

A landscape photograph featuring a winding river in the foreground, a vast plain in the middle ground, and a range of mountains in the background under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the image.

Joshua 21

The Levitical Cities:
Special, Significant, Secure

Roadmap

1. Context
2. Content – Levitical Cities:
 - A. Special (v. 1-3)
 - B. Significant (v. 4-40)
 - C. Secure (v. 41-45)
3. Conclusion

1. Context

- Jos 20 & 21 – concludes the distribution of land among the 12 tribes of Israel after their conquests
 - Jos 1-5: crossing into the Land
 - Jos 6-12: taking the Land
 - Jos 13-19: dividing the Land
 - Jos 20-21: differentiating the Land

1. Context

Background of Joshua 21

- God's script to bring the Israelites to the Promised Land draws to a close.
- Every detail is presented, for the tribes to settle in their allotted land.
- Now, the stage is set for the final touches.

Roadmap

1. Context

2. Content – Levitical Cities:

A. Special (v. 1-3)

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3. Conclusion

2. Content – Levitical Cities

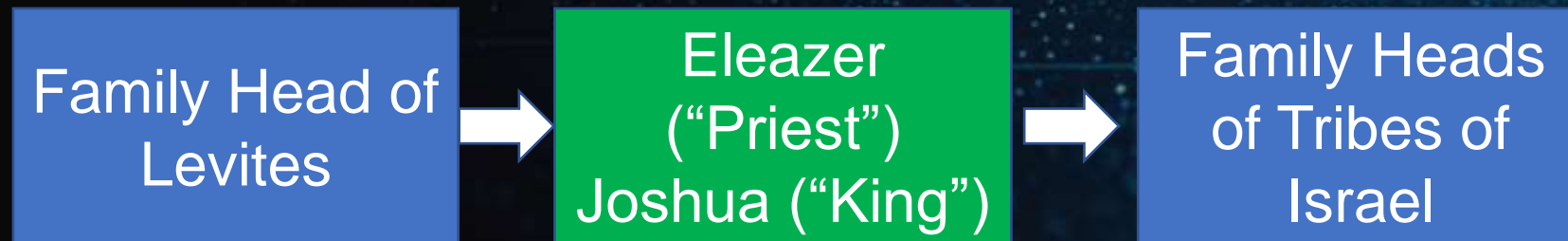
A. Special (v. 1-3 NRSV)

Then the heads of the families of the Levites came to the priest Eleazar and to Joshua son of Nun and to the heads of the families of the tribes of the Israelites; **2** they said to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, “The Lord commanded through Moses that we be given towns to live in, along with their pasture lands for our livestock.” **3** So by command of the Lord the Israelites gave to the Levites the following towns and pasture lands out of their inheritance.

2. Content – Levitical Cities

A. Special (v. 1)

- Family heads of the Levites
- Priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun
- Family heads of tribes of the Israelites.



2. Content – Levitical Cities

A. Special (v. 2)

- “The Lord commanded through Moses”

Numbers 35:1-8

In the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **2** Command the Israelites to give, from the inheritance that they possess, towns for the Levites to live in; you shall also give to the Levites pasture lands surrounding the towns.

2. Content – Levitical Cities

A. Special (v. 3)

The Israelites gave the Levites their land from their allotments

- Obedience to God's commands
- Ask and you will receive! (Matthew 7:7)

2. Content – Levitical Cities

A. Special

Why were the Levites and their cities special?

- Levi was one of the 12 sons of Israel
- Simeon and Levi killed the males in Shechem, and became “odious to the inhabitants of the land” (Genesis 34:25-30)
- Israel pronounced on Simeon and Levi: “I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel” (Genesis 49:7)

2. Content – Levitical Cities

A. Special

Why were the Levites and their cities special?

- Levites were scattered through Israel (Numbers 35:1-8)
- They did not receive an inheritance but only towns and pasturelands to live (Jos 14:3-4)
- They were dependent on the tribes for their living who gave them tithes

Did God forsake the Levites?

