

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

1. Under the law of Moses, cities of refuge were established in Israel.
 - A. Refuge: “Shelter or protection from danger or trouble; succour sought by, or rendered to, a person.”
 - B. Detailed information about these cities of refuge are found in **EXO 21:12-14; NUM 35:9-34; DEU 4:41-43; 19:1-13; JOS 20:1-9.**
2. Note the fact of progressive revelation in the accounts of these cities.
 - A. In **EXO 21:12-14** a place is appointed but not named.
 - B. In **NUM 35:9-34** six cities are to be appointed with three on each side of Jordan, but they are not named.
 - C. In **DEU 4:41-43** the three cities on the east side of Jordan are named.
 - D. In **DEU 19:1-13** the three cities on the west side of Jordan are to be *in the midst* of the land.
 - E. In **JOS 20:1-9** all six cities are named. All six cities were cities given to the tribe of Levi out of the various tribes of Israel. **JOS 21:13, 21, 27, 32, 36, 38.**
3. There were six cities of refuge in the land of Israel for the benefit of any man who accidentally killed his neighbour without hate or intent.
 - A. One to whom the deceased was dear would likely attempt in the heat of passion to avenge his dearly departed.
 - B. The slayer had to *flee* to the city of refuge.
 - i. Flee: “To *run* away from or as from danger; to take flight; to try to escape or seek safety by flight.”
 - ii. To delay was to court danger.
 - C. Upon arriving at the city of refuge, the slayer declared his cause to the elders of the city. He was then admitted where he awaited trial before the congregation.
 - D. Once admitted to the city of refuge, the avenger of blood could only act as a prosecutor. If the slayer were proven to be a murderer, then the avenger could also act as an executioner.
 - E. If the slayer was not proven guilty of intent to kill, then he would be delivered from the avenger of blood.
 - F. To remain secure from the revenger of blood, the slayer had to abide in the city to which he fled until the death of the high priest.
 - G. If he wandered from the city of refuge before the death of the high priest and was slain by the avenger of blood, the avenger was not held guilty.
 - H. This confinement would have served to induce people to be careful to avoid accidentally slaying someone and thus added protection of human life was provided.
4. Three cities were on the east side of Jordan and three were on the west side of Jordan so that there was always easy access to a city of refuge.
5. These cities are a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in Whom sinners find refuge as they live in this troublesome world. **HEB 6:17-20.**
 - A. The slayer could find no security in anything of his own. He had to flee to God's provision.
 - B. The Lord is a refuge from trouble to Which we may flee. **PSA 9:9; 46:1; 143:9.**
 - C. Paul sought his refuge from the law in Christ rather than in his own attainments. **PHIL 3:7-14.**
 - D. The information given regarding these cities set forth the fellowship with Christ which they find who flee to Him.
6. These cities of refuge are described in four books of the Old Testament. Christ our refuge is set forth in the four gospel records.
 - A. The cities of refuge were places where one could flee to be delivered from the avenger of

blood.

- B. In the four gospels are numerous accounts of men as it were fleeing to Christ for deliverance.
7. According to **EXO 21:13** God appointed this place of refuge.
- A. This whole scheme of deliverance originated in God.
- B. Jesus is the Saviour of God's appointing. **ACT 4:12; 5:30-31 c/w HEB 3:1-2.**
8. These cities could be entered by strangers as well as by Israelites. Christ is a Saviour for believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews. **ROM 10:12-13.**
9. Like the cities of refuge, Christ is easily accessed. **ACT 17:27; PSA 34:18; 46:1.**
10. Like the slayer, we should flee to Christ without delay. **ACT 22:16; HEB 3:7-8.**
11. The manslayer had to leave everything for the city of refuge. So must one leave all in fleeing to Christ. **LUK 14:26, 33.**
12. If a man killed his neighbour with malice aforethought, then no refuge was provided for him.
- A. Those who presumptuously turn from Christ have no refuge either. **HEB 10:25-31.**
- B. The *assurance* of our salvation is like a city of refuge. This assurance is in obedience, not in sin. **HEB 6:10-11; 1JO 2:3-5; 3:18-19.**
13. In order for the city of refuge to be a place of safety, the manslayer had to *abide* or *dwell* therein.
- A. *Abide* and *dwell* are the very verbs used to describe those who live in the fellowship of Christ finding in Him their refuge from danger. **JOH 15:1-8; EPH 3:17; 1JO 2:28; 3:24.**
- B. Abiding in Christ we are secure from being overcome by the devil and from God's wrath upon our disobedience.
14. Abiding in a city of refuge, the slayer was living with the servants of the house of God and the teachers in Israel. **DEU 33:8-10.**
- A. This parallels the description of believers living in a New Testament church made up of priests of God serving in the house of God overseen by God-appointed teachers of the word. **1PE 2:5; EPH 4:11.**
- B. Jesus Christ's churches are cities of refuge into which believers must press to save themselves from an untoward generation (**ACT 2:40**), the craft and deceptions of Satan (**EPH 4:14**) and from the wrath of God (**ACT 3:19, 23**).
15. Although the city of refuge was a place of security on the one hand, on the other hand it was a place of confinement.
- A. Upon the death of the high priest the slayer was allowed to go free from the city of refuge and to return to his own house.
- B. In this sense, upon the death of Christ our great High Priest we are redeemed or set free from the curse of the law. **GAL 3:13.**
16. Until the death of the high priest, the slayer's *only* legal protection was in the city of refuge. So, too, one has no protection from God's law except in Christ. **ACT 13:39; GAL 2:16; ROM 8:1.**
- A. Our High Priest now never dies.
- B. Thus, in this sense, believers must ever abide in their city of refuge for protection.
17. The names of these cities indicate what a believer finds as he abides in Christ the refuge.
- A. *Kadesh* means *holy*. Christ is our sanctuary of holiness. **1CO 1:30.**
- B. *Shechem* means *shoulder*. The government is on Christ's shoulders (**ISA 9:6**). He upholds us, controls our lives, and protects us.
- C. *Hebron* means *fellowship*. God calls us unto the fellowship of His Son. **1CO 1:9.**
- D. *Bezer* means *fortification, munition*. The Lord is our stronghold and fortress to defend us. **NAH 1:7; PSA 71:3.**
- E. *Ramoth* means *heights*. The Lord exalts us so that in Him we live on higher ground. **1PE 5:6.**
- F. *Golan* means *exultation, joy*. In Christ we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. **1PE 1:8.**

