

• *Cities for the Levites*

1. Humbly claiming what God has promised

The final aspect of dividing the land is the appointment of cities for the Levites to live in.

1. **There is a place for humbly claiming what has been promised to us by God.** It is interesting to note that the leaders of the Levites boldly claim what is theirs, quoting the words of Moses¹. Caleb, Zelophahad's daughters and the tribe of Judah² had done the same thing. When something has been definitely revealed as God's will it may be claimed. God had made His will clear concerning the Levites. His will was now in the written Pentateuch which already existed. Numbers 35:1–18 was already in existence. On the basis of the written Scriptures the Levites claimed their cities. Such 'claiming' must be done with some humility. I do not think we should 'claim' blessings from God with an arrogant spirit. And sometimes Christians make the mistake of 'claiming' what God has not promised. Yet when God has given a promise to us, we may take that promise and request that it should be kept. Prayer is often a matter of turning promises into requests.

¹ 21:1–2
² see 14:6

2. Dependence on our high-priest

2. **We live in dependence on our high-priest.** The Israelites gave the Levites their cities¹. They did it by casting lots. This prevented any quarrels and it also allowed God to make the choice of who got which town. The wording of 21:4 and 21:9 suggests that the fact that the priests were dealt with first was itself the result of the way in which the casting of lots turned out. The lot indicated that the priests, who were Levites descended from Aaron, should be given their towns first². There were three sections of the Levite tribe, based upon the three sons of Levi, Kohath, Gershom and Merari³. Aaron was a Kohathite; that is, he descended from Kohath. The Kohathites consisted of the descendants of Aaron, and 'the rest of the Kohathites'. The priests were descended from Aaron. The priests got thirteen cities in the tribal areas of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin⁴. This means that they lived in the southern area which was closed to Jerusalem where the temple would be built later. God's hand was in the casting of the lots. The high-priesthood of the descendants of Aaron has come to an end, and yet the Christian understands why it was so honoured. It pointed to Jesus being our great high-priest. It pointed to the shedding of His blood in Jerusalem. The priesthood and the lands that they were allocated were both a shadow of things to come.

¹ 21:3

² 21:4
³ see Exodus 6:16

⁴ 21:4

3. Provision for those whose calling was more spiritual than agricultural

3. **Provision was made for those whose calling was more spiritual than agricultural.** The rest of the Kohathites got ten cities¹. The Gershom-section of the tribe got thirteen cities².

The Merari-section got twelve³. Joshua 21:8 closes this sub-section. Joshua 21:9 starts to list the cities that were given to the priests. Nine cities were in the lands of Judah and Simeon⁴; four were in the territory of Benjamin⁵.

¹ 21:5
² 21:6
³ 21:7
⁴ 21:9-16
⁵ 21:17-19

Joshua 21:20–26 lists the cities that were given to the other Kohathites in the tribe of Levi. Four were in the territory of Ephraim¹; another four were in the tribal lands of Dan². Two were situated in the western half of the tribe of Manasseh³.

¹ 21:20-22
² 21:23-24
³ 21:25-26

Joshua 21:27–33 lists the cities that were given to the Gershom-section of the Levites. They had two towns in the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh ^{¶1}, four towns in the lands of Issachar ^{¶2}, four towns in Asher ^{¶3}, four towns from Naphtali ^{¶4}.

¶1 21:27
 ¶2 21:28-9
 ¶3 21:30-31
 ¶4 21:32-33

• Those called to teach and help the people spiritually full time

Joshua 21:34–40 lists the cities that were given to the Merari-section of the Levites. There were four in the land of Zebulun ^{¶1}, four in Reuben ^{¶2} and four in Gad ^{¶3}. Forty-eight towns in all were given for the use of the Levites ^{¶4}. They were assistants to the priests. They were spread around the land to do the spiritual work of teaching the law of Moses, and to give spiritual help to the people. They were specialists and were ‘full-time’ workers in spiritual matters. They were not allowed to be full-time farmers as most of the other Israelites were.

¶1 21:34-35
 ¶2 21:36-37
 ¶3 21:38-40
 ¶4 21:41-42

• Provision for ‘full time workers’



These ‘full-time workers’ were not to spend their time in earning their wages by farming or agricultural work, but on the other hand they were not to be left destitute either. Full provision was to be made for them. At the same time by being in ‘cities’ (small enclosed villages) throughout the land they were able to get to the people easily. The spiritual equivalent in the Christian church are those specially called to minister to God’s people. They need to be cared for; they need to be in every corner of the land. The Levites had to trust that God would care for them. God fulfilled His promise of care by first providing them with homes. They did not have large rural estates, but they had a place to call home.

4. The faithfulness of God

4. **The story of the allocation of the land closes with a note of the faithfulness of God.** God gave the entire people ‘rest’ ^{¶1}, freedom from hostility ^{¶2}, and totally fulfilled the promises He had given them ^{¶3}. Over forty years previously the Israelites had feared to enter the land. Now a generation later their fears are proved to have been needless unbelief. God was faithful. Powerful enemies had been put down. Now the people were fully provided for and began to enjoy the land flowing with milk and honey. Hebrews 4:8 explains that the spiritual rest spoken of by Hebrews was not given by Joshua. What Joshua did was simply a shadow of the ‘rest’ we have from Jesus. When by His oath God gives us success and we inherit the promises, the immediate result is that we enter into rest.

¶1 21:44a
 ¶2 21:44b
 ¶3 21:45

• Entering into rest

		<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p> 
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