

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Twenty – Joshua 20:1-9

Robert Foster in his book *Building Life on the Promises* says this:

(Building Life on the Promises by Robert D. Foster)

“O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for Thee.”
(Isaiah 33:2)

Grace is God’s all for my bankruptcy. I am saved by grace, kept by grace, strengthened by grace. Grace made me God’s son and Heaven my home.

Grace is God’s heart of love poured out to me as a sinner, in spite of my heart of hatred to Him.

Grace is the cream of God’s love . . . life with the spiritual vitamins from the heart of God . . . able to destroy every germ of sin.

Grace simply points me to the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary: “Behold the Man!”
(source unknown)

It was John Newton who put it the best when he wrote that great hymn:

(A Savior for All Seasons by William P. Barker)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see...

[Over his mantel so he would never forget it, he had these words inscribed:]

“Thou shalt remember that [you were] a bondsman in the land of Egypt and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.”

[And he left the instructions for his own epitaph and they are as follows:]

“John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slave in Africa, was by the mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ preserved, restored, pardoned and appointed to preach the faith he had so long labored to destroy.”
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The reason we're focusing on GRACE is that we often hear the God of the Old Testament is not the same as the God of the New Testament because we have walked through so many passages and across so many battlefields in our Old Testament studies. We've been to Jericho and to Ai. We've been in the northern and the southern campaigns and we've seen a God of justice and judgment wrecking His judgment out on many different individuals and cities and tribes. To the point where we wonder where the grace of God is.

We have finally arrived. The grace of God is in chapter 20. We've called this chapter:

“The Cities of Refuge.”

Now chapters 1-5 we had—The **INVASION** of the land.

In chapters 6-12—The **SUBJECTION** of the land.

In chapters 13-22—The **DIVISION** of the land.

Basically, when we get to chapter 19 all the tribes have their inheritance. We have finished with the division of the land at that point, but there are still some things that need to be tied up in these chapters and so we put them all under that major title.

Caleb was the first to receive his inheritance. And in our last study Joshua was the last one who received his little inheritance there in the tribe of Ephraim.

Now when we come to this particular section, we're going to magnify the grace of God and we're going to talk about the **CITIES OF REFUGE**.

Understand the **CITIES OF REFUGE**? Let's take a minute to labor with those so we understand what we're getting into.

There are three passages that talk about the **CITIES OF**

REFUGE.

The first one is Numbers 35:6-28. Let's read some of the passage so we can get a handle on where we're going.

This is Moses talking way back there before they ever went into the land:

Numbers 35:6-28

“Six of the towns you give the Levites will be cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone may flee. In addition, give them forty-two other towns. In all you must give the Levites forty-eight towns, together with their pasturelands. The towns you give the Levites from the land the Israelites possess are to be given in proportion to the inheritance of each tribe: Take many towns from a tribe that has many, but few from one that has few.”

Then the Lord said to Moses: “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee. They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that a person accused of murder may not die before he stands trial before the assembly. These six towns you give will be your cities of refuge. Give three on this side of the Jordan [of course he's speaking from the east side] and three in Canaan as cities of refuge. These six towns will be a place of refuge for Israelites, aliens and any other people living among them, so that anyone who has killed another accidentally can flee there...

He goes on and describes a lot of situations where this could happen. And one of them is, of course, a guy is out doing some logging and the ax head flies off and he happens to inadvertently strike a mortal wound to his friend and he dies. What is his option? He can flee to a city of refuge because this was not murder with forethought. It was an accident and he can go to that city.

Now listen to Deuteronomy 4:

Deuteronomy 4:41-43

Then Moses set aside three cities east of the Jordan, where anyone who had killed a person could flee and find refuge if he unintentionally killed his neighbor without malice aforethought. ...

And it goes on to describe it a little further.

And the other passage is Deuteronomy 19:1-10. Basically it's the same thing and all that is said in Deuteronomy 19 is keep the roads clear. Be sure that everybody knows where the cities of refuge are located and keep the roads clean and clear so they can get there quickly and be saved as a result of making it to the city.

Here's the outline of our verses for this passage:

I. The Next Item on the Lord's Agenda—verses 1-6.

II. The Designation of the Cities of Refuge—verses 7 and 8.

III. The Provision Formalized—verse 9.

Let's pick up now at verse 1.

I. The Next Item on the Lord's Agenda—verses 1-6.

v. 1 Then the Lord said to Joshua:

“Then the Lord said to Joshua:”

The little word “Then” tells us that Joshua is an incredible human being. He is still sensitive to the Lord God directing his life. His life is one of the most intensely organized, disciplined and directed lives in all of scripture.

