

## Joshua 21:1-42

As creatures, we are not like God, the Creator. He is self-existent; we have needs. God knows and is concerned about his people's needs. Jesus taught his disciples not to be anxious but rather to trust Him to provide for their necessities (**Matt. 6:31-33**) We also see this truth clearly taught in Joshua chapter 21 as well.

### Summary

**Joshua 21:1-42 presents another set of special cities set aside for the tribe of Levi, showing us not only the heart that God has for the needs His people, but also the power and grace of God to meet those needs.**

#### **1. Special Tribe vv. 1-3**

Levi was the third son born to Jacob and Leah (**Gen. 29:34**). He had three sons; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari (**Gen. 46:11**). A Kohathite, Aaron, his sons and their descendants eventually became the priests of Israel. The other Kohathites, who were not descendants of Aaron, along with the sons of Gershon and Merari, also served the Lord in various capacities connected with the tabernacle (**Num 4:1-33**).

Why were the Levites singled out to live in certain cities throughout the land?

**First**, the Levites were a strange mixture of cursing and blessing (**Gen. 34:30; 49:5-7; Exod. 32:26-29**). **Secondly**, it has to do with the consecration of the First-born (**Exod 13:1-2; Num. 3:11-13, 40-41**)

By their calling and responsibilities, the Levites were unique among all the tribes of Israel, and as a result God provided for them in a unique way. They had no inheritance of land like the other tribes (**Josh 14:3-4; 18:7**), but they were given places to live and pastureland for their cattle.

Joshua 21 opens with the leaders of the Levites coming to Shiloh to present their request to the panel responsible for the land grants for the places to live that God had promised them (**Josh 21:2**). Without hesitation or delay the tribes allotted them cities and pasturelands from their inheritance. We should see their appeal as an act of faith. Like Caleb (**Josh 14:12**), the Levites were eager to possess everything God had promised to them, and they did not hesitate to ask for it

In this simple act lies a profound lesson for prayer: ask for what God has promised. Divine commands and faithful obedience characterize the entire book of Joshua. The land-allotment commission set the example of explicit obedience to the Lord.

#### **2. Distributed Presence vv. 4-42**

After the initial request from the leaders of the Levi, the rest of chapter 21 is taken up with the lists of the 48 cities that were donated and which tribes contributed them. The Lord provides for each of the clans of Levi, and in so doing honors those who serve him. Though a definite distinction existed between the Aaronic and non-

Aaronic Levites (**Josh 21:9-19**), they were all the Lord's servants whom he cared for and provided for out of his goodness.

Your role, serving God in His church may not be glamorous in the eyes of others, but your service is important to the Lord. Each member of the body of Christ needs every other member in order to function properly for God's glory (**1 Cor. 12:12-26**). Two different aspects of the relationship between the Levites and the rest of Israel are stressed (**Josh 21:3, 41**). **First**, 'out of their inheritance' (**21:3**) denotes the voluntary nature of the gift. **Secondly**, 'in the midst of the possession of the people of Israel' (**21:41**) stresses the fact that the Levites lived in the midst of the people scattered throughout the land.

### 3. Divine Provision

We learn here some important lessons about God, his people, their needs, and His provision.

**First**, the Lord provides for the physical needs of His people. The basic needs of the Levites had to be met; shelter and land to pasture their animals in an agricultural economy. That is why God set aside these cities and farmland for them.

**Secondly**, the cities of the Levites remind us that God knows what we need. Our heavenly Father in heaven knows the needs that we have, and he will see to it that they are supplied (**Matt. 6:31-33; Phil. 4:19**).

**Thirdly**, God uses His people to provide for His people.

Christians are to take care of their fellow believers (**2 Cor. 8:2-3; 9:6-8**).

**Fourthly**, God provides for the spiritual needs of His people.

By providing the Levites places to live from the various tribes, God scattered them throughout Israel (**Josh 21:3, 41; Lev. 10:11; Mal. 2:4-9**). The Lord knew that Israel needed constant exposure to his word so that they would fulfill their covenant obligations, follow him, worship him, and continue to live in the land of promise.

We need that constant exposure to Scripture as well.

We have to know God if we are going to follow him.

Like the cities of refuge in chapter 20, the cities of the Levites are also a picture of Christ, showing us that everything we need for eternal life, God will provide (**Phil 4:19; 2 Peter 1:3-4**). No one else may know your needs, but God does. He is aware of what it will take to supply every necessity for you. Will you trust him to do that? Most of all, will you trust him to provide you with the salvation that comes only through his Son, Jesus Christ?

If you are a Christian, you continue to have spiritual needs, needs for God's grace and power to face trials, to overcome temptations, to bring your life into obedience to Christ. Everything you need to walk with God, he will supply (**2 Pet. 1:3**).

Cast yourself on the Lord Jesus and discover the joy and peace of finding everything in him.