

(According to the Word of the Lord)

Joshua 19:1 – 20:9

~ The Lord Jesus Christ is the only refuge to which a man or woman can flee in their hour of crises. He is a refuge from the storms of our life that will break forth upon each and every one of us; it's not a matter of "if" – it's only a matter of "when." That moment of decision arrives for every living soul, according to Scripture. Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God will consider cities of refuge in this report; and we'll see how the Lord Jesus Christ is the counterpart in a tremendous spiritual correlation.

In our safari through Joshua the wars are, for the most part, over; and the land has been divided up between and allotted to the tribes. Chapter nineteen brings us the final segment of the consignment of geographical territory between the families of the children of Israel. Judah was given special preference; and Judah will become the political capital and religious center of the nation. King David will ultimately establish Jerusalem as the central governmental city and – as we well know – the Lord Jesus Christ will be from the tribe of Judah....

XIX

1 And the second lot came forth to Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.

2 And they had in their inheritance Beersheba, or Sheba, and Moladah,

~ If you have a good Bible with a map, you'll find these cities in the extreme southern region. The tribe of Dan was far north, and Beersheba was in the boondocks of the extreme southern tribe of Simeon. When we

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read the expression "... from Dan to Beersheba" in Scripture, it encompasses any and all people of the nation Israel. This chapter is another example of the level of detail God gives us concerning His people. Israel's physical land and the children of Israel are inextricably intertwined in blessing. This is where God had led them to. This is the only place He intends to bring them blessings. So, what we have is complete possession of the land of Canaan - but NOT possession of the entire geographical territory God had designated them. Further, God gave each family a particular place within the particular section of land; and that reveals God is personally concerned with every detail of each individual child of His.

All of that is remarkable to me in this seemingly unremarkable section of Scripture; and it has a pertinent spiritual application for us today. God is concerned about your personal and private life. With God, your existence is neither personal NOR private. God knows you better than you know yourself. Your secret sin is an open scandal in Heaven. The godless man always says he wants to "get away from it all" - to a place over the hills and far away from everybody else. I know a man who used to constantly say he wanted to "... get off this planet." Well, God's plan and purpose of blessing for us just happens to be right here where we are today - and can only happen in the spiritual realm of land He leads us to, and we take hold of in faith. In all fairness, I think we all have a desire, to some extent, to get away from this physical world; however, we need to be reminded that we aren't going to get away from God. It's simply impossible to run away from Him. Wherever you go – or want to go – God is ALREADY there waiting for you to arrive. Now, when you want to get away WITH the Lord, then that is a wonderful thing, indeed. It's altogether different. Remember, the Lord Jesus retired many times to a desert place to pray and be alone with the Father. Let's all pray for wisdom, judgment and discernment now as turn to Him....

3 And Hazarshual, and Balah, and Azem,

4 And Eltolad, and Bethul, and Hormah,

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5 And Ziklag, and Bethmarcaboth, and Hazarsusah,

6 And Bethlebaoth, and Sharuhem; thirteen cities and their villages:

7 Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan; four cities and their villages:

8 And all the villages that were round about these cities to Baalathbeer, Ramath of the south. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families.

9 Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.

10 And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun according to their families: and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid:

11 And their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached to Dabbasheth, and reached to the river that is before Jokneam;

12 And turned from Sarid eastward toward the sunrising unto the border of Chislothabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia,

13 And from thence passeth on along on the east to Gittahhepher, to Ittahkazin, and goeth out to Remmonmethoar to Neah;

14 And the border compasseth it on the north side to Hannathon: and the outgoings thereof are in the valley of Jiphthahel:

15 And Kattath, and Nahallal, and Shimron, and Idalah, and Bethlehem: twelve cities with their villages.

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16 This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.

17 And the fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according to their families.

18 And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesulloth, and Shunem,

19 And Hapharaim, and Shion, and Anaharath,

20 And Rabbith, and Kishion, and Abez,

21 And Remeth, and Engannim, and Enhaddah, and Bethpazzez;

22 And the coast reacheth to Tabor, and Shahazimah, and Bethshemesh; and the outgoings of their border were at Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages.

23 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities and their villages.

