

Joshua Chapter 21

The Levitical Cities



- The Levites were the priestly tribe so they were not allocated tracts of land. Their task was to take care of everything to do with the Tabernacle and worship. Today Priests have the same Ministry cf Josh 13:14, 33

21:1-3 The Leaders of the Clans of Levi approached Eleazar and Joshua at Shiloh reminding them about Moses' command to give them cities to dwell in and enough ground to care for their livestock: Num 35:2-5
vs 3: The Leaders obeyed God's order.

21:4-42 48 cities scattered throughout the land were assigned to them. In the same way Priests don't own land – yet they are scattered throughout the Christian Community to minister to God's People.

- Aaron, the first high priest was a descendant of Levi. In his **official** capacity (not his personal life) he foreshadowed Jesus, our High Priest, who – as the Son of God – **is a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true Tabernacle which The Lord, not any man, set up.** Heb 8:2
- The priestly **sons** of Aaron and the Levites are a figure of the public servants of the Lord today in all their ranks.
1 Cor 9:13-14: Don't you know that those who work in the Temple get their food from the Temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? IN THE SAME WAY, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should receive their living from the Gospel.

→ Both Josh 21 and 1 Corinthians 9 deal with the temporal needs of God's Public Servants.

(NB) God had also made provision for the Levites in Numbers chapter 18

- a) The Priests Portion: Num 18:8-19
- b) The Levites Portion: Num 18:20-24
- c) Tithes for Levites: Num 18:25-32

→ this provided the best of food as well as money for them

→ So to get the cities on top of this was a very generous inheritance from the Lord, for they were treated like princes.

21:43 Thus Israel took full possession of the Land given to them by God.

21:44 The lord gave them **REST**

21:45 Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken
ALL CAME TO PASS

} **God is FAITHFUL**
God's Word is TRUE
God is LOVE

In the light of the Cross:

Is it not true that the enemy has no right to dwell in the land?

Is it not true that Satan's claim on your life was taken from him on Calvary?

Is it not true that sin has no right to a foothold in the life of a child of God?

Is it not true that Satan has NO POWER in the presence of omnipotence?

Is it not true that by virtue of His Blood and His Resurrection, Jesus Christ is pledged to destroy the enemy utterly?

Is it not true that in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, there is strength for every temptation, there is grace for every trial and there is power to overcome **every** difficulty?

(Alan Redpath, early 20th Century)

Joshua Chapter 22

Demobilisation

Isaiah 55:11 ... the word that goes forth from my mouth does not return to me empty,
without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

- 1) God kept His promises to Israel...
He **did** save them from Egypt...
He trained them in the wilderness...
He **had** brought them to the Promised Land...
He **did** fight FOR them **and** with them to conquer it...
Finally they were **all** in possession of their inheritance – they were **all** given their own portion
and it was confirmed by Lot.

For us God promised a Saviour in **Gen 3:15**... He sent that Saviour to us 2,000 years ago.
Jesus **did** save us from sin, death and Hell on the Cross...
Jesus sent Apostles and disciples out into the world after personally training them...
He has fought with and for His Church for 2,000 years...
and each soul is given its own place in the K.O.G. both on Earth and in Heaven...
Just as the Israelites couldn't sit back and relax – neither can we for the **ENEMY** is still **there** and
willing to bring us down... he is defeated but can still wreak havoc on God's People and will continue
to do so until the end of time, as is illustrated in Revelation 19-21.

- 2) The Israelites still had a lot of work to do in the lands apportioned to them...

- 22:1-4** 3) Now Joshua keeps his promises to the 2½ Tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh – whose territory was beyond the Jordan on the Syrian side.
- They had kept their promise to fight alongside the rest of their Brethren...
 - So now Joshua gives them leave to return to their own lands.

- 22:5-6** 4) Joshua gave them an exhortation before leaving.
- a) To keep the Lord's Commandments - (ie) and remain faithful to the Covenant.
 - b) To Love the Lord God always: cf Deut 6:4-10
 - c) To walk in **His** ways - (ie) keep away from paganism and idolatry.
 - d) To hold fast to Him and serve **Him** in this New Life **OUTSIDE** the Promised Land.

- 5) Then Joshua **BLESSED** them and sent them away.
 - He **could** bless them (i) as God's chosen servant (ii) as the Head of the Nation
 - Maybe Joshua used the blessing God gave to Aaron in Num 6:23-27?
The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His Face shine on you, and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His Countenance upon you, and give you peace.

- 22:7-9** The 2½ tribes depart with a lot of spoils from war.
Their faithfulness was rewarded and they returned home to enrich their clans.

