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Joshua 20

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Joshua 20.

Topics.

- Cities of refuge are to be appointed for the manslayer.
- Kedesh is set apart as a city of refuge.
- Bezer, Ramoth and Golan are set apart as cities of refuge.
- The purpose of the cities of refuge.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: the first five books of Moses anticipated the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham concerning the Promised Land. Moses is now dead. Joshua crosses the River Jordan (about 1400 B.C.) and after a string of military victories apportioned the land according to the twelve tribes. These battles shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that God fights for His people when they are faithful and courageous and put their full trust in Him. (Josh. 1:6-9). At the close of the book Joshua says that he and all his house will serve the LORD and invites the people to choose whether they will serve the gods of their fathers or the gods in whose land they dwell or the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. The people choose to serve their God. (Josh. 24:15). Although anonymous the book appears to contain eyewitness testimony, some of which may have been written by Joshua himself.

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JOSHUA 20:1-6

Cities of Refuge are to be Appointed for the Manslayer.

- **Joshua 20:1-6:** Then the LORD said to Joshua, ²"Say to the people of Israel, 'Appoint the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, ³that the manslayer who strikes any person without intent or unknowingly may flee there. They shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood. ⁴He shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and explain his case to the elders of that city. Then they shall take him into the city and give him a place, and he shall remain with them. ⁵And if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not give up the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unknowingly, and did not hate him in the past. ⁶And he shall remain in that city until he has stood before the congregation for judgment, until the death of him who is high priest at the time. Then the manslayer may return to his own town and his own home, to the town from which he fled."

This chapter is a continuation of (Josh. 18:2-6) where Joshua began to allot the remaining land of Canaan to the seven tribes who had not yet been allocated an inheritance. These remaining seven tribes were:

1. Benjamin (Josh. 18:11-20)
2. Simeon (Josh. 19:1-9)
3. Zebulun (Josh. 19:10-16)
4. Issachar (Josh. 19:17-23)
5. Asher (Josh. 19:24-31)

6. Naphtali (Josh. 19:32-39)

7. Dan (Josh. 19:40-48).

The LORD spoke to Moses concerning the cities of refuge in (Num. 35:6-34) (Deut. 19:1-13) these two chapters fully explain the typical meaning and use of the cities of refuge. From the forty-eight cities of the Levites six were to be given for cities of refuge (Num. 35:6) and from the people of Israel three cities beyond the River Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan were to be given from their cities. (Numbers 35:13-15). The design of the cities of refuge was not to protect criminals, but only to give the manslayer protection from the vengeance of the deceased's family member relative or friend until it could be determined whether the death had resulted from an accident or from premeditated malice. The institution of the cities of refuge, together with the rules prescribed for the guidance of those who sought refuge within their walls, was an important provision to secure the ends of justice as well as of mercy. When the Israelites were settled in their promised inheritance, the LORD told Joshua to tell the people to appoint cities of refuge. Cities of refuge were safe haven for any person who struck someone accidentally and without hate and intent in their heart or unknowingly and they died, such a person is called a manslayer in the Scriptures. The manslayer could flee to a city of refuge and be protected from the avenger of the person who had been killed. When the manslayer arrived at one of the cities they were to stand at the entrance of the gate and explain their case to the elders of that city, then the elders would take the manslayer into the city and give him a place where he could remain with them. If a family member, relative, friend or loved one of the person that had been accidentally killed sought revenge and pursued the manslayer the elders were not to give him up, because he struck his neighbour unknowingly and accidentally and had no hatred toward him in the past. The manslayer was to remain in that city until he had stood before the congregation for judgment or until the death of the high priest at that time. When the high priest had died then the manslayer could return to his own town and his own home from which he fled. In this way the manslayer did suffer a certain level of punishment since he could not return to his home town for quite some time.

JOSHUA 20:7

Kedesh is Set Apart as a City of Refuge.

- **Joshua 20:7:** So, they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah.

Cities of refuge on the west side of the Jordan River.

- Kedesh; in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali.
- Shechem; in the hill country of Ephraim.
- Kiriath-arba (Hebron); in the hill country of Judah.

JOSHUA 20:8

Bezer, Ramoth and Golan are Set Apart as Cities of Refuge.

- **Joshua 20:8:** And beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they appointed Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland, from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh.

Cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan River.

- Bezer; in the wilderness on the tableland, of the tribe of Reuben.
- Ramoth; in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad.
- Golan; in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh.

JOSHUA 20:9

The Purpose of the Cities of Refuge.

- **Joshua 20:9:** These were the cities designated for all the people of Israel and for the stranger sojourning among them, that anyone who killed a person without intent could flee there, so that he might not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, till he stood before the congregation.

These cities were for all the people of Israel and the stranger sojourning among them, that anyone who killed a person by accident and without intent could flee to, so that they might not die by the hand of the person seeking revenge, until they stood before the congregation. The faithful of God have in Christ and will have in heaven rest and refuge that eternally secures them in everlasting happiness and glory. It could be said that these cities of refuge signify the relief which the Gospel provides for repentant sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ to who all faithful believers flee for refuge and for their protection from the condemnation of the law and the wrath of God.

- When God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. (Heb. 6:17-18).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
