

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Joshua: God's Faithful Giving Of The Promised Land To Israel

Part III: God's Dividing The Land For Israel's Inheritance, Joshua 13:1-21:45

F. Special Local Inheritances: God's Local Provisions To Edify Amid An Ungodly World's Destruction (Joshua 19:49-21:45)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The world's higher powers progressively counter edifying Bible order, so we need to know how to live locally:

(1) Charles Krauthammer's piece, "The price of fetal parts," in the Republican-American, July 25, 2015, p. 6A, reported a video has surfaced about a Planned Parenthood doctor casually saying "over salad and wine . . . how a fetal body can be" killed "in a way that leaves valuable organs intact for sale." Another video presents an official of this group "haggling over the price of an embryonic liver. 'If it's still low, then we can bump it up,'" she says, and adds, "'I want a Lamborghini,'" Ibid. World Net Daily told of still another video of a Planned Parenthood doctor with fetal "specimens" on a table in front of undercover pro-life activists and saying, "'It's a baby!'" and another employee jokes, "'And another boy!'" (Bob Unruh, "New Planned Parenthood Video: 'It's Another Boy!'", wnd.com, July 30, 2015)

Mr. Krauthammer observed: "Abortion critics have long warned that the problem is not only . . . what abortion does to the fetus -- but also what it does to us" by way of "desensitization," and he referred to the effect of legalizing "assisted suicide" in the "Netherlands": the practice there is now "so widespread and wanton that one-fifth of all Dutch assisted-suicide patients are euthanized without their explicit consent," Ibid., Krauthammer.

(2) In striking contrast, Corinne Ramey's article, "Judge Rules Chimps Aren't People" (The Wall Street Journal, July 31, 2015, p. A13) reported how the animal-advocacy group, Nonhuman Rights Project, argued unsuccessfully before the New York State Supreme Court that chimpanzees used for research should "be considered legal persons and given the rights bestowed by . . . personhood." Amazingly, Judge Barbara Jaffe, though now ruling chimps are not persons, said in her decision that "courts 'are slow to embrace change,' and she was bound by precedent," Ibid. In other words, Judge Barbara Jaffee of the New York Supreme Court implied that is only a matter of time before animals are granted full legal rights as persons under the U. S. Constitution!

(3) In such a secular climate at the upper echelons of society, Christians have been increasingly asking how they should function at the local level to preserve a semblance of edifying Biblical order.

Need: So, we ask, "In view the godless disorder in the world's upper echelons, how should we function locally?!"

- I. After God gave Israel's tribal units their TRIBAL inheritances in Joshua 13:1-19:48, He arranged for LOCAL inheritances with a LOCAL FOCUS: He (a) gave Joshua his INDIVIDUAL inheritance (Joshua 19:49), (b) He established the LOCAL CITIES of REFUGE (Jos. 20:1-2, 7-8) and (c) arranged for Levi to obtain its LOCAL TOWNS that were LOCALLY SCATTERED throughout Israel, Jos. 21:1-3; 13:14.**
- II. These LOCAL inheritances supplied a LOCAL FOCUS in OFFSETTING APOSTASY at the HIGHER levels of the nation via God's RIGHTEOUS, GRACIOUS, EDIFYING ORDER at the GRASSROOTS:**
 - A. God arranged for Joshua's inheritance to exemplify personal godliness before all Israel, Joshua 19:49-51:
 1. The Lord had directed that Joshua himself select his own personal inheritance plot, Joshua 19:49-50a.
 2. In making that choice, Joshua exemplified a selfless, righteous personal example to all, Jos. 19:50b et al.:
 - a. Joshua had earlier charged the men of his tribe of Ephraim to displace the Canaanites who lived in their hill country and to cut down their forests for land in which to dwell, Joshua 17:14-18.
 - b. He had then moved Israel's national center to Shiloh in that hill country to promote this theme, Jos. 18:1.
 - c. Then, though this hill country was "rugged, infertile" and "mountainous," Joshua chose as his own property the city of Timnath Serah in that hill country, B. K. C., O. T., p. 362. He thus exemplified the need for all Israel to heed his example in their personal lives by humbly, graciously settling into the land that God had allotted to each man in his tribal inheritance in obedience to the Lord, Ibid.
 - B. God called for six cities of refuge to promote the sanctity of human life and God's grace, Joshua 20:1-9:
 1. The Joshua 20:1-9 instruction on the cities of refuge are discussed in four books of the Old Testament, "in Exodus 21:12-13; Numbers 35:6-34; Deuteronomy 19:1-14 and Joshua 20:1-9, Ibid.
 2. These cities were meant to be "havens for unintentional manslayers," and since instruction on them appears so often in the Old Testament, God meant to "impress on Israel the sanctity of human life," Ibid.
 - a. The revenge of blood relatives was widely observed in pagan lands where even an unintentional slaying was avenged, leading to "increasingly larger numbers of innocent people" being "violently" slain, Ibid.

