



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

KEEP CALM AND MARCH ON!

Marching through the Book of Joshua: Lesson 18

Last week we ended with the final division of the Promised Land to the 12 tribes of Israel. This week we see Joshua carry out the directions given to him by Moses, who received them from the Lord (Numbers 35:9-34). Six cities were appointed as "**cities of refuge**" for the protection of people who killed someone accidentally. Human life was sacred to the Lord and He provided these cities for their protection. What an interesting concept. Let's read about these cities together in Joshua chapter 20.

First Day

1. Read Joshua 20:1-9. What would you title this chapter? What facts do you find?
2. Are there any key words or phrases?
3. Do you see any immediate applications for your life?
4. Read Numbers 35:9-34, Deuteronomy 4:41-43, and 19:1-13. What additional facts do you find from these Scriptures?

5. Briefly describe a "city of refuge." Where were they located? (Look on a map if possible.) What was their purpose?

6. Who decided who was eligible to enter these cities?

7. Why do you think it matters if the killing was accidental or planned?

8. Do you think having a "city of refuge" would be a good idea today? Why or why not?

9. Why do you think God set these up? Was He just being nice?

When there was an accidental death, the nearest relative of the dead person (or the avenger of blood), was charged with maintaining the family rights. In the heat of the moment, he might try to slay the one who killed his relative. The offender could run to a city of refuge but could be killed if the relative caught him before he reached the city (Numbers 35:19). The offender had to stand a type of trial and prove to the congregation that the killing was accidental (Numbers 35:12, 24).

Dale Davis tells us: "This is not to say that any offender could run to a city of refuge, claim he killed unintentionally, and be home free. After the killer was admitted to the city of refuge, he had to stand before the assembly for judgment. Whether this assembly consisted of representatives in or near the city of refuge, or possibly refers to officials from the killer's hometown is unclear. But only after the court was convinced that the killer had not acted deliberately or out of hatred

and enmity was his ongoing sojourn in the city of refuge approved. These cities of refuge were in no way a legal means of escaping justice, much as that pattern may be in vogue today."

Let's end here for today. Tomorrow we'll look at what the word "refuge" means and where we find it.

Memory Verse of the Week: "Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us." **Psalm 62:8**

Second Day

Review your memory verse. Is God your refuge?

1. Read Joshua 20 again.
2. Look up the word "refuge" in the dictionary. What does it mean?
3. How is God our refuge?
4. Read Psalm 91. What phrases are most comforting to you regarding God as our refuge?
5. Read Psalm 9:9, 32:7, and 46:1. When does God want to be our refuge?
6. In what other things do we sometimes take refuge? Give specific examples.

7. What, or who, is YOUR refuge TODAY? Do you run to Him when in trouble? Do you run to Him for answers? Do you run to Him for counsel? Do you seek refuge in your friends? In your husband? In food? In exercise? Where do you hide?
8. Read Isaiah 25:4-5. Isn't it awesome that He will be your hiding place, no matter what the weather, trial, or problem? Write a prayer to the Lord, thanking Him for being your strength, your shade, and your refuge.
9. In Joshua 20:6, what can release the offender from his banishment and bring him home again?

Many see the cities of refuge as a picture of our salvation in Jesus Christ, to whom we have **"fled for refuge"** (Hebrews 6:18). The death of the high priest took the punishment away from the offender. Hebrews 2:17 says, **"that He (Jesus) might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation (substitution) for the sins of the people."** His death paid the penalty for our sins so that we may be free. Just as the offender had to go to the city for refuge, we have to come to Christ by faith in order to be saved (John 6:37).

There were three cities of refuge on each side of Jordan, about equally distant from one another. They were easily accessible from all parts of the land. Salvation in Jesus Christ is open and accessible to everyone who comes to Him by faith. Have you made a commitment to Jesus? Acts 4:12 tells us that "there is no salvation in any other, for there is no name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

10. Read Proverbs 18:10. How is Christ like a lighthouse?

11. How does "trusting the Lord" relate to "putting our refuge in God"?

This concludes our lesson for today. My "**Reason to Rejoice**" is that I can take refuge in God, who is my hiding place, my shelter from the storm, my protection, and my fortress. **Isn't God good?** I think He's great!

