

Sunday Night Message

May 6, 2018

Joshua 21 – *The Levitical Cities*

Series – *Joshua*

Text – Joshua 21

Review

In chapter 14, we saw the general division of the Land of Israel, noting the two and one half tribes located on the eastern side of the Jordan River, and then the nine tribes plus two half tribes located on the western side of the river, with the half tribe of Manasseh receiving portions of land on both sides. Also, the Levites were dispersed throughout the Land on both sides in 48 cities, but receiving no specific land inheritance.

In chapter 15, we saw the land distribution of the tribe of Judah. (See Map) Judah was the largest of all of the tribes according to the census taken in Numbers 26. The numbers given there are for the men, twenty years of age and older who could go to war.

"These are the families of Judah according to those that were numbered of them, threescore and sixteen thousand and five hundred." (Numbers 26:22)

In chapters 16 and 17, we saw the land distribution for Manasseh and Ephraim, the two half-tribes within the Tribe of Joseph.

In chapter 18 & 19, we saw the land distribution for the remaining tribes, along with a special gift of land for Joshua.

In chapter 20, we studied the six Levitical cities of refuge.

The Distribution of the Levitical Cities (vs. 1 – 42)

In chapter 21, we see the distribution of the remaining Levitical cities. There were forty-eight cities that were to be given to the Levites from the inheritance of the other tribes of Israel. The breakdown of this land distribution was as follows:

The Kohathites received 23 cities – 13 on the west side of the Jordan and 10 on the east.

All priests descended from the family of the Aaron, and Aaron was part of the family of the Kohathites.

The Gershonites received 13 cities

The Merarites received 12 cities

General facts about the land distribution for the Levites.

The instructions for the land distribution were originally given by Moses in Numbers 35:1 – 8.

These locations were strategically placed throughout the land of Israel so that these ministers would be close to all of the people in Israel. Thirteen of the twenty-three cities allotted to the Kohathites are very close to where the Ark of the Covenant would eventually be placed.

The tribes of Israel that were larger, were responsible to supply more cities than the smaller ones.

They Levites were not only to be given the cities themselves, but also three thousand feet (10 football fields) of land for pasture surrounding the cities on all sides.

The Fulfillment of God's Promise to Give Israel the Land (vs. 43 – 45)

Way back in the Book of Genesis, God promised to give Abraham's seed the land of Israel. (See Genesis 12:4 – 7; Genesis 17:1 - 8)

God kept His promise:

"Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel." (Joshua 1:2)

Interestingly, there were still some enemies remaining in the land that had yet to be driven out. But, that was according to God's promise as well:

"And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee." (Deuteronomy 7:22)

According Genesis 15:18, the Land of Israel will someday include all the way up out to the Euphrates River. During the Millennium there land will be much larger than it is today or ever was.

Israel was at rest from their enemies. (v. 44) Jesus said that if we come to Him, He will give us rest:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:28-29)

The Book of Hebrews refers to this salvation rest. (See Hebrews 3:11 – chapter 4) as well as Canaan rest and Creation rest.

God not only kept His promise specifically regarding the land. He kept (and keeps) all of His promises. (See Joshua 1:5 – 9; Joshua 23:14; 1 Kings 8:56)

"For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;" (Deuteronomy 12:9-10)

God has made us some promises that we can count on. He promises to save those who trust in Him; He promises to keep those that are saved; He promises to meet all of our needs; He promises to never leave us or forsake us; He promises to comfort us during times of trial; He promises an awesome new home for us in Heaven.

0 15 30 Miles
 0 15 30 Kilometers



LEVITICAL CITIES AND CITIES OF REFUGE

- Levitical city (Gershonite)
- Levitical city (Merarite)
- Levitical city (Kohathite)
- Levitical city (Aaronite)
- City of Refuge (*Num. 35:6; Josh. 20:7-9; 21:13, 21, 27, 32, 38; 1 Chr. 6:57,67*)