

**05<sup>th</sup> June 2019.**

## **JESUS CHRIST OUR REFUGE.**

### **Joshua 20,21.**

After the distribution of the land by lot among the tribes of Israel, six towns were set apart, in accordance with the Mosaic instructions in Num.35, as places of refuge for unintentional manslayers. Many things were by the law of Moses ordered to be done when they came to Canaan and this among the rest, the appointing of sanctuaries for the protecting of those that were guilty of casual murder, which was a privilege to all Israel, since no man could be sure but some time or other it might be his own case; and it was for the interest of the land that the blood of an innocent person, whose hand only was guilty but not his heart, should not be shed, no, not by the avenger of blood: of this law, which was so much for their advantage, God here reminds them, that they might remind themselves of the other laws he had given them, which concerned his honour, the main points of the Mosaic law contained in Num. 35 and Deut. 19:1-13.....

[Reading chapter 20.....]

The principle for capital punishment goes back to Gen. 9:6: Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man. The state's right to use the sword of execution is also stated in the New Testament Rom.13:3-4.....

God said also that unpunished murderers defiled the land: “Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death . . . So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.” (Num. 35:31, 35:33-34).

On a map, we see that the cities of refuge were well spaced throughout the country. No matter where you were in Israel, you were not very far from a city of refuge.

Deut. 19:2 tells us that proper roads were to be built and maintained to these cities of refuge. The city was not much good to the slayer if they could not get to it quickly.

The cities of refuge were not only for the benefit of the Israelite, but also for the stranger who sojourned among them. God's justice applied to all without partiality.

The Bible applies this picture of the city of refuge to the believer finding refuge in God on more than one occasion:

Ps. 46:1: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.....  
More than 15 other times, the Psalms speak of God as our refuge.

Heb. 6:18: That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

The two immutable (unchanging) things are God's promise and His oath. It is impossible for God to lie in either of these two things. Don't be discouraged! God has a refuge of hope ready for you. We can think of this refuge of hope are like the cities of refuge commanded by the Law of Moses, as described in Numbers 35.

Points of similarity between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Jesus;

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are within easy reach of the needy person; they were of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are open to all, not just the Israelite; no one needs to fear that they would be turned away from their place of refuge in their time of need.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge became a place where the one in need would live; you didn't come to a city of refuge in time of need just to look around.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the only alternative for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection only within their boundaries; to go outside means death.

With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the death of the High Priest.

A crucial distinction between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Jesus is that the cities of refuge only helped the innocent, but the guilty can come to Jesus and find refuge.

In chapter 21, we see the Levites also allotted cities as Moses had commanded in chapter 35 of Numbers too. The Levites received no "province" of land such as the other tribes did; however, they had to live somewhere.

So, each tribe gave certain cities and common-lands (land immediately surrounding the cities) to the tribe of Levi.

The tribe of Levi had no "province" of land because God had declared that He would be their inheritance.

Cities were appointed to the Levites, according to their three main family divisions.

[Reading 21:1-42....]

The striking thing about this list is that God wanted the Levites "sprinkled" all throughout the land of Israel. He never intended there to be one "state" of Levi, but every tribe was to have the priestly influence and presence in their midst.

In the same manner, Christians (being priests, 1Pet. 2:5&9) are to be "sprinkled" all throughout the world and society, instead of heading off to make a "Christian country" somewhere.

Perhaps it is also significant that the priests received their cities last of all the tribes. Priests are appointed to serve, not to be served, and there is something priestly about letting others go first.

Vs 43-45.....

God was completely faithful in regard to the land; but Israel was not. Any failure to fully possess it was not because God had not made adequate provision, but because Israel had failed to fully follow the LORD.

God has been completely faithful to you, and made provision for continual victory. He has given greatly unto you, but what do you possess?

"In the light of the Cross, is it not true that the enemy has no right to dwell in the land? Is it not true that Satan's claim to your life was taken from him at Calvary? Is it not true that sin has no right to a foothold in the life of the child of God? Is it not true that Satan has no power in the presence of Omnipotence? Is it not true that by virtue of His blood and His resurrection, Jesus Christ is pledged to destroy the enemy utterly? Is it not true that in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit there is strength for every temptation, grace for every trial, power to overcome every difficulty?" (Alan Redpath)