He starts out like a house of fire in Joshua chapter 1 when the Lord says, “Don't let the book of the law depart out of your mouth. Be careful to meditate and observe it. You're going to be successful.” (see Joshua 1:8)

Basically, his life is about a five or six act play and it's just BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! And he's ready for new instructions. He's sensitive to it. We've invaded the land, we've possessed the land, we've divided the land.

Okay what's next? Chapter 20—the next item on the Lord's agenda is “take care of the cities of refuge.” It's a whole series

of things in his life.

Are we like that? We know God's will for our life today and have we fulfilled it? And are we so excited that we fulfill it?

It's an incredible possibility that we have gotten so far away from that we live our lives in a slip-shod sort of fashion. As a result, we probably went on a lot of missions today and did a lot of things that the Lord really had not intended to be in His perfect will, but we didn't check in for signals this morning. And we've just slipped through the day in the best way we thought and hoped that the Father would approve.

We read in Isaiah:

Isaiah 30:21

When you turn to the right hand, when you turn to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it."

Here's a poem from a college student from many years ago:

He does not lead me year by year,
Nor even day by day.
But step by step my path unfolds,
My Lord directs my way.

Tomorrow's plans I do not know,
I only know this minute.

But He will say, “This is the way,
By faith go walk ye in it.”

And I am glad that it is so.
Today’s enough to bear.
And when tomorrow comes,
Its grace shall far exceed its care.

What need to worry then, or fret,
The God who gave His Son
Holds all my moments in His hand,
And He gives them one by one.
(source unknown)

The thing that is so fantastic about this is that Joshua and the Lord are still on speaking terms after all of this. They have been through a lot of work together over these years in all that has taken place. And the Lord is still speaking to Joshua and he’s still all ears and he’s ready to do what the Lord said.

“Then the Lord said to Joshua:”

Isn’t that a great way to start? Here comes the Lord’s message to Joshua.

**v. 2 “Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge,
as I instructed you through Moses,**

“Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed you through Moses,”

v. 3 so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood.

“so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood.”

What’s he supposed to be able to do?

He’s supposed to be able to “flee” and to “find.”

He flees to the city and he finds “protection” from the guy who’s chasing him, who’s basically out for his hide.

Now he’s going to find some other things in the next couple of verses.

v. 4 “When he flees to one of these cities, he is to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state his case before the elders of that city. Then they are to admit him into their city and give him a place to live with them.

“When he flees to one of these cities, he is to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state his case before the elders of that city. Then”—this is what also is to happen—“they are to admit him into their city and give him a place to live with them.”

Not only to “admit him” but give him a residence in this city during the time that he’s going to be there.

v. 5 If the avenger of blood pursues him, they must not surrender the one accused, because he killed his neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought.

“If the avenger of blood pursues him, they must not surrender the one accused, because he killed his neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought.”

Did they use the cities very much? Is there any scripture of the cities being used?

Well, yes.

Abner, in the early part of David’s life, had a battle with David and the men of Judah. It was David’s first real battle against the Israelis in the north. Joab had two brothers—Abishai and Asahel. Both of them are “kill’em and then think later” types.

Asahel was the marathoner in the two and he was chasing Abner and Abner said, “Stop, don’t do that.” And all of a sudden Abner stops on a dime and Asahel runs right up on his spear and he becomes a fatality.

When Abner comes down to talk to David about terms of

peace, Joab lures him outside the city gate. The dummy sealed his own fate at that point. He left the city of refuge and Joab justifiably put it to him. Even though the death was unintentional on the part of Asahel—he warned him several times—he did not intentionally murder him, but it was an accident. He stepped outside the city gate and Joab put it to him there. He had to do that in order not to be in violation of the law. So yes, these cities were used.

v. 6 He is to stay in that city until he has stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then he may go back to his own home in the town from which he fled.”

“He is to stay in that city until he has stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then he may go back to his own home in the town from which he fled.”

Now why does it say “until the death of the high priest”? What does that have to do with being set free from the bondage of the unintentional or accidental act?

Well, nothing in the Old Testament happens without some significance in the New Testament.

As far as God is concerned, the Jews didn't crucify Christ. The Romans didn't crucify Christ. WE DID!

As far as God is concerned, we're all guilty of manslaughter. We all need a city of refuge if we're ever going to be right with God. And it's going to require the death of our High Priest for us to be set free.

There's an old hymn called "I Met a Man" that fits well here:

I met a man at Calvary,
It broke my heart so bruised was He.
His hands and side were wounded sore,
Thorns were the cruel crown He wore.

I asked Him why He suffered so,
Why He to Calvary's cross must go.
He looked at me with tender eyes,
"It is your sin that crucified."

He left His Father's home on high.
He trudged this weary world to die.
His bed the ground; His pillow stone,
He staggered to the cross alone.

