

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

Joshua 20, 3C0E8718-68D1-5D88.wpd, November 28, 2001

(Josh 20), “The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, {2} Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: {3} That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. {4} And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. {5} And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime. {6} And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled. {7} And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah. {8} And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh. {9} These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.”



- S **THE SUBJECT OF THE *CITIES OF REFUGE*** is unfamiliar to most. A serious study of God’s purposes for the *cities of refuge* proves to be **interesting** and very **revealing**.

- S **THE *CITIES OF REFUGE* WERE SO IMPORTANT TO GOD THAT INSTRUCTIONS** were included in **FOUR DIFFERENT O.T. BOOKS**: Exodus 21, Numbers 35, Deuteronomy 19 and Joshua 20. **THE INSTRUCTIONS** regarding *cities of refuge* were issued **BEFORE ISRAEL** was established as **A NATION**.

- S **IT IS NOT JUST THE CITIES** that are important, but all the instructions related to the cities, too. **THE DIRECTIONS** regarding these cities **REVEAL MUCH** about **THE CHARACTER OF GOD** and **THE TYPE OF GOVERNMENT** GOD CONDONES.
It has always been **A PUZZLE** why **GOVERNMENTS VARY** so broadly from nation to nation. **WHY DO** some beliefs almost always lead a nation toward **DICTATORSHIP?** Why are some nations free, while others are highly restrictive of personal freedom?
THE ANSWERS to those questions are directly related to **WHAT THOSE NATIONS CONSIDER TO BE TRUTH**. When a person makes the comment that it **DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU BELIEVE**, you can mark it down, they do not have a clue what they are talking about. Whatever we believe is what we live by. If we believe the wrong things, we will live the wrong things. If we believe the right things, we will live the right things. The writer of Proverbs wrote, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: . . .” (Prov. 23:7).

WHATEVER A NATION THINKS in their national heart, **SETS THE COURSE FOR THAT NATION**.

- S As we study *the cities of refuge*, we will **DISCOVER O.T. TRUTHS** related to the **ADMINISTRATION OF NATIONAL JUSTICE**. In light of the different directions modern nations have taken regarding administration of justice, this study is very important.
- S As we study *the cities of refuge*, **KEEP IN MIND** that **JESUS** came to fulfill the law (Mat 5:17-18). Part of the law that Jesus has already fulfilled is directly related to *the cities of refuge*.

- I. **PLANS FOR THE CITIES OF REFUGE**
- II. **PURPOSES FOR THE CITIES OF REFUGE**
- III. **PICTURES FROM THE CITIES OF REFUGE**

I. PLANS FOR THE CITIES OF REFUGE

CONSIDER THREE ELEMENTS:

- #1. **LOCATION**
- #2. **ACCESSABILITY**
- #3. **FIVE DEFINITIONS**

#1. LOCATION

- S INTERSPERSED THROUGHOUT THE LAND OF PROMISE were **FORTY-EIGHT LEVITICAL CITIES**. The Levitical cities are the subject addressed in Joshua 21. **SIX OF THE LEVITICAL CITIES WERE *CITIES OF REFUGE***. **Three** of the *cities of refuge* were located on **WEST SIDE** of the Jordan, and three were located on the **EAST SIDE**.

THE THREE CITIES ON **WEST SIDE** OF THE JORDAN WERE:

- 1) **KEDESH** IN GALILEE (1 Chr. 6:76),
- 2) **SHECHEM** IN EPHRAIM (Josh. 21:21; 1 Chr. 6:67),
- 3) **HEBRON** IN JUDAH (Josh. 21:11; 2 Sam. 5:5; 1 Chr. 6:55). Hebron was the city that Caleb had claimed as his rightful possession in chapter 14. It appears that he must have given the city back to God as his offering. Perhaps he lived in the city among the Levites. Perhaps he lived in the country surrounding the city.

THE THREE CITIES ON **EAST SIDE** OF THE JORDAN WERE:

- 1) **BEZER** IN REUBEN ON THE PLAIN OF MOAB (Deut. 4:43; Josh. 20:8)
- 2) **RAMOTH** IN GAD IN THE LAND OF GILEAD, (Deut. 4:43; Josh. 21:38; 1 Kin. 22:3)
- 3) **GOLAN** IN THE HALF TRIBE OF MANASSEH IN BASHAN, (Deut. 4:43; Josh. 21:27; 1 Chr. 6:71).