Third Day

Review your memory verse. Are you trusting in your refuge?

Let's continue reading Joshua chapter 21, where the Levites were now assigned cities.

1. Read Joshua 21:1-45. Pick out any interesting facts you find. List any questions or comments you have.

2. Who came and asked for cities to dwell in? Was this proper?
Read Numbers 35:1-8.

The next allotment went to the Levites who were divided into Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites (Genesis 46:11). There were 48 Levitical towns which were for the benefit of God's servants, the Levites, and constituted their sole material inheritance of the land of Canaan. Remember that the Lord Himself was their inheritance! Irving Jensen, in his commentary on the book of Joshua, says, "The cities were purposely located throughout the regions of all the tribes, that by the Levites' ministry of serving in the things of the sanctuary, and walking daily in

the midst of the people, that they might exalt the covenant and the laws of God and encourage people to walk wholly after Him." Each Levitical city was to serve as a "base of operation" so that the Levites could better infiltrate each of the tribes to instruct them in God's covenant.

Even though the Levites were set apart for special ministry, they had earthly needs. They needed houses to live in and pastures to sustain livestock. Because they never owned land or developed deep roots, the Levites could be seen as the true sense of the word "sojourner."

3. Where was this all taking place?
4. We read about the Kohathites in Joshua 21:4. Levi's son Kohath had a grandson named Korah. How did they sin? Read Numbers 16:1-40. Why were they rebelling?
5. What was the consequence of their rebellion? Wow! Why did God do such a radical punishment?
6. Define the word "rebellion." Is there any present in your life? How does God view rebellion? Read 1 Samuel 15:23.
7. In Zephaniah 3:1, Zephaniah is speaking about the destruction and injustice of Jerusalem. He calls them "rebellious and polluted." What four reasons does he give for her rebellion in verse 2?
 - a.
 - b.

c.

d.

8. Using these four points as a definition for rebellion, let me ask again, are you guilty of rebellion?

So often we think of rebellion as some big, obvious sin. It comes from an attitude of our hearts before it ever comes out in our actions. To stay out of rebellion you must obey His voice, receive correction, trust in the Lord, and draw near to God.

Let's pray that God would reveal any area of our hearts that are rebellious towards Him today. Rejoice!

Fourth Day

What's your memory verse? Are you doing it?

1. Read Joshua 21: 8-26 again. Choose one of the cities and try to find something about it to share with your group.

2. Read Joshua 21:27-42. Who was Gershon? Read Numbers 3:21-26. What were their duties in the tabernacle?

3. Why didn't God put all the Levites in one place?

4. Why do you think God also scatters us around? What would happen if we were all in one place?

5. Can you share a time that God really used you when you were just "going about" your business, maybe at work or school?

In Acts 1:8, Jesus told His disciples to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Persecution is what drove the church out into Judea and Samaria. Verse 4 tells us that those who were scattered went everywhere, preaching the Word.

God also wants to scatter us around so that more people will hear the Gospel. He wants to use His kids as a vehicle for the truth. We need to be thankful that God has put us where we are, even if we don't always like it. Remember the people He put in your world when you were ready to listen.

Numbers 26:62 tells us that there were 23,000 Levites before Israel entered the land, which was a big number to distribute among 48 cities. Their job was extremely important. They were the ones who owned copies of the Scriptures, giving them the responsibility of expounding the Word to all the people. The future success of Israel depended on the influence these men would have in the midst of this people.

God also has given us the privilege of having the Word of God. We often take this privilege lightly and leave our Bible sitting on our shelf, collecting dust. We have the opportunity to read it and explain it to our families, friends, and others around us.