Upon Golgotha's blood-stained brow
The Savior dies in sorrow now.
The Roman spear has pierced His side,
The Son of God is crucified.

O God in heaven, the guilt is mine,
I've crucified Your Son divine!
Let mercy's door be opened wide,

‘Tis God’s own Son I’ve crucified.
(source unknown)

Thank God that His death made a city of refuge for each of us. A place for us to come and to find the freedom and the forgiveness that can be ours in a relationship now because of what Christ did.

Now that’s the background of the cities of refuge. That’s the next item on the Lord’s agenda. Next item—cities of refuge—so we have this chapter dedicated to it.

Now what we’re going to do in verse 7 is look at the cities on the west side and in verse 8 we’re going to look at the cities on the east side.

We only have 6 cities—but they are loaded with truth so we’re going to have to spend a little time on them.

We need to get our map. We want to put the 6 cities on there. Because all we’re going to do in our passage is just make a big loop. We’re going to start in the north and go south on the west side and then we’re going to cross over on the south on the east side and go back to the north. We’re going to make a gigantic circle here in the land.

Because these maps are not infallible and they need some help, let’s work on them for just a minute.

This is the New International Version Study Bible map and

the original is in color.

The office staff made copies and can't tell where the boundaries are because the shades are so close. So one of them started drawing lines around shapes. The problem is, the lines around the shapes don't quite correspond with the tribes that are involved in some places. The New International Version study guide also leaves two of these cities off of here. One of them is completely out of place and the other one is completely left off.

The first city is "Kedesh." We're going to start up here on the west side up at the top. See "Naphtali" up there? Underline "Kedesh"-that's our first city we're going to talk about and then we have it located.

Okay stay on the west side. Drop down—it says "Manasseh" but it's really in the tribe of "Ephraim." It's "Shechem." See the second city there. Underline that one.

Now keep going south to the tribe of "Judah" and underline "Hebron." We have the third city we're going to talk about.

So we have:

"Kedesh,"

"Shechem," and

"Hebron" on the west side.

Okay cross the Dead Sea over to the tribe of Rueben now. We're on the east bank south and underline the city of "Bezer"—B-E-Z-E-R. That little city there.

Move up to the tribe of "Gad." In the northern section of the tribe of "Gad" just put a star. And then keep going north to "Ramoth Gilead"—that's way out of place up there—and underline that one and then draw a line back down to the star. Because "Ramoth Gilead" is supposed to be in "Gad" and is supposed to be substantially south and west from where it is located on the map. We don't know all the technical details involved in that but "Ramoth Gilead" is one of them and it's going to say in the text it's "from the tribe of Gad." Okay?

Now all we need to do is write "Golan" in there. Put it right under the word "Bashan"—the city of "Golan"—G-O-L-A-N.

Those are the 6 cities. We're going to make a loop through the city.

Verse 7 gives us the three on the west side. We're starting in the north and we're going south.

v. 7 So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah.

"So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of

Naphtali, Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah.”

So geographically we have these three now on the west side.

Let's listen to Dr. Campbell in his book *No Time for Neutrality*. He talks about these 6 cities and some of the lessons we can learn.

(No Time for Neutrality by Donald K. Campbell)

Some Christians claim that the provision of the cities of refuge is typical of the believer's salvation in Christ. Their benefit of sanctuary does remind us of Psalm 46:1: “God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in trouble:” and of Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews must have had the Old Testament cities of refuge in mind when he wrote that believers have strong encouragement, having “fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:18b). We may properly conclude then that the cities of refuge are typical of Christ to whom the sinner may flee for refuge pursued by the avenging law which decrees judgment and death. In fact the great and key expression of the epistles, “in Christ,” may also be connected here in an antitypical sense. For in Christ there is safety and security for every believer.

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Now that's basically what he says about the cities of refuge.

We want to go a little deeper and deal with each word. And each word points to the person of Jesus Christ. If He is our city of refuge then every one of the words ought to point to some function or some ministry and glorify the person of Jesus Christ—the basis for the believer’s salvation.

Let’s pick up with the first city.

The first city that is designated as a city of refuge is “Kedesh” of the tribe of “Naphtali”—way in the north on the west side.

What does “Kedesh” mean?

“Kedesh” means “sanctuary.” “Kedesh” also comes from a root word which means “to be pure, to be spotless, to be clean, to be holy, to be consecrated.”

Jesus Christ, our High Priest, entered the sanctuary as the veil was ripped from top to bottom. And by the sacrifice of His own blood, provided a sanctuary for us.

We see in “Kedesh” the High Priestly ministry of Jesus Christ the crucified.

1 John 2:1, 2

My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one...

Hebrews 4:14-16

Seeing that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted at all things as we are, yet without sin...

