altar was named “Ed” – which means “witness”.

**Psalm 133:1** “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

- Ed was their witness and testimony that they were part of the family, part of the congregation of Israel.
- A better witness would be to gather with the nation at the feasts, going to Shiloh to make their offerings to the Lord, being obedient to what God has called them to do – this is what their children will remember and what others would see – then there would be no question.

**Hebrews 10:25** “Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.”

- The stone monument, or a plastic fish on your car cannot give that assurance.
- Jesus gave us our “Ed” our identifier:

**John 13:35** “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

**1 John 4:20** “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”