6. Who is in your **"sphere of influence"**? Are you teaching God's Word to your children diligently? Are you expounding on the Scriptures, explaining the principles that God has given us to live by, or are you depending on the Sunday School teachers to do it? Are you discipling any friends who are new believers? How are you affecting those in your **"sphere of influence"**?

Let's end here for today. God's Word is so valuable to each of us. I pray that we never take it lightly or for granted. I pray that we would assume the role of the Levites; sojourners in this land. I pray that we would never set our roots down too deep in this world, knowing that our "citizenship is in Heaven" (Philippians 3:20). Let's rejoice in our Heavenly home.

Fifth Day

Write out your memory verse. How did it speak to your heart this week? Did you just memorize it or did you hide it in your heart?

1. Read Joshua 21:43-45. The settlement of the land is now complete. How are these verses an appropriate ending to chapters 13-21?
2. What 4 words emphasize the fulfillment of God's promises to His people? How do these words encourage you in a trial you may be facing?

Notice how clear these verses are about who is responsible and who gets the glory: **"The Lord gave Israel the land ... the Lord gave them rest ... the Lord delivered them."** F.B. Meyer said, "This is the secret of a successful and blessed life. Live near the springs of life and learn to receive from the Divine fullness, grace upon grace."

God never fails to make good on His Word. Are you holding on to one of His promises? Don't forget ... God always comes through!

3. It was important for Israel to remember that God was responsible for their victory. What happens when we forget that?
4. Think back over our study of Joshua. List some ways that God took care of Israel. Give Scripture references along with your examples if you can

5. These chapters show us again that God continually makes provisions for His people. How has God provided for you in the past? How is He providing for you now? If you are doubting God's promise in any area, how can this whole book of Joshua encourage you?

In his commentary on Joshua, Irving Jensen points out some great spiritual applications from the allotments to the twelve tribes. These are some points he picked up as he studied the details of these chapters. I found them very helpful in pulling everything together. I hope you do, too.

A. Sovereign Location: The procedure of lots was to emphasize the Lord's part in locating His people. Some locations were for chastisement (Simeon); some for reward (Judah); some for challenge (Asher with its bordering enemies). All were located with the destiny of being places where God could dwell in the midst and reveal Himself to His people and to the world through history.

B. Gracious Inheritance: Every land allocation, regardless of its description, was a gift of undeserved grace, a dwelling place for a people who, up until now, had no home. There was a mine of blessings located in every land.

C. Beauty of Diversity: As widely as the tribes differed one from the other in numerous respects, so the lands themselves were diverse. This is a simple illustration of the beauty of God's working one purpose in various ways, even as the Church today proclaims the one Gospel of the one God, but by different methods.

D. Inspiring Challenge: Rest-land was not vacation-land. It was a land of opportunity, of proving God in the face of the enemies, of progressively growing stronger and purer in life and worship.

E. Strength of Unity: The division of the land was made with a view toward unity. When a weaker tribe needed auxiliary strength, its stronger, neighboring tribe assumed the protecting of bordering towns. Two intimately friendly tribes (Dan and Naphtali) sometimes were located apart from each other to cement the union of the whole nation. The strongest bond was the one tabernacle to serve the congregation of all the tribes. The potential of a strong nation of Israel blessed of God was great if this unity of faith and fellowship would be nurtured.

6. Review chapters 18-21. What point from these chapters spoke to your heart? How can this truth make a difference in your life?

7. Read over your memory verse. Did God use this verse in your life this week? How? In what ways can you allow this verse to change your heart or your life?

This week, remember those four words, "All came to pass." Remember that we can flee to Jesus, who is our city of refuge. Remember God's provisions for you continually. Remember the importance of His Word. Remember that He will never let you down, lie to you, or change His mind. James 1:17 says that "in Him, there is no variation or shadow of turning." Aren't those all wonderful "**Reasons to Rejoice**"?

**Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
Let such as love Your salvation say continually,
THE LORD BE MAGNIFIED!
Psalm 40:16**

NOTES