Robert Foster, when he gets to this particular verse, says:

(Secrets of Successful Living by Robert D. Foster)

No longer do I await judgment . . . the death of the High Priest has given to me complete liberation (*Joshua 20:6*).

Should storms of sevenfold thunder roll,
And shake the globe from pole to pole,
No flaming bolt shall daunt my face,
For Jesus is my hiding place.
(source unknown)

He is our “Kedesh.” He is our sanctuary. He is our high priest

Now the second word is “Shechem.” And that’s “in the hill country of Ephraim.” And we’ve moved a little bit further south to the heart of the land now.

Now we will remember some of these words because we’ve had some of these cities.

“Shechem” means “shoulder.”

Isaiah 9:6

And the government shall be upon his Shechem—upon his shoulder.

What happens to the shoulder? The shoulder has two responsibilities:

1. it carries the burdens and
2. it accepts the blows.

It’s where the pain is inflicted. It’s where the burdens are carried.

How does that fit Jesus Christ? Perfectly.

He is our SIN-BEARER.

He says, “I want the whole load on my shoulders.” And shame on us if we’re sitting here in guilt and anxiety about His ability to forgive and having paid the price. He is the Sin-Bearer.

The Sin-Bearer involved not only a burden but a lot of blows—as we have witnessed in His death on Calvary’s Cross.

Probably the greatest passage that would put both of those

together is:

Isaiah 53:4-6

Surely he took up our infirmities
[In other words, He bore the burden of our sins]
and he carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.
[He took the blows]
He was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

In “Kedesh” He’s our High Priest.

In “Shechem” He is our Sin-Bearer.

2 Corinthians 5:21

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The interesting thing about “Shechem” is that “Shechem” is located between two mountains:

Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerazim.

And just after Joshua and the forces of Israel won the battle

at Ai in Joshua chapter 8, guess what? Joshua took everybody and he made a bee-line to Shechem. And when he got there, he divided the twelve tribes in half. He put some over on Mt. Ebal and some over on Mt. Gerazim and he proceeded to have the curses and the blessings of the Law read there at Shechem.

Isn't it interesting that Galatians 3:13 would make it very specific:

Galatians 3:13

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."

And isn't it also amazing that at the moment Christ experiences the extensive crucifixion pain when He is pinned to the Cross and elevated between heaven and earth, and the weight of His body comes upon the flesh of His hands that have been pierced by nails, that He would say, "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing." (see Luke 23:34)

His incredible capacity to forgive and to bring healing. He is yes, our totally adequate burden-bearer—our sin-bearer.

We just don't relate to that very well. It goes way beyond human comprehension that this sort of thing can happen.

The third city is now designated in the latter part of verse 7. And that's in Judah:

“and Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah.”

We've already met “Hebron” as part of Caleb's inheritance. There'll be more said about that in the Levitical cities, but the word means “conjunction or joining.”

If He's our High Priest in “Kedesh,” if He's our Sin-Bearer in our “Shechem,” He bears the burden—the whole load and accepts the blows—then what is He in being joined together?

Let's get theological for a minute. He's VERY GOD and VERY MAN. In Him we have a true “Hebron.” We have a welding together—a hypo-static union, to use a theological term—that puts Jesus Christ, the God-Man (all of man and all of God) in one person.

He is united. He is our “Hebron”:

John 1:14

The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us...

Colossians 1:19

For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him.

Colossians 2:9

For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in a bodily form,

So on the west side we have an act of God's grace pictured in Jesus Christ. He is our High Priest. He's our Sin-Bearer. And He's the God-man—God taking on human flesh.

Isn't it wonderful to know that He has the great capacity to exercise grace which is His unmerited favor toward us?

Who did not commit murder unintentionally, but deliberately. And God commendeth His love toward us. And that while we were yet sinners, that Jesus Christ—as the High Priest—would come and sacrifice Himself as an adequate sacrifice for sin. Taking the whole load upon Himself and dying upon the Cross for our sins. The God-man brings us together in a relationship with Him because of what He has done.

Are we able to forgive like that?

William Barker in *A Savior for All Seasons* describes how man's forgiveness and God-like forgiveness is so far apart, and how different we are like this. And he quoted a story about a 100-year-old man:

(A Savior for All Seasons by William P. Barker)

An old man was celebrating his one hundredth birthday. “What are you most proud of?” he was asked.

“Well,” said the man, “I’ve lived one hundred years and haven’t an enemy in the world.”

“What a beautiful thought. How truly inspirational,” commented the reporter.

“Yep,” added the centenarian, “outlived every last one of them.”

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That’s about the best that we can do in our ability to forgive. Getting along with our enemies.