24 And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families.

25 And their border was Helkath, and Hali, and Beten, and Achshaph,

26 And Alammelech, and Amad, and Misheal; and reacheth to Carmel westward, and to Shihorlibnath;

27 And turneth toward the sunrising to Bethdagon, and reacheth to Zebulun, and to the valley of Jiphthahel toward the north side of Bethemek, and Neiel, and goeth out to Cabul on the left hand,

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28 And Hebron, and Rehob, and Hammon, and Kanah, even unto great Zidon;

29 And then the coast turneth to Ramah, and to the strong city Tyre; and the coast turneth to Hosah; and the outgoings thereof are at the sea from the coast to Achzib:

30 Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty and two cities with their villages.

31 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

32 The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, even for the children of Naphtali according to their families.

33 And their coast was from Heleph, from Allon to Zaananim, and Adami, Nekeb, and Jabneel, unto Lakum; and the outgoings thereof were at Jordan:

34 And then the coast turneth westward to Aznothtabor, and goeth out from thence to Hukkok, and reacheth to Zebulun on the south side, and reacheth to Asher on the west side, and to Judah upon Jordan toward the sunrising.

35 And the fenced cities are Ziddim, Zer, and Hammath, Rakkath, and Chinnereth,

36 And Adamah, and Ramah, and Hazor,

37 And Kedesh, and Edrei, and Enhazor,

38 And Iron, and Migdalel, Horem, and Bethanath, and Bethshemesh; nineteen cities with their villages.

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39 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.

40 And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families.

41 And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Irshemesh,

42 And Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah,

43 And Elon, and Thimnathah, and Ekron,

44 And Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath,

45 And Jehud, and Beneberak, and Gathrimmon,

46 And Mejarkon, and Rakkon, with the border before Japho.

47 And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.

48 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.

49 When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them:

~ Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim; and the area that constitutes Ephraim was some of the choicest land in the entire world at the time in

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which we are studying – and still is today. So, when the time came to give Joshua some land, one might imagine the children of Israel would say something like, “.... Joshua, you have led us here and conquered our enemies and we owe it all to you – so, take some good land.” Well, that’s not what happened. The place they gave Joshua is totally barren and desolate – Timnathserah. If you ask me, this was an insult. The children of Israel should have felt guilty allowing Jacob to take that land. They should have insisted he have something better. It's typical of the treatment received by most pastors today.

That should remind us of Abraham and Lot and how Abraham told Lot to choose whatever portion he wanted - and Abraham would take what was left. Both Abraham and Joshua were weak, sinful men, just like we are today; yet their greatness is shown by their extremely honorable actions and their selflessness is the ONLY thing in the world that reveals they had a little different heart in spite of their fallen nature – as far as the book of humanity is concerned, that is. This would be like having the choice of Santa Monica, California – but choosing the desert somewhere between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, Nevada. That should be a revelation about the character of Joshua. Also revealing is the fact that the people didn't even think twice about Joshua taking such an awful, dreadful place. Frankly, I don't think they cared. What an awesome message we have here – and it is told by God in a most casual way....

50 According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnathserah in mount Ephraim: and he built the city, and dwelt therein.

51 These are the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. So they made an end of dividing the country.

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XX

1 The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying,

2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses:

3 That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.

4 And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.

5 And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.

6 And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

7 And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.

8 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.

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9 These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.

~ Now, I hope you read those nine previous verses carefully because we have a striking picture painted in vivid, living color. We have considered the six cities of refuge previously in Exodus chapter twenty-one verse thirteen, and in the entire thirty-fifth chapter of Numbers; and this law the Lord gave to the children of Israel has been subsequently observed by other primitive tribes and people of the world throughout the ages. For example, the Hawaiian's had this system when they were killing each other left and right - prior to Christianity being introduced to the islands. In fact, Hawaii was one of the human sacrifice capitals of the world. The image the tour guide gives, which depicts them loving each other so much and inventing surfing while lulling on the beaches and living in perfect harmony, just happens to be a bunch of malarkey. They also like to say the missionaries came and put a muumuu on them and broke up all the fun; well, that's not the way it happened. They were a dark, moody, doleful, superstitious people – but they DID have a city of refuge. Evidently, this law of God was purposed and intended to be passed along to all of mankind. And so, it was.

