

# Christ Our Refuge

Under the Levitical system, God appointed or sanctified cities for the purpose of protecting those who had accidentally slain a fellow Jew. Of the 48 cities assigned to the Levites, six were designated as cities of refuge, three on either side of the Jordan River (Numbers 35:6-7; Joshua 20:7-8). In the ancient Near East if a person were killed, it was the custom that the nearest relative become the "blood avenger." These cities provided the necessary refuge from the avenger of blood (Numbers 35:10-15). If the manslayer reached a city of refuge before the avenger of blood could slay him, he was given a fair trial and provided asylum until the death of the high priest. After that the manslayer was permitted to return home; but if he left the city of refuge before the death of the high priest, he was subject to death at the hands of the avenger of blood.

In the New Testament, the cities of refuge apparently became a type, or symbolic illustration, of the salvation that is found in Christ. The writer of Hebrews says, *"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us"* (Hebrews 6:18). In other words, when the sinner flees to Jesus Christ for refuge he is safe from the divine avenger of blood. Regardless of sin, the sinner may find asylum and sanctuary in Christ; all who flee to Him in obedience will find refuge. In a very interesting way, even the meaning of these cities of refuge typify Christ.

1. Kedesh -- "holiness." Christ is the Holy One; a fountain and model of holiness. He is absolutely and eternally holy.
2. Shechem -- "shoulder." Christ is often spoken of as bearing or upholding. *"He shall bear up the glory"* (Zechariah 6:13). *"The government shall be upon His shoulder"* (Isaiah 9:6).
3. Hebron -- "fellowship." Sin casts us out and alienates and separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). Through Christ we have access to God, and fellowship with him.
4. Bezer -- "fortification." Jesus is the refuge, the fortification of his people, their strong tower and hiding place.
5. Ramath -- "elevation or exalted." Christ is the most high or lofty one. He has a *"name above every name"* (Philippians 2:9).
6. Golan -- "manifestation or joy." Christ is the revealer; he who hath manifested the deity, by His incarnation in the flesh, and by the "good news" of His gospel.

There are also other noteworthy resemblances of our Lord toward these Old Testament cities of refuge. The situation of the cities of refuge typify Christ.

The cities were upon high hills so they could be seen afar off, and in every direction. Jesus is also to be lifted up. His person and work are to be made known to all who are near, and to all who are afar off. John 3:14-15 says, *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."* A child of God's primary function is to lift Jesus Christ up as their Savior and be always ready to show Him to an unbelieving world.

The roads to the cities of refuge were always kept wide, and in good repair. Jesus is also a way of easy and continual access. The way is narrow as far as character is concerned, but it is wide enough for the whole world to walk in it; and it is always open. For those who are living in sin, the access to Christ is but a few simple points of obedience; after which they rise and walk in newness of life. Hebrews 7:25 says that Christ always lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God by obedience to His divine will. For the Christian, Jesus is accessible through the avenue of prayer. Hebrews 4:14-16 encourages us to come boldly to the throne of grace to find grace to help in time of need.

There were posts erected which pointed to the cities of refuge. The word of God was given to show us the way of life, and to make us wise for salvation. In the gospel, this is done so clearly and fully that any honest and genuine heart who seeks a knowledge of the truth may have it. Our Bibles must become an integral part of our lives; they must not be "window-dressing!" The scriptures were inspired by God and will lead us to God!

The cities of refuge were situated so that they might be reached from every part of the land in a few hours. Jesus is our Savior. He is never far off, but is close at hand. It does not matter if we are in New York City or Lufkin, Texas. Christ is always a refuge to which we may immediately go to (Romans 10:6-10). Jesus is near to all those who call upon Him. Even those who desire salvation this very day can be satisfied if they turn from their life of sin.

The gates of the cities stood open constantly. We have already laid great emphasis on the fact that Christ is always accessible. At all times the sinner can come to God in penitence, confessing Jesus as the Son of God, and being baptized for the remission of their sins. Every day and during every instant the Lord is ready to receive the sinner into His fold. Revelation 3:20 says, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me."* The gates of mercy always stand open to the sinner, and they are always open for you.

The cities were a sure refuge to all who entered. If one made it up the hill to the gates, the refuge was certain. For us, the refuge is certain only if we make it into Christ. No one can condemn, harm, or destroy our salvation. But however near we are to Christ, by knowledge or profession, it will be to no avail. We have to be within the ark to avoid the waters; within the refuge to avoid the manslayer; within Christ to be saved.

The refugees were required to abide in the cities until the death of the High Priest. The Christian must abide in Christ until his own death. This is the whole emphasis of one who has become a Christian. He that endures to the end shall be saved. If we are "*faithful unto death*" (Revelation 2:10), then Christ will abide in us and we in Him. That is a high standard to which we are obligated, but if we stand true, the Lord will grant us a crown of life which we will enjoy for all eternity.

The sinner is guilty, condemned, and pursued by the avenger of blood. John 3:36 says that the "*wrath of God*" abides on him. The way to Christ, the true refuge, is by repentance, confession, baptism, and living a life of faith. The imminency of peril and the uncertainty of life demands that you consider fleeing to Christ, the refuge. The certainty of the wrath of God awaits those who pass up the chance for refuge. If you remain impenitent or if you have not obeyed the gospel of Christ, please read Romans 6:23 and Mark 16:16.

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