Then he said this is true Christian forgiveness and he sites this story:

(A Savior for All Seasons by William P. Barker)

It was a dismal, familiar story of a man in his late forties on long business trips to the Orient who was unfaithful to his wife. Perhaps Jim was trying to justify himself, but he told Helen, his American wife, that he was tired of being married to her and was in love with Haruka, a pretty young Japanese girl. Jim divorced Helen after twenty-five years of marriage and moved out to be free. His company continued to send him to the Far East on business. He picked up the affair with the woman in Japan each time he visited Tokyo. When Haruka sent word that she was pregnant, Jim felt twinges of guilt and uneasiness. He cabled some money. During the next few years, Jim continued to visit Haruka and their baby daughter,

Jasmine, and give them a small allowance.

Suddenly Jim was taken violently ill. The doctors examined him and discovered that he had a rapidly spreading form of cancer. In spite of surgery and chemotherapy, Jim quickly grew weak and realized he would not live more than a few months. Friends told Helen, Jim's ex-wife. Helen had gone through all the stages of hurt and anger when Jim had left, but she still remembered that she was a Christian. One day, Helen appeared at Jim's bedside in the hospital. She and Jim tried to talk, but it was difficult. Finally Jim broke down and cried, asking for Helen's forgiveness. Helen groped for words. "Is there anything I can do?" she found herself asking.

"It's Haruka and Jasmine," Jim whispered. "I've used up nearly all my money on this sickness, and I don't know what will happen to them. All my insurance is being left to you."

Helen couldn't answer. She left Jim's hospital room and struggled in prayer for several days. A few days before Jim died, she wrote to Haruka and Jasmine, inviting them to come live with her. A month after the funeral, a moving scene took place as a fragile Japanese girl and frightened child were taken into the arms of Helen and welcomed as family. Helen has made a home for them and thanks God for the way she had learned to appreciate His undeserved mercy.

In your hurt, you need more than moralisms about being merciful. You need a model. Love as an abstraction is not enough; you need a living demonstration of forgiveness in the face of hurts.

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When we read that we realize how foreign that is to us. And

yet that's exactly the way God treats us. He forgives us unconditionally and eternally. He reaches out to us in love and restores us.

The greatest demonstration of grace is almost all of the Bible we're getting ready to see in verse 8.

Know why? If we were responsible for two-and-a-half tribes and they decided to settle out of the land that we'd prepared for them and they were going to live on the east side, when it came to giving cities of refuge we'd have told them to forget it.

“You know, just go on and ship for yourselves if you all know better than I do. And you want to live on the east side then there isn't going to be no cities for y'all over there. I'm just not going to act in grace toward you.”

In other words, our grace would run out when they stopped short of what we wanted them to do. That's the way we are.

Is God like that? He just comes along and brings healing to these two-and-a-half tribes and He gives them three cities on the east just like He gave three cities on the west. And we turn around on the south side and we head to the north now and we see three cities over there. And they again magnify the person of the Lord Jesus.

v. 8 On the east side of the Jordan of Jericho they designated Bezer in the desert on the plateau in the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead in the tribe of

Gad, and Golan in Bashan in the tribe of Manasseh.

“On the east side of the Jordan of Jericho they designated Bezer in the desert on the plateau in the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead in the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan in the tribe of Manasseh.”

Now we’re over there in the tribe of Reuben.

1. Fourth city, first on the east side—“Bezer.”

“Bezer” evidently was a mining town. The word “Bezer” means “metal in its crude state.” And we could say precious metals like gold, silver or copper or something of that sort.

In the Lexicon it said Job 22:24 is a verse that used this word and this is the way it’s translated in the *New International Version*:

Job 22:24

Lay precious metals on the dust,

In other words, we have just mined it out, lay it there in the dust and—listen to the rest of it:

The Almighty shall be to thee as precious metals.

Now the word “Reuben” means “behold a son.” God the Father gave His most precious possession when He sent the Son of

God.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave His most precious possession, His Son to come and to die.

So, in “Bezer” we see the Son of God, this precious treasure of the Father’s heart being given. And actually, Colossians picks up on that:

Colossians 2:3

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul picks up on it in:

2 Corinthians 4:7

We have this treasure [Christ] in these earthen vessels [these bodies of ours] ...

Jesus said:

“Where your treasure, there will your heart be also.”
(Matthew 6:21).

But we’re a treasure too, aren’t we? In Matthew 13 in the parable of the kingdom, he sells all that he has and goes and

buys this pearl of great price. And he buys the field where that is located. (see Matthew 13:44)

He's our Highest Priest. He's our Sin-bearer. He is the God-man. But He is the Son of God.

Romans 2:4

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

2. The next city is "Ramoth...in the tribe of Gad."

Now it is "Ramoth of Gilead in the tribe of Gad."

"Ramoth" means "the heights."

"Gilead" means "the depths" or "the difficult places."