- b. To counter this abuse, God wanted Israel to acknowledge that all humans are made in His image (Genesis 9:6), even those who accidentally kill others, that Israel give the innocent party refuge, Ibid.
 - c. For this reason, the cities of refuge, three on each side of the Jordan River, made it reasonably possible for any manslayer to flee for temporary safety there until a just trial conducted by experts in the Law, Levites who manned the cities of refuge (cf. Joshua 20:7 with 21:32, 21 and 11 and Joshua 20:8 with 21:36, 38 and 27), could determine his innocence or guilt, and render a just verdict, Joshua 20:1-9.
 - d. Manslayers who slew either "unintentionally" (*shagagah*, "sin of error; inadvertence," B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 993) or "without" (*be + beli*, "with" + "no," Ibid., p. 115) "knowledge" (*da'at*, Ibid., p. 395), with no knowledge of doing so, were to enjoy refuge in the city of refuge to which they fled until the death of the high priest. Then, they could go home, Ibid., Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 362-363.
- C. God arranged for the cities of the Levites to promote Scriptural orientation at the local level, Joshua 21:1-45:
1. The last tribe to get its inheritance was the tribe of Levi, Joshua 21:1-2.
 2. However, the Lord had arranged for this tribe not to inherit crop lands for making a livelihood like the rest of the tribes, but to obtain local cities with pasture lands for their animals in Israel, Joshua 21:3.
 3. This left the priests and Levites focusing on the ministry of spiritually leading Israel in Scriptural ways through a preoccupation with the constant study and teaching of God's Word (Malachi 2:4-7) and depending on God's livelihood supply through the other tribes' contributions to the Lord, Joshua 13:14, 33.
 4. In the end, 48 cities, 6 of them being cities of refuge, were scattered throughout the land so that "no one in Israel lived more than 10 miles from 1 of the 48 Levite towns," Ibid., p. 364. Thus, "every Israelite had nearby a man well-versed in the Law of Moses who could give advice and counsel on the many problems of religious, family, and political life," Ibid.
 5. The tribe of Levi was thus to function much like local church pastors do today:
 - a. They were to make the study and proclamation of God's Word their lifelong career, Malachi 2:7.
 - b. They were to highlight God's grace and the value of human life in their cities of refuge, "II, B,4" above.
 - c. They were to exemplify the life of faith, trusting God to meet their livelihood needs, Joshua 13:14.
 - d. They were to minister to the people in the tribal territory in which their respective city was located.
 - e. Since each person with his family in the tribe of Levi was assigned by lot to a specific city (cf. Jos. 21:4 et al.), and the Lord used the lots to indicate His will (Jos. 19:51 with Proverbs 16:33), each person in the tribe of Levi was to view his city as God's local assignment for his life and service to the Lord.

Lesson: *To help guard against upper echelon apostasy destructiveness, God made LOCAL provisions -- (1) a godly example in Joshua for all Israel, (2) the cities of refuge to highlight His grace and the sanctity of human life and (3) ministries by Levi to promote faith in God for one's livelihood and the knowledge and use of Scripture.*

Application: *May we (1) trust in Christ to receive eternal life, John 3:16. (2) Then, in our decaying world, may we function constructively at the LOCAL level by relying on the Holy Spirit to live uprightly (Gal. 5:16-23). Thus empowered, may we (3) follow upright personal examples (Joshua, and Philippians 4:9), (4) may we extol the sanctity of human life by fairly evaluating all questionable issues in the lives of people around us and promote God's grace in each case (cities of refuge) and (5) may we support the promotion of God's Word in our local churches (local cities and ministries of the tribe of Levi).*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

David Skeel's op-ed, "Now Isn't the Time to Flee the Public Square" (The Wall Street Journal, July 24, 2015, p. A9) critiques the plan of some "Christians to stage a 'strategic retreat' from the culture" in the wake of the recent U. S. Supreme Court's ruling on same-sex marriage, for "the practical consequences . . . could be considerable."

However, Mr. Skeel then observes that "(i)n the 1920s, fundamentalist Christians abandoned their efforts to prevent Darwinism and theologically liberal, modernist theology from reshaping mainstream Protestant churches" and "formed their own denominations and schools, and disengaged from American public life," a move he might oppose as "a 'neo-Amish withdrawal from the world,'" Ibid. Yet, Mr. Skeel himself then acknowledges that "Christianity has tended to flourish anew when the distinctions are clearest between Christian faith and other conceptions of what it means to be human" (Ibid.), just what the fundamentalists in the 1920s did, and why God richly blessed them. Thus, God in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 calls us to live rightly at the local level as *separate* from the world to be blessed of Him.

May we trust in Christ as Savior and rely on the Holy Spirit for power. May we then heed godly examples, may we extol the sanctity of human life and may we join in the local church's ministry of the Word.