- S **A MAP** of these cities in their locations is a picture worth a thousand words.

#1. **LOCATION**

#2. ACCESSABILITY

SCRIPTURE REQUIRED THAT THESE CITIES TO BE EASILY ACCESSIBLE

- (1) THE CITIES WERE TO BE **CENTRALLY LOCATED** (Deut 19:2)

- (2) **ROADS WERE TO BE BUILT** so that the journey to the city could be accomplished with relative ease (Deut 19:3)

TRADITION REINFORCED THE IDEA OF ACCESSABILITY

- (1) **THE ROADS WERE TO BE MAINTAINED.** After the rainy season the roads to the *cities of refuge* were not to be left in disrepair.
- (2) **BRIDGES** were to be built over any ravines to make the journey easier
- (3) **SIGNS WERE TO BE POSTED AT ALL CROSSROADS** so that a person in flight would not be in doubt as to which direction he should take. The signs were to read "**REFUGE.**"
- (4) **THE CITY GATES** were to always be left **OPEN DAY AND NIGHT.** That was different from other walled cities. The folks in those cities locked their gates at night so they would be protected from outside dangers. The *cities of refuge* were to be accessible 24 hours a day.

- #1. **LOCATION**
#2. **ACCESSABILITY**

#3. FIVE DEFINITIONS

- [#1]. **THE SLAYER THAT KILLS** (V. 3)
[#2]. **THE AVENGER OF BLOOD** (V. 3)
[#3]. **THE DECLARATION OF CAUSE** (V. 4)
[#4]. **THE HIGH PRIEST** (V. 6)
[#5]. **THE STRANGER** (V. 9)

1) THE SLAYER THAT KILLS

(V. 3), "That the **SLAYER THAT KILLETH** any person . . . "

S This verse **ADDRESSED** the person who had taken the life of another person. For the sake of communication, we will refer to the person who has taken the life of another as a **MANSLAYER**. The verses that address the subject of the *cities of refuge* refer to **TWO KINDS OF "MANSLAYERS:"**

- 1) The person that **SLAYS ANOTHER PERSON WITHOUT PREMEDITATION OR INTENT IS GUILTY OF MANSLAUGHTER.** It is called *manslaughter* because the death was accidental.

(V. 3), "That **THE SLAYER THAT KILLETH** any person **UNAWARES** and **UNWITTINGLY . . .** "

- 2) The person who **SLAYS ANOTHER PERSON WITH PREMEDITATION & INTENT IS GUILTY OF MURDER.**

S **OUR TEXT** DRAWS A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN **ACCIDENTAL SLAYING & PREMEDITATED SLAYING.**

S **U.S. LAW** DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN **MANSLAUGHTER & MURDER.**

- 1) **MURDER** is defined as **intentionally** causing the death of another person. **TWO DEGREES** of murder exist in most U.S. criminal codes. **FIRST DEGREE MURDER** involves a **premeditated** and **deliberate** act of taking someone's life. Throwing a bomb into a crowd would be premeditated murder. **SECOND DEGREE MURDER** involves **intent** to kill someone, but **without premeditation**.
- 2) **MANSLAUGHTER** is where a person kills another **unintentionally**. If someone died because a person lost control of their **CAR**, that driver could be charged with manslaughter.

SCRIPTURES SURROUNDING THE *CITIES OF REFUGE* GIVE FOUR EXAMPLES OF ACCIDENTAL MANSLAUGHTER:

- ◆ **(Num 35:22-23 niv)**, ""But if **WITHOUT HOSTILITY** someone **SUDDENLY SHOVES** another or **THROWS** something at him **UNINTENTIONALLY** {23} or, **WITHOUT SEEING** him, **DROPS A STONE** on him that could kill him, and he dies, then since he was **NOT HIS ENEMY** and he did not intend to harm him,"
- ◆ **(Deu 19:5 niv)**, "For instance, a man may go into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and as he **SWINGS HIS AX** to fell a tree, the head may fly off and hit his neighbor and kill him..."