Now how does that fit Jesus Christ?

Put Philippians 2:7-11 there. It's the incarnation. He left the heights of glory:

Philippians 2:7-11

He emptied Himself, He took the form of a servant and He was made in the likeness of men. [He didn't stop there] He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the

death of the cross. [And then what does the text say?]
Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name...

He left the heights, came to humiliation and went back to the heights. And He is glorified at the right hand of God the Father.

“Ramoth in Gilead”—the INCARNATION. It is God taking on human flesh.

Now are there any verses besides Philippians 2:7 that can fit at that point? Yes, we think of:

John 1:11

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But we also think of:

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us...

So again, we have that verse coming into the study.

3. Now the third city on the east side—and the last one—is “Golan.” There are differences of interpretation. When we read Harry Ironside and a few of the other writers they say that “Golan” means “joy.”

Going out independently, we can say that “Golan” means “exile.” The word means “exile”—E-X-I-L-E. Not Exxon—“exile.”

Now is Jesus Christ an exile?

Boy is He ever. He’s an exile in His birth. He’s an exile in His life. He’s an exile in His death.

How is He an exile in His BIRTH?

John 1:11

He came to his own, and those who were his own received him not.

They didn’t even give Him the time of day. They didn’t want Him here.

How else in His birth? Luke chapter 2—remember how He was born? Verse 7—they didn’t have any room for Him in the inn. He had to be born in a barn.

How was He exiled in His LIFE?

Matthew 8:20

And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His

head.”

He didn't have any place to call home. We talk about being in exile and being lonely. Thirty-three long years—no place to call home.

Was He exiled in His DEATH?

That central word from the Cross—that fourth statement. God has pulled the curtain. It's been dark for three hours—from 12:00 until 3:00—and we hear that orphan cry:

Matthew 27:46

... “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

“Eli, Eli lama sabachthani?”

God turning His back on His Son as He dies there on Calvary's Cross.

So yes!

He is the EXILE in “Golan.”

He's the INCARNATE ONE in “Ramoth of Gilead.”

He is the SON OF GOD in “Bezer.”

He is the GOD-MAN in “Hebron.”

He is the SIN-BEARER in “Shechem.”

And He’s the HIGH PRIEST” in “Kedesh.”

Every word in scripture has significance.

Now notice that every one of these cities is connected with a tribe. It’s very carefully stated.

Now why seven of the tribes don’t have cities and only six of them have cities, we don’t know how God made that choice. The only way we can see this is it’s by location and accessibility because they have to be able to get there quickly. That’s most likely the reason they’re located like that.

But each one of them has a tribe. And all we did was put a challenge together for believers with the statement of the meaning of the city with the tribe. We came up with these six statements:

1. In KEDESH we see the sanctuary of the struggler.

Naphtali means “to wrestle” or “to struggle.”

Struggling? We say, “Boy I am. I sure must have sinned up a storm or something for what I’m going through.”

That’s the way believers think! Listen, if we’re struggling, welcome to the Christian family. If we’re just sitting around

coasting and we're really having a great time, we and the evil one are going the same way.

God didn't save us to make us comfortable. God meant for us to really have to struggle and to suffer and to hurt.

Romans 7:24

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Galatians 5:16, 17

The flesh wars against the Spirit, the Spirit against the flesh...

Ephesians 2:12

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers...

Maybe it's rough right now. That's great. We're delighted. God sees some potential.

And the sanctuary of the struggler is a very real experience in all of our lives as we pursue Christian maturity.

2. SHECHEM—we see BURDENS and BLOWS becoming BLESSINGS.

Burdens and blows becoming blessings because Ephraim means “fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Believers are the only ones that can take burdens and blows and turn them into blessings. The world takes burdens and blows and turns them into bitterness. They make them bad things.

Christians take burdens and blows and take them as bumps to grow on. And they turn them into blessings. Instead of becoming bitter they become better as a result of what has happened.

1 Peter 2:20, 21

You were called to this because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps.

3. HEBRON OF JUDAH—we see the COMMUNION OF PRAISE.

Have we been with the Lord today? Were we with Him this morning and did we praise Him?

The Lord loves to have us praise Him. Praise Him in the morning and then praise Him in the nighttime. Praise Him in the middle of the day.

Just refresh our spirits by stopping and praising the Lord.

One thing that we find in a carnal Christian—we never find praise. We don't find people who are living in the flesh doing much praising. They hang their harps in the willow trees and they walk around like they've been weaned on a dill pickle or something. They're just really down—sad all the time.

DEPRESSED.

DISCOURAGED.

DEFEATED.

No joy of the Lord. They're really not a joy to be around. They really just aren't that much fun.

We can tell when we're around a bunch of Christians that are walking with the Lord. They're excited and living for Him because they're touching significant lives that are around them.

