

LESSON 11

ESTABLISHING CITIES OF REFUGE

Scripture Text: Joshua 20

God provided cities where the accused could be safe from the pursuer. He has provided a Savior to Whom sinners may come and be safe from Satan's power.

In the cities of refuge, God has given us a very clear type of Jesus Christ our Savior. All of the types actually existed or took place as events in the lives of the people. They served their purposes for the people then. They also serve as types for us—to picture spiritual truths. So the cities of refuge were real cities serving to save lives. They were a type of Christ serving to save souls. God authorized the appointment of the cities of refuge. What does this mean to us?



MEMORY VERSE: *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*

—Proverbs 18:10

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—Joshua 21 Cities given to the Levites.

Tue.—Numbers 35 Rules for cities of refuge.

Wed.—2 Samuel 22:1-7, 28-33 David takes refuge in God.

Thu.—Psalm 46 God is our refuge.

Fri.—Isaiah 35 Salvation promised.

Devotional Reading: John 3:1-21 Christ is our refuge.

Levites in the Cities of Refuge

Joshua 20:1-2 All the tribes except Levi had received their inheritances. Caleb and Joshua had received theirs as special rewards for faithfulness at Kadesh-barnea. Now the Lord points Joshua to the next step. **Appoint . . . cities of refuge** (Numbers 35:6). This city was to be a place where a slayer might flee for protection.

Now the last tribe, Levi, was to receive its inheritance. It was different from the others, not one connected area for all, but homes in 48 cities among the other tribes. They did not inherit the entire city, but were given room in it and its suburbs (Joshua 21:8). These cities included all of the cities of refuge. The list of cities and the rules by which the Levites were to live are found in Joshua 21, Leviticus 25:32-34, and Deuteronomy 18:1-8.

Purpose of Cities of Refuge

Joshua 20:3-6 God set rules for these cities of refuge. They were: (1) Refuge was for one who had killed **unawares and unwittingly**, accidentally. If the trial showed him to have killed purposely, he was a murderer and must be put to death (Numbers 35:15-21). (2) Coming to the gate of the city, he would tell his case to the elders. Gates of those cities were places of city government. The elders would hear the fugitive's story and give him a place of safety in the city. (3) The avenger of blood—the relative of the slain one who inherited his property and had the right to kill his murderer—could not touch the fugitive while in the city of refuge. (4) The accused would be brought to trial before **the congregation**—a court made up of representatives of the people. (5) If judged a willful murderer, he would be slain by the avenger of blood. (6) If judged innocent of intent to kill, he was given safe asylum in the city of refuge until

the death of the high priest. (7) If he was found out of the city, the avenger of blood was allowed to kill him (Numbers 35:26-28). (8) At the death of the high priest, the man was to return to his home, the case closed. (9) These rules applied to all, Israelite and stranger alike.

The Cities Chosen

Joshua 20:7-9 They appointed—the Hebrew word means *sanctified, or set apart to a special purpose*—six cities of refuge. Three were west of Jordan: **Kedesh** in Galilee in the north, **Shechem** in the middle, 30 miles north of Jerusalem, **Hebron** in Judaea in the south, and 20 miles south of Jerusalem. Three were east of the Jordan: **Bezer** in the south across from Jericho, **Ramoth** in the middle, and **Golan** in the north.

Some Comparisons

Dividing the type into parts, we find each detail a comparison of one fact in the salvation plan: (1) CITIES OF REFUGE a type of CHRIST—As the slayer in danger of his life ran into the city and hid safely, so the sinner in danger of eternal damnation flees to Christ and is safe. . . . **your life is hid with Christ in God** (Colossians 3:3).

(2) AVENGER OF BLOOD a type of SATAN—As he sought the life of the slayer, so Satan seeks to damn our souls. Read First Peter 5:8.

(3) GOING OUT OF THE CITY a type of RETURNING TO SIN—If the slayer went out of the city of refuge, the avenger of blood was free to kill him. So, if one sins after being saved, he is lost again. Read Ezekiel 33:11-19 and Second Peter 2:20-22.

(4) LEVITES a type of THE CHURCH—Levites attended to the service of the Lord, ate of the sacrifices, and **the Lord was their inheritance** (Deuteronomy 18:2). As the slayer went to live in the city with Levites, so a sinner when saved comes to **the city of the living God**. He fellowships with God and **the spirits of just men made perfect** (Hebrews 12:22-23).

(5) ISRAEL and THE STRANGER a type of ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE—As both an Israelite and any stranger had equal right to refuge, so all people may be **partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel**. Those who have refuge in Christ are **of all nations, and kindreds** . . . (Ephesians 3:6; Revelation 7:9).

(6) DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST a type of the DEATH OF CHRIST—As the man went home free at the death of the high priest, so a sinner is set free from sin and its penalties by the death of Christ. **By his own blood he . . . obtained eternal redemption for us** (Hebrews 9:11-12).

The Fulfillment

And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers . . . (Joshua 21:43-45). This is the same Lord Who reigns today, the One Who gave us the Bible, gave us Jesus Christ and promises to come again for His own. We can depend upon His promises.

JUST A THOUGHT

**The heart of the problem is the
problem of the heart.**