1) *THE SLAYER THAT KILLS*

2) *THE AVENGER OF BLOOD*

(V. 3), "That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from **THE AVENGER OF BLOOD**."

- S THE HEBREW WORD FOR "**AVENGER**" (GAW-AL') is translated a variety of ways: "**KINSMAN**," "**REDEEM**," "**REDEEMER**." In the Book of **RUTH** it is translated as "**NEAR KINSMAN**." In our text, and in other places, it is translated as "**AVENGER**."
- S THIS "**GAW-AL**" is presented so often in the O.T. that **THE LAW OF THE REDEEMER KINSMAN WAS ESTABLISHED**. **THE "GA'AL" WAS** the **NEAREST MALE RELATIVE** RESPONSIBLE FOR carrying out a variety of functions **for a relative** who had fallen on hard times. **CONSIDER THREE RESPONSIBILITIES** a near kinsman was charged with. These three obligations do not represent all his responsibilities.
 - 1). THE "**GAW-AL**" was responsible for **BUYING BACK THE LAND** OF A RELATIVE that had been sold because of hardship (Lev 25).
 - 2). THE "**GAW-AL**" was responsible for **BUYING BACK THE RELATIVE HIMSELF** if he had become so impoverished that he **HAD SOLD HIMSELF INTO SLAVERY** (Lev 25).

- 3). THE **"GAW-AL'"** was responsible for **TAKING THE LIFE** of a person if he had **MURDERED HIS RELATIVE**. In that particular instance, the redeemer kinsman was called **THE AVENGER OF BLOOD** (Num 35:12-28; Joshua 20:3). He could also be called *the redeemer of blood*. He was to carry out **RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION** so that civil justice would be maintained in the land.

THREE GUIDELINES REGARDING THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION WERE:

- (1) **THE WILLFUL MURDERER** was to be **PUT TO DEATH BY THE AVENGER OF BLOOD**:
(Num 35:16-21 niv), "If anyone with malice aforethought shoves another or throws something at him intentionally so that he dies {21} or if in hostility he hits him with his fist so that he dies, that person **SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH; HE IS A MURDERER**. THE AVENGER OF BLOOD shall put the murderer to death when he meets him."
NO COMPENSATION COULD BE MADE FOR THE WILLFUL MURDERER (Num 35:31).
- (2) **RETALIATION COULD NOT BE EXTEND BEYOND** the person who had committed the slaying (Deut 24:16; 2 Kin 14:6; 2 Chr 25:4). The avenger of blood was not permitted to extend his judgment to the parents, siblings or friends of the murderer.
- (3) **IF THE SLAYING HAD TAKEN PLACE WITHOUT HOSTILE INTENT**, THE GUILTY PERSON WAS PERMITTED TO FLEE TO A **CITY OF REFUGE** FOR PROTECTION.

- 1) *THE SLAYER THAT KILLS*
- 2) *THE AVENGER OF BLOOD*

3) THE DECLARATION OF CAUSE

(V. 4), "And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and **SHALL DECLARE HIS CAUSE** in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them."

FOUR GUIDELINES REGARDING THE DECLARATION OF CAUSE WERE:

- (1) DECLARATION WAS TO TAKE PLACE **IMMEDIATELY** upon entering the city. (V. 4)
- (2) IT TOOK PLACE **IN THE CITY GATE** (V. 4)
- (3) IT TOOK PLACE **BEFORE THE CITY ELDERS** (V. 4). The elders would have all been **LEVITES**. The six *cities of refuge* were also Levitical cities.
- (4) The *manslayer* was to **REMAIN** in the city **UNTIL A FURTHER TRIAL** could be convened to determine his innocence or guilt.
- **(V. 6)**, "And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, . . ."
 - Indications are that the *manslayer* was to be taken back to the location where the death had occurred for his in depth trial (Num 35:25).

● **IF IN THE COURSE OF THE TRIAL THE MANSLAYER WAS**

FOUND GUILTY OF MURDER, he was turned over to the **AVENGER OF BLOOD**. The murderer was put to death. The *city of refuge* was never intended to provide refuge for a willful murderer.