Psalm 34:3

Glorify the Lord with me;
let us exalt his name together.

4. BEZER OF REUBEN—Bezer means “that precious metal.” What does Reuben mean? “Behold a son.”

BEHOLD A SON OF GREAT WORTH.

Why? Because we want to be like Him—that’s why. And the more we behold Him, the more we become like Him.

2 Corinthians 3:18

We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...

1 John 3:2

Soon we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

The work will be instantaneously complete. Behold a son of great worth.

5. This is “Ramoth in Gilad of the tribe of Gad.” He left the heights for the difficult place that we might be fortunate or rich.

Think of a verse that fits it:

2 Corinthians 8:9

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

6. “Golan...of Manasseh”—Manasseh’s the first-born son of Joseph and when Joseph has this, he calls him Manasseh

because it means “forget my troubles.”

“I’m forgetting everything that happened back in Canaan when my brothers hated me and they sold me in Egypt. And I’m forgetting everything that I’ve been through because now I’ve been elevated to this great place and I’ve got a wife and my first-born son is ‘forget my troubles’—Manasseh.”

How does that fit with “Golan” beginning in exile?

He was in exile for 33 years. But as soon as He ascended to the Father, He forgot His troubles because of the glory He was experiencing.

Romans 8:18

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

We’re exiles here. We’re tenting. We’re looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. And one of these days we’re just going to forget all our troubles and we’re going to be overwhelmed with the glory of His presence and what He has prepared for us. And that happens on a shorter view too as a believer.

In Philippians Paul says:

Philippians 3:12-14

...I'm forgetting those things which are behind and I'm pressing toward those things which are in front...

We have to forget yesterday. If tomorrow quarrels with today there can be no future. When the past quarrels with the present there can be no future. And when we have that kind of a feeling of always looking back and being down because of everything we've been through, we really cannot be effective for the Lord.

III. The Provision is Formalized—verse 9

v. 9 Any of the Israelites or any alien living among them who killed someone accidentally could flee to these designated cities and not be killed by the avenger of blood prior to standing trial before the assembly.

“Any of the Israelites or any alien living among them who killed someone accidentally could flee to these designated cities and not be killed by the avenger of blood prior to standing trial before the assembly.”

Where are cities of refuge in the church? Since when have we departed from being gracious to people who've had accidents? And since when have we departed from being constructively involved in the lives of people who desperately need us?

We've become so ingrown. We're content to sit around and

study the Word of God for ourselves. But to move out in a significant ministry and be a city of refuge to somebody who really hurts, that is foreign to our Bible mentality it seems, to be a city of refuge to somebody who desperately hurts.

William Barker in *A Savior for All Seasons* really puts the hammer down when he says:

(A Savior for All Seasons by William Barker)

Julia Ward Howe, the great reformer and writer, once asked Senator Charles Sumner if she could introduce him to the famous actor Edwin Booth. Senator Sumner haughtily declined, muttering, “I have outlived my interest in individuals.” Julia Ward Howe often recalled Sumner’s refusal and later remarked, “Fortunately, God Almighty has never gotten that far.”

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He provides a city of refuge for those who hurt and have had an accident and need healing, protection and help. These cities are spotted throughout the land.

Now we have five lessons and then we’ll close with one little illustration of a city of refuge being made between a father and a son.

Lesson #1: The Lord is manifesting His grace and forgiveness in this passage.

Lesson #2: Do you find yourself in the SANCTUARY OF THE STRUGGLER?

If so, we're right where we need to be. God's just honing us down for greater fruitfulness. Just hang in there. It's going to get better.

Lesson #3: Are you turning your BURDENS AND BLOWS INTO BLESSINGS?

If we want to get the attention of the unsaved world, turn your burdens and blows into blessings. It's one of your greatest witnesses.

Lesson#4: Are you offering Him your praise?

Hebrews 13:15

Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

God expects us to offer the sacrifice of praise from our lips to Him.

Lesson #5: Are you a city of refuge to those who desperately need you?

Maybe we need to go do some work. Maybe we have some relationships that have been really hurt and we're content to

leave it like that. And we're not willing to take the initiative to be a city of refuge and to go and seek forgiveness and to make those things right.

Roy Rogers, Jr., writing about his family—says this, and he's really honest:

(Growing Up with Roy & Dale by Roy Rogers, Jr.)

But the more I thought about it, the more it hit home that my dad was approaching his seventies. We might not have all that much time together.

One day I climbed into my truck and drove over to the house.

“Hi, Dusty!” Dad called.

“Hi, Dad. What are you doing?”

“Just heading out to buy some trees.”

“Care for some company?”

“Sure. Come along.” We made small talk for awhile, and then he looked at me kind of sideways and said, “You got something on your mind, son?”