2. Content – Levitical Cities

A. Special

God did not forsake the Levites but redeemed them

- Considered God's first-born (Numbers 3:40-45)
- No portion in the land but God was their portion and inheritance (Numbers 18:20; Deut 10:9; Jos 13:14)

Then the Lord said to Aaron: "You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; **I am your portion and your inheritance** among the children of Israel. (Numbers 18:20)

2. Content – Levitical Cities

A. Special

- They were the priestly tribe of Israel – the people who would minister to the Lord and take care of the sanctuary (Num 18)
- They were designated specific cities, which included cities of refuge

The Levites had a special relationship with God

2. Content – Levitical Cities

A. Special

Reflection

- God pronounced judgement on the tribe of Levi, but they proved faithful to Him and received a **special dispensation** of His blessing (Exodus 32:25-29; Numbers 25:6-13).
- They had a **special place** and were set apart as God's portion and inheritance (Numbers 3:12-13)

2. Content – Levitical Cities

A. Special

Reflection

- We are God's special possession – distinct and set apart

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, **His own special people**, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9 NKJV)

2. Content – Levitical Cities

A. Special

Application

- We are made in God's image (Gen 1:27). The Bible tells us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). **How will you describe your relationship with God? What makes it special?**
- God also gives us our unique gifts and calling. **Give thanks for them, and ask Him to guide us to pursue our destiny.**

Roadmap

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2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant (v. 4-8 NRSV)

Kohathites (Aaronic line)	Kohathites (Non- Priestly)	Gershonites	Merarites	
v. 4	v. 5	v. 6	v. 7	
13 towns	10 towns	13 towns	12 towns	48 towns
Judah Simeon Benjamin	Ephraim Dan Manasseh	Issachar Asher Naphtali Manasseh	Reuben Gad Zebulun	

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant (v. 8 NRSV)

- These towns and their pasture lands the Israelites gave by lot to the Levites, as the Lord had commanded through Moses.

Repetition of v. 3 – emphasises God's faithfulness and the people's obedience

Verses 9-40 cf. 1 Chron 6:54-81

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant (v. 9-19 NRSV)

Kohathites
(Aaronic
line)

v. 4

13 towns

Judah
Simeon
Benjamin

***Hebron (CR)**

Libnah

Jattir

Esthtemoa

Holon

Debir

Ain

Juttah

Beth Shemesh

Gibeon

Geba

Anathoth

Almon

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant (v. 9-19 NRSV)

Kohathites
(Aaronic
line)

v. 4

13 towns

Judah
Simeon
Benjamin

- Comprised priests and High Priests
- Offered the animal sacrifices and incense. Access to the Holy place & Holy of Holies.
- Land strategically situated within Judah and Jerusalem

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant (v. 20-26 NRSV)

Kohathites
(Non-
Priestly)

v. 5

10 towns

Ephraim

Dan

Manasseh

***Shechem(CR)**

Gezer

Kibzaim

Beth Horon

Eltekeh

Gibbethon

Aijalon

Gath-rimmon

Taanach

Gath-rimmon*

(Ibleam)

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant (v. 20-26 NRSV)

Kohathites
(Non-
Priestly)

v. 5

10 towns

Ephraim

Dan

Manasseh

- From the non-priestly descendants of Kohath
- Responsible for the care of the ark, table, lampstand, altars, articles of the Sanctuary (Num 3:31-32)
- Settled in the area later known as Samaria

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant (v. 27-33 NRSV)

Gershonites

v. 6

13 towns

Issachar

Asher

Naphtali

Manasseh

***Golan (CR)**

Be Eshterah

Kishion

Daberath

Jarmuth

En Gannim

Mishal

Abdon

Helkath

Rehob

***Kedesh (CR)**

Hammoth Dor

Kartan

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant (v. 27-33 NRSV)

Gershonites

v. 6

13 towns

Issachar

Asher

Naphtali

Manasseh

- Descended from Gershon, eldest son of Levi (Gen 46:11)
- Allocated land in northern parts on both sides of Jordan
- Responsible for the care of the outer tabernacle, including tent of covering, screens and doors (Num 3:25-26)
- Asaph (writer of Psalms) – Gershonite (1 Chron 16:4-5)

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant (v. 34-40 NRSV)

Merarites

v. 7

12 towns

Reuben

Gad

Zebulun

Joknean

Kartah

Dimnah

Nahalal

***Bezer (CR)**

Jahaz

Kedemoth

Mephaath

***Ramoth (CR)**

Mahanaim

Heshbon

Jazer

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant (v. 34-40 NRSV)

Merarites

v. 7

12 towns

Reuben
Gad
Zebulun

- Descended from Merari, third son of Levi
- Responsible for taking care of the frames of the tabernacle, crossbars, posts, bases and posts of the surrounding courtyard with bases, tent pegs and ropes (Num 3:36-37)
- Inheritance included 2 cities of refuge

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant

Reflection & Application

- The Levitical cities served as touchpoints in the region. They functioned as “salt and light” and cities on a hill (Matthew 5:14-16)
- How can we be salt and light in our family, workplace, church and community?