- **IF IN THE COURSE OF THE TRIAL THE *MANSLAYER* WAS FOUND INNOCENT OF MURDER, BEING GUILTY ONLY OF MANSLAUGHTER, HE WAS STILL NOT TOTALLY ABSOLVED OF ALL RESPONSIBILITY.** The *manslayer* was **permitted to live** because the death was **unintentional** and **accidental**, **BUT THERE WAS STILL A PENALTY FOR TAKING A LIFE.**

EVEN IN MODERN U.S. LAW, A PRICE HAS TO BE PAID if a person accidentally kills another human being. If **YOUR CAR CAUSES THE UNINTENTIONAL DEATH** of another person, there is a penalty. It is not the same price as first or second degree murder, but there is still **A PRICE**. Ignorance does not totally absolve a person of the accident. If a person drives **45-mph** through a **30-mph speed zone**, he may plead ignorance, but the law allows for the writing of a ticket if the police officer so chooses.

THE PRICE TO BE PAID IN O.T. DAYS RELATED TO MANSLAUGHTER WAS:

- **(Num 35:25-28 niv)**, "The assembly **MUST PROTECT THE ONE ACCUSED** of murder from the avenger of blood and **SEND HIM BACK TO THE *CITY OF REFUGE*** to which he fled. **HE MUST STAY THERE UNTIL** the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil. {26} "But **IF THE ACCUSED EVER GOES OUTSIDE THE LIMITS** of the *city of refuge* to which he has fled {27} and the avenger of blood finds him outside the city, **THE AVENGER OF BLOOD MAY KILL THE ACCUSED** without being guilty of murder. {28} The accused must stay in his *city of refuge* until the death of the high priest; **ONLY AFTER** the death of the high priest may he return to his own property."
- THAT MAY SOUND LIKE **CRUEL & UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT**, but in light of the standard for that day, IT WAS **VERY MERCIFUL. THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION WAS WIDELY PRACTICED** IN THE ANCIENT WORLD among nations. Because man's heart is desperately wicked, it was **DIFFICULT** for human beings to maintain **A RIGHTEOUS APPLICATION** of the law of retribution. The domino effect often came into play and many innocent people got caught up in a feud that led to unending retribution. It could easily become something like the feud between the Hatfields and the McCoys.

BLAIKIE tells of a **four-century period** in **ITALY** were more than **600,000** people were wounded or murdered out of **revenge** (*The Book of Joshua*, Hodder & Stoughton, p. 332; *Joshua: Leadership Under Fire*, Donald K. Campbell, p. 118). Even with the acknowledgment of God's law in mind, it is easy to miss God's intention by going to **EXTREMES**. Some people go to extremes by ignoring all wrongs and pretending they never happened at all. Other people go to extremes by wanting to prosecute every transgression of law whether great or small. Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer

17:9).

DEFINITIONS

- 1) *THE SLAYER THAT KILLS*
- 2) *THE AVENGER OF BLOOD*
- 3) *THE DECLARATION OF CAUSE*

4) *THE HIGH PRIEST*

(V. 6), “And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and **UNTIL THE DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST** that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.”

- S The High Priest was appointed for **LIFE**. The death of the High Priest marked the day of release for the manslayer from the *city of refuge*.
- S THIS REQUIREMENT **FOCUSED NATIONAL ATTENTION ON THE HIGH PRIEST**. The national focus on the High Priest was by design as we will discover at the conclusion of this message.

- 1) *THE SLAYER THAT KILLS*
- 2) *THE AVENGER OF BLOOD*
- 3) *THE DECLARATION OF CAUSE*
- 4) *THE HIGH PRIEST*

5) *THE STRANGER (WHOSOEVER)*

(V. 9), “These were the cities appointed FOR ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AND FOR **THE STRANGER** THAT SOJOURNETH AMONG THEM, that **WHOSOEVER** killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.”

- S **HOW MANY TIMES** did God tell the children of Israel to treat *strangers* among them no differently that they treated each other. Then God would add a comment something like, “For you were strangers and sojourners in the land of Egypt.” No group of people knew better than Israel what it meant to be *strangers* in a foreign land.
- S This command addressing *strangers* demonstrated that God was no respecter of persons. GOD’S **FAIRNESS** applied to all people regardless of their race or nationality.

