

Joshua Chapter Twenty – Teaching Notes

Introduction: A key idea in the book of Joshua is that God blesses obedience. Today, we hope to discuss the cities of refuge.

Body:

Read Joshua 20:1-9

D. Cities of Refuge. God tells Joshua to tell the people about the cities of refuge. These cities are set up for those who accidentally kill someone. There are cities on the east and west side of the Jordan, so all of the people of God would have access to mercy.

Applications –

- **God's way of communicating.** Notice in vs. 1 that God speaks to the leader who is to speak to the people. And the people are to obey what God says through the leader. First, God still speaks to the one He sent. This is true in family, church, community, and on the job. Second, the people of God should follow God's leadership. There is still too much resistance to doing what the Lord says do. *Let's work on following God's leadership, which often comes through the one He sent.*

- **Remembering Moses.** Notice in vs. 2 that there is mention of Moses' ministry. We can move forward with an appreciation for what God has done in the past. It doesn't have to be "either/or." It should be "both/and." We should be moving forward and appreciate that the future is built on the past. This is true in church, family, and Black History. *Let's work on moving forward with an appreciation of the past.*

- **Godly justice.** Notice in vss. 3, 5 that God wanted those who were guilty of manslaughter to receive some mercy. The difference between manslaughter and murder was intent. In other words, God wants those who killed by accident to be treated with more mercy than those who killed with malice. In like manner, God is still concerned with punishment matching crime. In America, we have too many poor people in jail because of their selling poor people's drugs (e.g., crack), when compared to rich people selling rich people's drugs (e.g., powdered cocaine). There are too many poor people in jail for poor people's crimes like burglary, when compared to rich people doing rich people's crimes like embezzlement, not issuing recall orders for faulty cars, and botching surgeries. *Let's make sure we are involved with godly justice being administered fairly in our society today.*

- **The wise ones.** Notice in vs. 4 that the elders were called upon to help discern who should receive mercy and to then administer the mercy. In like manner, there should be people in our lives who can be trusted to help us discern what is going and what should be done. There are times when these people are not senior citizens. In fact, there are times when the seniors don't know what to do either. *Let's pray for those who are responsible to help discern what is going on and what should be done, in our lives.* Let's also be open to maturing and being used by God in such capacities.

- **Trusting even when we don't understand.** Notice in vss. 6-8 that God works in mysterious ways. The fact that there were cities on the east and west makes sense. The fact that there were cities in the north, middle, and south made sense. However, things get a little fuzzy, when we think

about a person's release being tied to when the High Priest died. A person could get out pretty quickly, if the Priest is old or sickly. And the person could be in for a long time, if the Priest is young and strong. And then there is the issue of, "Why does God allow man slaughter to happen"? Or, "Why doesn't God prevent man slaughter"? When you put all of this together, we have to conclude that there are times when God makes sense to us. And there are times when we just have to trust God, because our explanations fall short of satisfying our desire for logic. *Let's work on trusting God, whether we understand Him or not.*

Conclusion: Let's work on obeying God. God has much for those who obey His will.