

Numbers 34-36

January 8, 2012

Introduction:

34:1-15 In **chapter 34 verses 1 to 15** God gives to Moses the physical boundaries of the Promised Land. This is not very interesting to us but few passages are more important to the Jewish people. **Nine and a half tribes** would occupy the Promised Land. **Two and a half tribes** would occupy land East of the Jordan River (modern day Jordan).

34:16-29 In **verses 16 to 29** God tells Moses the men to pick that would help and lead with distributing the land to the tribes and the families within those tribes.

35:1-5 In **chapter 35 verses 1 to 5**, why were the Levites given these cities?

- They were given these cities all over the Promised Land because the Levite tribe did not inherit portions of the land like the other tribes.
- *If anyone should ask, it appears that **verses 4 and 5 contradict each other**. **They do not**. The most recognized Old Testament commentary is Keil and Delitzsch explains this in this way. Notice in **verse 4** that the measurements are from the outside walls – the area is **1000 cubits** from those exterior walls; no directions are mentioned. In **verse 5** the measurements are **2000 cubits** in specific directions (east, west, north, south). The city is a **square** with each side measuring **1000 cubits**; the directional measurements are from the wall on the other side of the **1000 cubit square city**.)*

35:6-15 What do we learn about the Levite cities in **verses 6 to 15**?

- The Levites would have **48 cities**; **6 of those cities** would be cities of refuge. **Three of the 6 cities** would be east of the Jordan (in modern-day Jordan) where the **2½ tribes** would dwell. The other 3 cities would be in the land possessed by Israel today.

What was the purpose of the cities of refuge?

- If someone killed another person accidentally, he would have to flee to a city of refuge and remain there until he stood trial for the matter.

35:16-21 What do we learn from **verses 16 to 21**?

- Here God tells the people what constitutes murder, which is unforgivable. If a deadly weapon was used or it was proven that the attack was premeditated, then it was “murder” and the blood avenger would put the murderer to death.

What would this mean in the Christian/Newsome murders?

- Their families would put the murder(s) to death.

35:22-28 What do we learn from **verses 22 to 28**?

- If the death were accidental the accused would have to flee to a city of refuge where he would be tried. *Even if he were found not to be guilty of murder, he would have to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the current High Priest. If he should leave that city before then, the blood avenger could execute him and it would not be a violation of the law.*

Notice here the responsibility for behavior regardless of the intention. In our day, we have a thousand “loop-holes” so that people do not have to be responsible for what they’ve done (bad childhood, insanity, etc.).

Let's look at the following verses that teach this same principle of responsibility. See **Exodus 21:12-17**, [12 "Anyone who assaults and kills another person must be put to death. 13 But if it was simply an accident permitted by God, I will appoint a place of refuge where the slayer can run for safety. 14 However, if someone deliberately kills another person, then the slayer must be dragged even from my altar and be put to death. 15 "Anyone who strikes father or mother must be put to death. 16 "Kidnappers must be put to death, whether they are caught in possession of their victims or have already sold them as slaves. 17 "Anyone who dishonors* father or mother must be put to death. **Exodus 21: 22-26**, [22 "Now suppose two men are fighting, and in the process they accidentally strike a pregnant woman so she gives birth prematurely. If no further injury results, the man who struck the woman must pay the amount of compensation the woman's husband demands and the judges approve. 23 But if there is further injury, the punishment must match the injury: a life for a life, 24 an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, 25 a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound, a bruise for a bruise. 26 "If a man hits his male or female slave in the eye and the eye is blinded, he must let the slave go free to compensate for the eye. **Exodus 21: 33-36**, [33 "Suppose someone digs or uncovers a pit and fails to cover it, and then an ox or a donkey falls into it. 34 The owner of the pit must pay full compensation to the owner of the animal, but then he gets to keep the dead animal. 35 "If someone's ox injures a neighbor's ox and the injured ox dies, then the two owners must sell the live ox and divide the price equally between them. They must also divide the dead animal. 36 But if the ox had a reputation for goring, yet its owner failed to keep it under control, he must pay full compensation—a live ox for the dead one—but he may keep the dead ox. **NLT**

Notice an exception to having to flee to a city of refuge in **Exodus 22:2**. [2 "If a thief is caught in the act of breaking into a house and is struck and killed in the process, the person who killed the thief is not guilty of murder.] **NLT**

Not only are we responsible for our behavior, the Bible also clearly teaches we are responsible to take care of ourselves.

What do we learn from **2 Thessalonians 3:10**?

- If we are unwilling to work, not one should help us to eat. It is irresponsible to help the irresponsible.

What do we learn about God and His ways in **Matthew 6:26**?

- God feeds the birds, but He doesn't put the food in their mouths. Like all other animals, they must work for what they eat.

Leviticus 23:22 tell us how God's people were to provide for the poor. What does it say?

- They would not harvest the corners of their fields; the poor would have to go into those fields and get their food. The food was not delivered to them; they had to do some work for it.

Now let's look at **1 Timothy 5:8**.

35:29 What does **verse 29** tell us?

- This was to be a "permanent" law that would never be changed or set aside.

35:30-34 What do we learn in **verses 30 to 34**?

- Murderers would be put to death if there were at least two witnesses and not at the word of only one witness. A person guilty of murder could not "buy" himself a pardon for his crime; he must die for his crime. A person guilty of manslaughter who was in a city of refuge could not "buy" himself an early release; he must remain there until the High Priest dies. When murderers are not executed, the land gets polluted.

Who can explain how our country does this in our day?

- One, almost no criminal ever serves the entire sentence he receives. People are released early because we can't afford to hold all of the criminals that belong in our jails and prisons. Governors and Presidents have the ability to pardon criminals and do so every year. This is often (if not usually) done as a political favor to some big contributor. People are given "life" sentences (which seldom actually mean "for life") because the cost of death row and execution can be as much as a million dollars (court costs, appeals, government-provided attorneys, "expert" witnesses, etc.).

Turn to and let's read Deuteronomy 19:1-13.

- *(Apparently the first three cities of refuge would be built in Israel and later the other three east of the Jordan.)*

36:1-9 Who can explain the problem addressed in chapter 36 verses 1 to 9?

- **Numbers 27:1-11** is the background to this issue. All of the males, to whom the inheritance normally falls, had died in the family of Zelophehad (*zee-LOH-fee-had*). God told them, that in that case, the inheritance would go to the daughters.

Now this issue is raised: if these daughters marry men from other tribes, then that land would go into the hands of the other tribes.

- God tells Moses to tell them that females who inherit land are to marry within their tribes so that the land remains in the possession of families in those tribes. **Verses 10 to 12** tell us that these women did as they were commanded and married within their tribe.