

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**5-3-23**

**Joshua 21**

**The Leaders Of The Tribe Of Levi Ask For What Was Promised To Them – Verses 1-2**

**<sup>1</sup> Now the family heads of the Levites approached Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the other tribal families of Israel <sup>2</sup>at Shiloh in Canaan and said to them, “The LORD commanded through Moses that you give us towns to live in, with pasturelands for our livestock.”**

**21:1-3** The forty-eight Levite cities are scattered throughout the land. The Levites have the task of teaching the law in Israel. Because each tribe gives a few cities to the Levites, all Israelites can benefit from the service of the Levites. It is important that God’s servants – today’s Levites – are everywhere among God’s children to serve them with God’s Word.

**21:1-3** From Joshua 21:43 comes a summary of the division of the land. The LORD gets the honor of all. He gives the land, He gives rest and He gives their enemies in their hands. The only conclusion is: “Not one of the good promises ... failed; all came to pass” (Joshua 21:45). He also wants to make Himself known to us in this way in view of the blessings He has given us.

**21:1-3** The division of the land has happened. The people may rest. All Christians have received blessings, but not all have taken possession of them. For every step, an enemy must be driven out of our practical life of faith. Then we can take possession of the fruits in the land, the spiritual blessings, that is to say enjoy in our hearts. This is the condition the people have reached here. In our spiritual life we can also come so far that we know and enjoy the spiritual blessings.

**Cities Appointed To The Levites – Verses 3-8**

**<sup>3</sup> So, as the LORD had commanded, the Israelites gave the Levites the following towns and pasturelands out of their own inheritance:<sup>4</sup>The first lot came out for the Kohathites, according to their clans. The Levites who were descendants of Aaron the priest were allotted thirteen towns from the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin. <sup>5</sup>The rest of Kohath’s descendants were allotted ten towns from the clans of the tribes of Ephraim, Dan and half of Manasseh. <sup>6</sup>The descendants of Gershon were allotted thirteen towns from the clans of the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan. <sup>7</sup>The descendants of Merari, according to their clans, received twelve towns from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Zebulun. <sup>8</sup>So the Israelites allotted to the Levites these towns and their pasturelands, as the LORD had commanded through Moses.**

**21:3-8** The Levites must be spread throughout the land, in forty-eight cities. This shows that they have a task for the whole people, or in the name of the whole people. Of the forty-eight, six are cities of refuge. The remaining forty-two, that is seven times six cities, are divided among the families of the three sons of Levi. With the cities the Levites also get pasture lands for their cattle.

## Cities for the Priests – Verses 9-19

<sup>9</sup> From the tribes of Judah and Simeon they allotted the following towns by name <sup>10</sup> (these towns were assigned to the descendants of Aaron who were from the Kohathite clans of the Levites, because the first lot fell to them): <sup>11</sup> They gave them Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), with its surrounding pastureland, in the hill country of Judah. (Arba was the forefather of Anak.) <sup>12</sup> But the fields and villages around the city they had given to Caleb son of Jephunneh as his possession. <sup>13</sup> So to the descendants of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron (a city of refuge for one accused of murder), Libnah, <sup>14</sup> Jattir, Eshtemoa, <sup>15</sup> Holon, Debir, <sup>16</sup> Ain, Juttah and Beth Shemesh, together with their pasturelands—nine towns from these two tribes. <sup>17</sup> And from the tribe of Benjamin they gave them Gibeon, Geba, <sup>18</sup> Anathoth and Almon, together with their pasturelands—four towns. <sup>19</sup> The total number of towns for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, came to thirteen, together with their pasturelands.

**21:9-11** The first Levites to be assigned their share are the Kohathites. Among them, Aaron's sons, the priests, occupy a special place. They get thirteen cities. Of these, nine are in Judah, including Simeon, including the city of refuge of Hebron, and four are in Benjamin. This division means that they will live in the right place, near Jerusalem, near the temple. Jerusalem is not yet known as such, but God places them there in view of the time He will dwell there.

**21:12-15** The task of the Levites is to teach and to offer incense (Deuteronomy 33:10). Their task is a task towards the people and a task towards God. In their duty to the people, they must teach the people the whole truth of God. Their duty to God is to bring Him offerings. In our life as Christians, the two aspects of the Levites are connected. We have a task to God and a task to the people around us. To God we are "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). To the people we are "a royal priesthood", to proclaim the excellencies of God (1 Peter 2:9).