THE MEMORIAL ALTAR

- In Deut 27:4-8 Moses ordered the Israelites to build an altar of undressed stones as soon as they crossed the Jordan.
- **THIS** new altar was **NOT** asked for by Moses or God! But it stood **NEAR** the one representing **God's Will!!**

22:11 They built an altar of great size (ie) **BIGGER** and **BETTER** than the one God wanted.

Shiloh was not only where the Tabernacle was but was also the “seat of Government” at that time.
- where Religious and civil authority resided...

Alarm bells sounded! The whole congregation were “up in arms”!

- Here we have an East-West (of the Jordan) conflict
- when the tribes west of the Jordan **HEAR** what the “East” has done, their reaction was simple **but Total**: go to war with them!
- this was men who had fought side by side for 7 years!!
Notice that Joshua didn’t organise this response: it was spontaneous!
- they gathered at Shiloh before the Tabernacle...
- they **presumed** the new altar was for **pagan** gods...
- they decided to DEFEND the **True God: God of Israel.**

22:13-15 At this point **PHINEHAS**, the son of Eleazar, the new High Priest, decided to take a delegation of the Leaders of the tribes to confront the leaders of the 2½ tribes...

- this is the wisdom of consultation before confrontation! cf Deut 13:12-18
- Phinehas wanted no rush to judgement: **wise man**

What was the problem?

At that time the Chosen People thought that the **True God could** only be worshipped **IN** the Promised Land!

- The idea that God could be loved and served **OUTSIDE** of the Promised Land was inconceivable to them.
- The 2½ tribes now move **OUTSIDE** of the jurisdiction of the leadership **in** the Promised Land... so, the folks on the **West** side think that they are outside the jurisdiction of the Lord **also!**
- Naaman, the leper in 2 Kg 5 cf Lk 4:27

22:16-18 The Authority of the High Priest

Phinehas was the one with spiritual authority to deal with the problem.

He was High Priest over **all** 12 Tribes, ∴ also these 2½ Tribes

- Phinehas wanted to **CORRECT** what went wrong and protect the Nation.

Phinehas confronts the Leaders to bring the Light of Truth into the crisis/

(i) Thinking this was a **Rival Place** to Shiloh, Phinehas accused them of **TREACHERY**

- Israel always had only **one** place of worship: Lev 17:8-9

Whatever man of the House of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and DOES NOT bring it to the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting, to offer it to THE LORD, that man shall be cut off from among his people.

Note That God says we can’t worship Him anyway we please!

Our worship must be pleasing and acceptable to God.

We must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth: Jn 4:24

(ii) Phinehas reminds them of the rebellion of Israel at **Peor** in the wilderness, where God punished the people.

- At Peor the men had sex with Moabite women and gave themselves to worship the Moabite gods. Their judgement was a plague that killed 24,000 people!

Thus God emphasised that not only did He want Truth but He also demanded **holiness** for true worship and holiness go together.

(NB) It was Phinehas **himself** who stopped the plague...

Phinehas knew that if **this altar** was allowed it would affect the **12 Tribes**

22:19 **Phinehas' advice:** If you find these lands beyond the Jordan **unclean**, then come back and live among **us!** (**in** the Promised Land!)

- (ie) He told them that the rest of the Tribes would **SACRIFICE LAND** to have them united as a Nation!

This was very generous since they had only just **received** land for the first time in their lives!

22:21-23 **2½ Tribes Respond**

- (i) They call on God's omniscience to point out they are **misunderstood**.
Our refuge in times of trouble is God Himself.
Ps 46:1-3: **God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble...** Ps 91:2
Deut 33:27 **The eternal God is a dwelling place and underneath are the Everlasting Arms...**
- (ii) They admit they deserve death if they are in rebellion against God.

22:24-29 The 2½ tribes **explain**

- (i) The Eastern Tribes acknowledge their **DISTANCE** from Shiloh
- that the River Jordan was a natural barrier between them
- so they built the altar as a **MEMORIAL** between them.
- (ii) They were concerned about **future** generations – so that the Tribes on **both** sides of the Jordan would worship the **True God**.

22:30-31 Phinehas accepted the explanation and said that the Lord **WAS** among the 12 Tribes **because UNITY** had been restored.

Ps 133:1 **How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity!**

22:32-34 The matter is resolved.

- Everyone – on both sides of the Jordan – was glad.
- The 2½ tribes called the altar **WITNESS** because it witnessed to all 12 Tribes that **THE LORD is God**.

Notice: Truth **alone** can make one intolerant – Love alone can make one too tolerant -
– when you combine **Truth and Love** you produce a **maturity** that can express itself:

- in vigour and kindness
- in discernment and sympathy
- in righteousness and compassion
- in stability and flexibility
- in firmness and gentleness

Finally, their altar of Witness didn't last: cf 1 Chron 5:25-26