2. Content – Levitical Cities

B. Significant

Reflection & Application

- The Levitical cities were places of worship, teaching, and safety – similar to our church and the cell group (Hebrews 10:24-25)
- Make a commitment to join or participate regularly in a cell group
- How can you grow your cell group to be places where there is anointed worship, teaching and a safe environment?

Roadmap

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C. Secure (v. 41-45)

3. Conclusion

2. Content – Levitical Cities

C. Secure (v. 41-42 NRSV)

The towns of the Levites within the holdings of the Israelites were in all forty-eight towns with their pasture lands. ⁴² Each of these towns had its pasture lands around it; so it was with all these towns.

Summary #1 – distribution of 48 cities, including pasturelands throughout Israel

2. Content – Levitical Cities

C. Secure (v. 43 NRSV)

43 Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to their ancestors that he would give them; and having taken possession of it, they settled there.

Summary #2 – All the land distribution (Ch. 13-21)

2. Content – Levitical Cities

C. Secure (v. 44 NRSV)

44 And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their ancestors; not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands.

Summary #3 – All the conquests and conflicts (Ch. 1-12) –
Jos 1:5

2. Content – Levitical Cities

C. Secure (v. 45 NRSV)

45 Not one of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

Summary #4 – The book of Joshua!

2. Content – Levitical Cities

C. Secure (v. 41-42 NRSV)

The towns of the Levites within the holdings of the Israelites were in **all** forty-eight towns with their pasture lands. ⁴² Each of these towns had its pasture lands around it; so it was with **all** these towns.

2. Content – Levitical Cities

C. Secure (v. 43-45 NRSV)

43 Thus the Lord gave to Israel **all** the land that he swore to their ancestors that he would give them; and having taken possession of it, they settled there. **44** And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their ancestors; not one of **all** their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given **all** their enemies into their hands. **45** Not one of **all** the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

2. Content – Levitical Cities

C. Secure (v. 41-42 NRSV)

“All” – mentioned 6X; emphasises God’s total commitment to the Levites

v. 41 God gave the Levites **all** the 48 towns throughout Israel

v. 42 **All** the towns had its pasturelands

v. 43 God gave Israel **all** the land He had sworn to their ancestors

v. 44 **All** their enemies could not withstand Israel

v. 44 The Lord gave **all** their enemies into Israel’s hands

v. 45 **All** the Lord’s good promises to Israel was fulfilled

2. Content – Levitical Cities

C. Secure (v. 41-42 NRSV)

Why were the Levites and their cities secure?

As the Israelites obeyed God's commands to give the land to the Levites, they could rest secure in:

1. God's faithfulness toward His people (Numbers 23:19)
2. God's victory over their enemies, giving them rest
3. God fulfilling all His good promises

2. Content – Levitical Cities

C. Secure (v. 41-42 NRSV)

Notes:

1. Israel did not fully possess every town and village mentioned. But it does not mean that God's promises did not come to pass. Instead, it reflects the tension between the "now" and "not yet"
2. To realise His promises, Israel must fully obey God's commands

3. Conclusion

The Levites and their cities represent God's faithfulness to His people. It also displays the Israelites' obedience to His commands.

Therefore, the Levites were:

- Special
- Significant
- Secure

3. Conclusion

Likewise, because of our Lord Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection, we can declare that, in the eyes of God:

- We are special
- We are significant
- We are secure

3. Conclusion

Reflection & Application

2 Cor 1:20 For **all** the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

1. What has God promised to you? Claim v. 45 that all of His good promises will come to pass.
2. How can we rest secure in God? Claim promises in scriptures and meditate on them for the next week.

THANK YOU!