I. **PLANS FOR THE CITIES OF REFUGE**

II. PURPOSES FOR THE CITIES OF REFUGES

S CONSIDER **FIVE PURPOSES**:

#1. TO PROVIDE REFUGE

- S IT **MAKES SENSE** that a *CITY OF REFUGE* would be **A REFUGE**.
- S “REFUGE” IS **A GOOD WORD**. It is a word that speaks of **encouragement & comfort**. A refuge is A PLACE OF **SAFETY, SHELTER, PROTECTION, SANCTUARY**, that is

designed for protection for a person in danger. By its very nature it is inaccessible to an enemy.

- S The *city of refuge* was a place where people that were in great trouble and danger could run and find safety.

PURPOSES:

#1. TO **PROVIDE REFUGE**

#2. TO PROVIDE OBJECT LESSONS

- S The *cities of refuge* stood as **A CONSTANT REMINDER** that GOD WAS AMONG HIS PEOPLE. In that sense those cities served a similar purpose to *standing stones*.
- S As God gave the victory to the children of Israel throughout the land of Canaan, Joshua would set up **MEMORIALS** that would remind future generations of God's goodness. Our study in Joshua 4 was titled *STONES THAT WITNESS*. After crossing the Jordan river, the children of Israel carried twelve stones to Gilgal and set up a memorial. **PARENTS** in future generations could take their children on a trip to Gilgal and use those stones to witness of **GOD'S GOODNESS**. Those stones became **OBJECTS LESSONS** to share the testimony of God.
- S THE SIX *CITIES OF REFUGE* WERE **OBJECT LESSONS FOR ISRAEL**. They, too, could be **USED TO TEACH THE WAYS OF GOD**. Whereas *standing stones* spoke primarily of things God had done in THE **PAST**, *cities of refuge* spoke of things God was doing in THE **PRESENT** and was going to do in the **FUTURE**.

PURPOSES:

#1. TO **PROVIDE REFUGE**

#2. TO **PROVIDE OBJECT LESSONS**

#3. TO HIGHLIGHT GOD'S CODE OF JUSTICE

- S God's code of justice, as revealed in Scripture, IS A PART OF **GOD'S TESTIMONY**. As we read about God's guidelines for the *cities of refuge*, we gain insight into the *character* and *ways* of God.
- S **PAINTED WITH BROAD STROKES**, CONSIDER GOD'S CODE OF JUSTICE AS REVEALED THROUGH THE *CITIES OF REFUGE*:
 - (1) God grants **THE RIGHT OF TRIAL** (Deut 19:18)
 - (2) God is **NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS** ("strangers")
 - (3) God distinguishes between **SINS THAT ARE INTENTIONAL & SINS THAT ARE UNINTENTIONAL**.
 - (4) God grants **THE RIGHT OF DUE PROCESS OF LAW**.
 - (5) Shedding the blood of another person is a **VERY SERIOUS** matter even if it is an accident.
 - (6) OTHER TRUTHS . . .

PURPOSES:

#1. TO **PROVIDE REFUGE**

#2. TO **PROVIDE OBJECT LESSONS**

#3. TO **HIGHLIGHT GOD'S CODE OF JUSTICE**

#4. TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT

NOTICE THE WORD "INNOCENT"

(Deu 19:10), "THAT INNOCENT BLOOD BE NOT SHED in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee."

(Deu 19:13), "Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of **INNOCENT** blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee."

S O.T. LAW **DISTINGUISHED** BETWEEN THE SHEDDING OF **INNOCENT BLOOD** and THE SHEDDING OF **GUILTY BLOOD**. **SHEDDING INNOCENT BLOOD POLLUTED THE LAND**. Shedding of innocent blood is a very serious matter to God.

(1) WHEN **CAIN MURDERED ABEL**, HIS BLOOD CRIED OUT TO GOD. GOD ASKED CAIN:

(Gen 4:10), "... What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's **BLOOD CRIETH** unto me from the ground."

