

In The Wilderness

Numbers 35:1-34

- Before Israel inherits the Land, God through Moses described in great detail the borders of the land that He's bringing the children of Israel into. After outlining the borders for the twelve tribes, Moses is now going to command Israel on where the Levites are to live. Remember the tribe of Levi did not inherit like all the other tribes because God declared to them that He was their inheritance > **Num 18:20**, therefore they will be scattered among the other tribes through the allocation of cities and towns that are described in this chapter.

V1-34

- **V1-5** shows that although the tribe of Levi didn't inherit like the other tribes they were still taken care of by the Lord, don't ever think that just because you may not receive the same reward as someone else that God has forgotten you or won't take care of you, He never forgets to bless His people, it may not look the same, but it will be just as rewarding.
- So although they didn't have land that they owned and could pass down to their families and children like the other tribes could, they still had ample places to live, for each tribe was commanded to provide cities within their borders for the Levites to dwell, ensuring that not only did the Levites have a place to live but all the tribes would have priests that would minister to them, so this was a twofold blessing within the twelve tribes of Israel.
- That is how its supposed to be when you bless those who are ministering to you for the Lord, you do it with joy, because they should be a blessing to you, as they point you to the Lord. Notice they also received some common land as well, so not just places to dwell, and sleep, but also fields suitable for grazing and small scale farming to help sustain themselves. In **Num 18:21** they also received a tithe from the people in comparison to the work they did, that allowed them to not be completely dependent upon the other tribes.
- So the twelve tribes help provide for the Levites, but they had to be good stewards in order for that to sustain them, and keep this arrangement from becoming a burden instead of a blessing as God intended it to be, each hand washing the other.
- **V6-8** there were forty eight cities given for the Levites to live in, they would be sprinkled throughout the nation so no area would be without Levites near them. These cities were distributed proportionally through the nation, as the larger populations with larger areas of land they had more Levitical cities, and the small populations had less priestly cities.

- In doing this we see the foresight the Lord had in wanting Israel to always be spiritually minded, as the Levites were the only tribe that were full time ministers, their main purpose was to take care of the things of God, from the Tabernacle, to the sacrifices, the upkeep, and the Tithe and offerings, everything that was spiritual among Israel the Levites were to head it, and in order for them to do so effectively they had to live among the people.
- God never intended for us to live in a Christian state or commune where we only experience spiritual bliss, God wants us sprinkled throughout the whole world, influencing people for Jesus Christ, and for that to happen we must be around people in order to influence them for God, the problem arises when we allow them to influence us back into the world.
- **V9-14** you see the grace and mercy of God, as He provides even for those times in which things don't work out the way everyone thought it would, God knowing this, has graciously provided. Since there was no police force, deputies or sheriffs office, it was up to the family to law and order, so if one's brother was working in the field and someone carelessly swung an axe or sickle that hit him and killed him, the culture demanded that his sibling or a family member hunt them down and kill them in order to keep the honor of the family name.
- This person was called an "**avenger**" and they could hunt for that person for as long as it takes, months, years, decades, there was no such thing as a statute of limitations, as long as the person who killed the family member was alive, they could keep hunting them. Also if the person doing the hunting dies, gets injured or becomes too old, they could relieve them and appoint another to take up the task of avenging their loved one. The only safe place this person had where no one could touch them was a city of refuge, only there was safety.
- **V15-21** not just for the children of Israel, but also for the sojourner and the stranger the city of refuge was safety, but a clear distinction is made as to who was eligible for this sanctuary. It needed to be determined that what happened was an accident and not murder, because God is not into protecting murderers from receiving their just do.
- In these descriptions we see that all murder is killing but not all killing is murder, which is why society needs laws that establish the principles that decide whether a death is an unfortunate accident or a true murder. **V22-23** so God gives Israel ways in which to judge whether a death was truly manslaughter or malice with intent to harm.
- **V24-28** to judge this properly notice there needed to be a jury (congregation) to hear both sides of the story before a judgment can be made. If he is declared innocent he shall live but only within the limits of the city of refuge, if he ventures outside of those city limits and the avenger of blood finds him then he can once again kill him without penalty. So although you were found innocent there was still a death and therefore some consequences that limit your ability to just roam free and carry on your life as if nothing ever happened.

- But if the High Priest who presided over the nation and its sin dies, then and only then is he made free from any obligations including remaining in the city of refuge, then he is free to go anywhere he wants Wow! When you look at this we see a clear picture of **Jesus Christ as the city of refuge** > both are within reach of a needy person, both are open to all, not just the Israelite, no one can be turned away, both provide protection within their boundaries, if you go outside it meant death, in both comes full freedom with the death of the High Priest.
- **V29-30** we see God institute Laws regarding murder, before anyone could be put to death there had to be at least two witnesses that declared their guilt, in fact they had to be so certain of the person's guilt that the witnesses would be willing to initiate the execution > **Deut 17:6-7. V31-34** once found guilty murderers could not pay their way out of the death penalty, and their punishment had to be swift less the land become defiled.
- According to this we can see why our country is in so much trouble, maybe even defiled, because murderers get off all the time with the right lawyers, and many of them stay on death row for decades waiting for appeals and pardons > **Eccl 8:11**- we see this with our young people today who can commit crimes, cause deaths, and all the courts do is release them to their families or a consenting adult, for them to go out and repeat the behavior.