**21:16-19** Levites are given to the priests to help them to bring offerings. Through the teaching they give, the people learn how they can bring to God something that is pleasing to Him. They always show the people to Whom they owe the blessings. That also applies to us. Every service among the believers must be aimed at creating true worship.

## Cities For The Sons Of Kohath – Verses 20-26

<sup>20</sup> The rest of the Kohathite clans of the Levites were allotted towns from the tribe of Ephraim: <sup>21</sup> In the hill country of Ephraim they were given Shechem (a city of refuge for one accused of murder) and Gezer, <sup>22</sup> Kibzaim and Beth Horon, together with their pasturelands four towns. <sup>23</sup> Also from the tribe of Dan they received Eltekeh, Gibbethon, <sup>24</sup> Aijalon and Gath Rimmon, together with their pasturelands—four towns. <sup>25</sup> From half the tribe of Manasseh they received Taanach and Gath Rimmon, together with their pasturelands—two towns. <sup>26</sup> All these ten towns and their pasturelands were given to the rest of the Kohathite clans.

**21:20-26** The remaining Kohathites (possibly descendants of Moses) get ten cities, including - the city of refuge Shechem, in the territories of Ephraim, Dan and Manasseh that lies on the west side of the Jordan, that is in the land.

## Cities for the Sons of Gershon – Verses 27-33

<sup>27</sup> The Levite clans of the Gershonites were given: from the half-tribe of Manasseh, Golan

in Bashan (a city of refuge for one accused of murder) and Be Eshterah, together with their pasturelands—two towns; <sup>28</sup> from the tribe of Issachar, Kishion, Daberath, <sup>29</sup> Jarmuth and En Gannim, together with their pasturelands—four towns; <sup>30</sup> from the tribe of Asher, Mishal, Abdon, <sup>31</sup> Helkath and Rehob, together with their pasturelands—four towns; <sup>32</sup> from the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee (a city of refuge for one accused of murder), Hammoth Dor and Kartan, together with their pasturelands—three towns. <sup>33</sup> The total number of towns of the Gershonite clans came to thirteen, together with their pasturelands.

**21:27-33** The Gershonites get thirteen cities in the territory of Issachar, Asher and Manasseh which lies on the eastern side of the Jordan, the wilderness side of the Jordan. Among their cities are two cities of refuge: Golan in Basan and Kedes in Galilee.

#### **Cities For The Sons Of Merari – Verses 34-40**

<sup>34</sup> The Merarite clans (the rest of the Levites) were given: from the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam, Kartah, <sup>35</sup> Dimnah and Nahalal, together with their pasturelands—four towns; <sup>36</sup> from the tribe of Reuben, Bezer, Jahaz, <sup>37</sup> Kedemoth and Mephaath, together with their pasturelands—four towns; <sup>38</sup> from the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead (a city of refuge for one accused of murder), Mahanaim, <sup>39</sup> Heshbon and Jazer, together with their pasturelands —four towns in all. <sup>40</sup> The total number of towns allotted to the Merarite clans, who were the rest of the Levites, came to twelve.

**21:34-40** The sons of Merari get twelve cities in the territory of Zebulun in the land, and in Reuben and Gad in the wilderness side of the Jordan. The city of refuge among their cities, Ramoth, is located in Gad, in the wilderness side of the Jordan. Of the forty-eight Levite cities, ten are in the wilderness side of the Jordan.

#### **The Territory Of The Levite Cities – Verses 41-45**

<sup>41</sup> The towns of the Levites in the territory held by the Israelites were forty-eight in all, together with their pasturelands. <sup>42</sup> Each of these towns had pasturelands surrounding it; this was true for all these towns. <sup>43</sup> So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. <sup>44</sup> The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hands. <sup>45</sup> Not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

**21:43-45** God proved faithful in fulfilling every promise he had given to Israel. Fulfillment of some promises took several years, but “every one was fulfilled.” God's promises will be fulfilled according to his timetable, not ours, but we know that his word is sure. The more we learn of those promises God has fulfilled and continues to fulfill, the easier it is to hope for those yet to come. Sometimes we become impatient, wanting God to act in a certain way now. Instead, we should faithfully do what we know he wants us to do and trust him for the future.