

The Book of Joshua

Bible Study – Good Shepherd Lutheran Church – Collinsville, Illinois

Chapter Twenty – Twenty One



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1. The Cities of Refuge Chapter 20

Why were six cities of refuge designated?

Numbers 35:6-7 Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites you shall appoint six cities of refuge, to which a manslayer may flee. And to these you shall add forty-two cities. ⁷ So all the cities you will give to the Levites shall be forty-eight; these you shall give with their common-land.

What was the “Redeemer of Blood”?

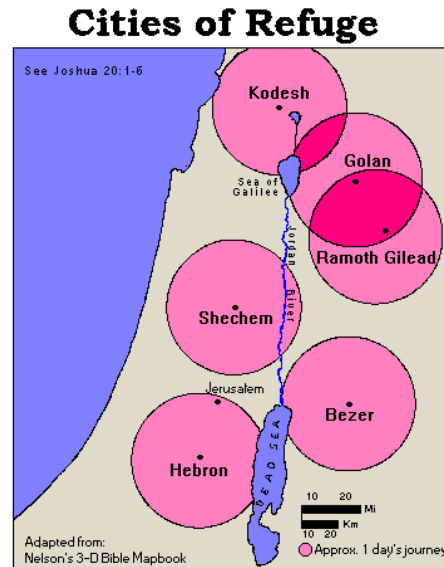
Deut. 19:12 Then the elders of his city shall send and bring him from there, and deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. (See also Num 35:19, 21 - 27)

What does the Bible say about capital punishment?

Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.

Romans 13:4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

The Christian church recognizes that capital punishment is a prerogative of the government. Capital punishment can be used justly. Obviously the misuse of capital punishment is a travesty we must avoid.



Many opponents of capital punishment try to argue that it is forbidden by God. They appeal to Jesus' condemnation of violence in the Sermon on the Mount or the words of Paul in Romans 12.17, "Repay no one evil for evil." The mistake they make, however, is the object of these commands. Jesus is speaking to individual Christians as is Paul in Romans 12.17. This command we must uphold – God forbids personal revenge! However God commands justice carried out by the government. This justice may include lethal force as Romans 13.4 indicates.

On the one hand it is very sad that people who murder will sometimes have their own lives destroyed. As tragic as this is, we sometimes forget just how tragic it is to destroy another human being created in the image of God.

How do the cities of refuge remind us of Jesus?

Romans 5.9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.



Romans 8.1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

John 6.37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

Hebrews 7.25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

2. Cities for the Levites 21.1-42

What is the significance of Shiloh?

Location: About ten miles northeast of Bethel

Tabernacle: This was the first permanent home of the tabernacle (Joshua 18.1). It remained the center of Israelite worship during the period of the judges (Judges 18.31). Hannah prayed at Shiloh (1 Samuel 1.3,11). God heard her prayer and Samuel was born. The tabernacle remained at Shiloh throughout the ministry of Samuel until it was captured by the Philistines.

Someone asked what "Shiloh" actually means? Here's a note from

Douglas, J. (1982; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996). *New Bible Dictionary*. Includes index. (electronic ed. of 2nd ed.). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

A reference of peculiar difficulty comes in Gn. 49:10, 'the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come (RV). The Heb. 'a• kî-yâ• ô' šîlōh can be rendered in several ways. (i) As RV, taking Shiloh as a Messianic title. (ii) As RVmg. 'till he come to Shiloh', with the subject as Judah and the fulfilment in the assembling of Israel to Shiloh in Jos. 18:1, when the tribe of Judah nobly relinquished the pre-eminence it had formerly enjoyed. (iii) By emending šîlōh to šellōh and translating with the LXX 'until that which is his shall come', *i.e.* 'the things reserved for him', a vaguely Messianic hope. (iv) By emending šîlōh to šay lô, as in NEB, so long as tribute is paid to him'. (v) Following a variant reading in LXX, 'until he comes to whom it belongs' (RSV), whatever 'it' may be (Onkelos says it is the kingdom).

The last of these was generally favoured by the Fathers, while the first does not seem to have been put forward seriously until the 16th century except in one doubtful passage in the Talmud. Against (i) is its uniqueness: nowhere else is Shiloh used as a title for the Messiah and the NT does not recognize it as a prophecy. If it were taken as a title it would have to mean something like 'the peace-giver', but this is not very natural linguistically. (ii) is plausible, but it scarcely fits in with what we know of the subsequent history of Judah; nor is it usual for a patriarchal blessing to have such a time-limit. A variant to get round that objection is the translation 'as long as people come to Shiloh', *i.e.* 'for ever', but it strains the Heb. (iii), (iv) and (v) involve a minor emendation, and the renderings leave much to the imagination, but Ezk. 21:27 (v. 32 in Heb.) shows that a similar construction can stand; indeed, Ezk. 21:27 is probably a deliberate echo and interpretation of Gn. 49:10. The use of še- for the relative particle is, however, normally regarded as late (but *cf.* Jdg. 5:7).

Why did the Levites not receive a land inheritance?

Numbers 18.20-24: The Levites received no inheritance because their inheritance was the privilege of serving God directly at the tabernacle. Their inheritance then was all the tithes and offerings that Israel brought to the tabernacle.

What is the difference between Priests and Levites?

Numbers 3-4: God chose the sons of Aaron to serve as priests. The other descendants of Levi were chosen to assist the priests in the work of the tabernacle. The Levites were especially chosen because they were the first to return to the LORD following the Golden Calf incident (Exodus 32.26-28).

Deut 33.8-11; 2 Chr 17.8-9: All Levites were to be teachers of the Torah.



3. God Keeps His Promises 21.43-45

How do these verses capture the theme and theology of Joshua?

Promises: God keeps His promises, and His word never fails.

Divine Monergism: God is the author of salvation. (Recall the walls of Jericho (6); the hailstones, the "long day" (10).) Victory came because "the LORD, the God of Israel, was warring for Israel" (10.42).

What about the fact that parts of the land remained unconquered?

Gradual Settlement: Recall that through Moses God had promised a gradual settlement of the land (Ex 23.29-30; Deut 7.22). So God speaks of a completion of His promises because

the land was given though the occupation was not yet complete.

Israel's Faithfulness / Unfaithfulness: These verses refer to God's part of the covenant to faithful Israel. The fact that Israel would act unfaithfully does not overturn God's faithfulness

2 Timothy 2.13: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

How does all this relate to Jesus?

The Book of Hebrews: Hebrews 4.1-8 describes the problem of Israel's unfaithfulness. God's rest in Joshua was not completed by the people of Israel occupying the Promised Land. Instead, the completed rest comes through Jesus Christ.