What we're dealing with is murder and manslaughter. Manslaughter is used in Scripture – it is called "manslayer" - and it means, as it means today, that a man kills another man accidentally; or, at least, it wasn't done deliberately in premeditated malice by plotting, planning and lying-in wait. In Israel, the man who committed premeditated murder was stoned to death, as we know; and if we dealt with human nature today in the strict manner God has prescribed, we wouldn't have even TEN PERCENT of the crime we have – you can just write that down.

A driver who has an accident and kills another person, obviously, didn't mean to kill the other person, although some family members of the deceased might tend to disagree. Well, under the Mosaic System, the

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unintentional killer would have a city of refuge to which he could flee for the protection of a fair trial. Suppose two men are out cutting wood and the ax handle comes loose and flies right in the face of the other man and kills him. Accident? Again, one of the family members might not accept that explanation.

Alright, the Lord Jesus Christ was slain, and yet He is also called our city of refuge. The writer to the Hebrews says, "... who hath fled for refuge and laid hold of the hope set before them?" This speaks of those who are conscious of their sinfulness but have chosen to avail themselves of the salvation secured for them by Christ upon the cross. Those who take refuge in Him are safe from the judgment of a Holy God forever, friends.

The entire world is guilty of crucifying Christ. Both Jew and Gentile will stand before God as having been a participant in that which brought about the murder of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ came to this world to give Himself a ransom for many. Christ's death upon the cross opens a city of refuge for anyone who places their trust in Him. Many people place the blame for the crucifixion of Christ on the Jew – but He wasn't crucified on a Jewish cross – it was a Roman cross. I think we need to REALLY be specific and understand that dynamic. Either way, it won't get us anywhere placing blame on any one specific racial group. That is the method of the anti-Semite – and it's always wrong – because it absolutely alienates the sincere Jewish man and woman who would otherwise turn to the Lord in faith. It definitely ought not be that way.

The Jewish man and woman is lifted up from the same sorry sack you and I are. We're all guilty; and that's where so many people go horribly wrong with Jesus. Scripture makes it more than clear that all are guilty. Peter, on the Day of Pentecost said, "... brother, I know that in ignorance you did this thing, as did also your rulers." Well, those things that God showed forth through His prophets have so been fulfilled. That's when Peter went on to say repent and turn to God. Remember, Peter was speaking to believers - not the lost.

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Paul also made it clear the Gentiles were just as guilty in first Corinthians chapter two verses six and eight. The hidden wisdom of God is in a mystery that was ordained before the foundations of the world. Well, if the princes of the world had known any of this, they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory! According to the Word of the Lord, God looks upon the entire world as being guilty of the sin of complicity to manslaughter in connection with the death of His Son - at the very least. That means YOU, my friend; and you can point your finger right back at me, because so am I.

Christ was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity. By His stripes we are healed of our sins. If you and I were not sinners, then Christ would have never been on the cross in the first place. The whole world is guilty of killing Christ and there's no way around it; Peter says we did it ignorantly, but we're still guilty. We can also thank God that Christ's death made a city of refuge – a place where you and I can come to. Flee for refuge to Him today, friends. It's dangerous NOT to flee to God in this world we find ourselves in.

The Bible gives an example in Abner, the captain of Saul; and Abner defected over to the camp of David. Well, Joab didn't particularly care for this man. Joab was fiercely loyal to David. So, Abner, without any forethought or malice, killed Asahel, Joab's brother, in self-defense. Well, Joab was determined to get back at Abner because of that. Abner knew what he should do, and he did go to a city of refuge. However, the story goes that Joab tricked Abner into coming out of the city. That resulted in Abner being killed by Joab. Later, David said that "... Abner died as a fool dieth."

If David said that about Abner, what do you suppose God says about the man who refuses to flee to – or remain in – Christ? Especially when you are equally as guilty of His crucifixion? You are a sinner before Almighty God, my friends – you can just write that down, sing it in a song or start shouting at the top of your highest soprano voice from a rooftop. Interestingly, I

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don't see many songs about it. The only place in this world that can afford you any protection whatsoever is the city of refuge God sent for us in His Son. That's also the only place the guilty stains of life can ever be washed clean. So, we're going to leave it at that for now, but I hope this leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God traversing one of the seemingly most boring chapters of the Bible was as wonderful for you as it is for me ~



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