I nodded. “I'm scared, Dad.”

He looked at me, concerned. “Scared? What's eating at you, Dusty?”

“You know, Dad, we've been father and son for over 30 years, and you've been a great dad. But we've never really been buddies, and that's bothered me.”

That set him back a bit. He stared at me for a few moments, and then he said, “It *has* been a long time since we really talked.”

“A long time? Dad, we’ve *never* talked. I’m afraid. It really frightens me that one day I’ll wake up and you’ll be gone, and we’ll never have had the chance to really know each other. You know, I never told Ron how much I loved [him] and appreciated him. I don’t want that day to come for you and me.” [And this is his step-brother and he had died.]

Dad was quiet for a few seconds. “Dusty, that bothers me, too.” He pulled the truck over to the side of the road, and we got out and walked through the field.

“Dad, I’ve always been afraid of disappointing you. I *hated* thinking I’d disappoint you. But when something bothers you, you never say anything. I just don’t know where I stand!”

“Well, you know son, that’s just how I was raised. I just keep it inside.”

“I do, too. But that’s no way to be. If you don’t tell me, how can I know if what I do is acceptable?”

He looked at me a minute. “You know when you were building the house and you said you’d come over and take that sign down?”

I nodded.

“Well, you never did. I had to tear it down myself.”

For Dad to share something that would seem insignificant to most people was like a gift to me, and for the next hour, we told each other our pet peeves and what we like and what we don’t.

Finally, I knew we had aired our feelings—not just our disappointments, but positive feelings, too. I looked at Dad. He stood there, shyly.

“I love you, Dad,” I said.

“I love you, Son,” he whispered. We wrapped our arms

around each other, then turned and strolled back to the truck.

From that day on, we have never let a day pass without an embrace, without saying, “I love you.” That conversation made all the difference in the world to us. It solidified in us the reality that fame and fortune mean nothing if we are impoverished in our relationships with those who mean the most to us.

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And then he goes on to tell how he was singing at a very important meeting and he asked his dad and mother to be there and he dedicated a song to his dad. And what a tribute it was as he expressed his love through the means in music to his dad who was sitting in the audience. He said the applause was deafening for almost 5 minutes.

We can let things like that go and never be a city of refuge, never accept the responsibility to go. We are the losers when we are impoverished in our relationships with each other. It's not how successful we become or how great people think we are. If we're not humble and broken enough to go get relationships right, we're going to have a tough time in glory because that is direct disobedience and we are doomed to carnality and to living in sin until we take care of those matters and become a city of refuge to those that are around us.

The ball is in our court. It's not in somebody else's to come and make themselves right with us. We're the one. If the Spirit of God is speaking to us about that, we should become a city of

refuge to somebody else and we will flee to them and get it right.

Father, we come to You. We pray that Your Holy Spirit would minister to our needs. Thank You for these cities that are tucked away here in this twentieth chapter and the marvelous grace of Yours toward us in the giving of Your Son who is really our city of refuge. May we find a beautiful refuge in Him because we're rightly related to Him through what He has done for us on Calvary's Cross. We love You and rejoice with the fact that we've had the privilege of studying Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Twenty – Joshua 20:1-9

NOTES

v. 1 Then the Lord said to Joshua:

v. 2 “Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed you through Moses,

v. 3 so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood.

v. 4 “When he flees to one of these cities, he is to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state his case before the elders of that city. Then they are to admit him into their city and give him a place to live with them.

v. 5 If the avenger of blood pursues him, they must not surrender the one accused, because he killed his neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought.

v. 6 He is to stay in that city until he has stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then he may go back to his own home in the town from which he fled.”

v. 7 So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah.

v. 8 On the east side of the Jordan of Jericho they designated Bezer in the desert on the plateau in the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead in the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan in the tribe of Manasseh.

v. 9 Any of the Israelites or any alien living among them who killed someone accidentally could flee to these designated cities and not be killed by the avenger of blood prior to standing trial before the assembly.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Joshua 20:1-9 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does the Lord command Joshua to do, according to verse 2?

3. What is the purpose of the cities of refuge, according to verse 3?

4. What is a person to do when he flees to one of these cities, according to verse 4?

5. Why are the residents of the city to protect the person who flees there, according to verse 5?

6. How long is he to remain in the city of refuge?

7. Locate, on a good biblical map, these six cities.

8. What is the purpose of these cities, which is again stated in verse 9?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The Lord is manifesting His grace and forgiveness in this passage.

LESSON #2: Do you find yourself in the sanctuary of the struggler?

LESSON #3: Are you turning your burdens and blows into blessings?

LESSON #4: Are you offering Him your praise?

Hebrews 13:15

Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

LESSON #5: Are you a city of refuge to those who desperately need you?

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