(2) **SHEDDING OF INNOCENT BLOOD DEFILES A NATION**:

(Num 35:33-34), "So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: **FOR BLOOD IT DEFILETH THE LAND**: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, **BUT BY THE BLOOD OF HIM THAT SHED IT**. {34} **DEFILE NOT** therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel."

S **THE CITIES OF REFUGE** helped prevent the shedding of innocent blood **BY DEFINING INNOCENCE AND GUILT**. God's Word clearly teaches that taking innocent human life is a very serious matter. **GOD PROTECTS THE INNOCENT**.

S **WITH THE THOUGHT OF BLOOD DEFILING THE LAND IN MIND**, WHAT DOES THAT SAY ABOUT OUR LAND? The lives of more than one and one-half million babies are extinguish every year in our nation. God's design is that the innocent be protected, not destroyed. For a nation to sanction the taking of innocent life is for a nation to be blood-guilty. That is a very serious matter to God.

PURPOSES FOR CITIES OF REFUGE:

#1. TO **PROVIDE REFUGE**

#2. TO PROVIDE **OBJECT LESSONS**

#3. TO **HIGHLIGHT GOD'S CODE OF JUSTICE**

#4. TO **PROTECT THE INNOCENT**

#5. TO RESTRAIN EVIL BY PUNISHING THE GUILTY

(Num 35:31), ""Do not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer, who deserves to die. He must surely be put to death."

S **WITHOUT RESTRAINT, EVIL RUNS RAMPANT**. If you doubt that, just watch when **DISASTER STRIKES A CITY** and see how long it takes for certain individuals to start looting. In its early stages, the land of Israel had **NO POLICE FORCE**. A system for restraint of evil had to be implemented. **A MAJOR DETERRENCE** for murderer in O.T. days was the prospect of meeting the immediate judgment of an angry avenger of blood.

S **THE CITY OF REFUGE OFFERED OPPORTUNITY FOR AN**

IMMEDIATE TRIAL in the city gates to determine innocence or guilt. **IF** the manslayer was **FOUND GUILTY** of deliberate and intentional murder, the *city of refuge* was no longer a refuge for him. He was to be turned over to the avenger of blood.

- **(Num 35:31)**, "Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but **HE SHALL BE SURELY PUT TO DEATH.**"
- **(Gen 9:5-6)**, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. {6} Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

S **IF THE *MANSLAYER* WAS PROVEN INNOCENT** of willful murder, he was still guilty of manslaughter, and had to remain within the boundaries of the *city of refuge* until the death of the high priest. No ransom could be paid that would allow the *manslayer* to return to his home.

- **(Num 35:32)**, "Do not accept a ransom for anyone who has fled to a city of refuge and so allow him to go back and live on his own land before the death of the high priest."
- THIS LAW IS **DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND** in light of modern law. If we were transported back in history, this stipulation would **PROVE TO BE MERCIFUL**. It would also show itself a **PROTECTION** for the man who had committed manslaughter. Other cultures in that day slew the person guilty of manslaughter and there was no *city of refuge* for them to run to. No other culture in that day had the equivalent of a *city of refuge* where the person who had accidentally killed someone was offered refuge. In its historical context, this law was **A LAW OF MERCY**. Had you accidentally killed someone, it would have been good to have lived in the land of Israel. At least you would be permitted to live.

I. **PLANS FOR THE CITIES OF REFUGE**

II. **PURPOSES FOR THE CITIES OF REFUGE**

#1. TO **PROVIDE REFUGE**

#2. TO PROVIDE **OBJECT LESSONS**

#3. TO **HIGHLIGHT GOD'S CODE OF JUSTICE**

#4. TO **PROTECT THE INNOCENT**

#5. TO **RESTRAIN EVIL BY PUNISHING THE GUILTY**

III. PICTURES FROM THE CITIES OF REFUGE

S It has already been stated that **JESUS** came to fulfill the O.T. law (Mat 5:17-18). Part of the law Jesus fulfilled was related directly to *the cities of refuge*.

S THE INSTRUCTIONS for the *cities of refuge* appear to have **FORESHADOWED** greater things to come. This foreshadowing is often referred to as **TYOLOGY**. **ONE FAMILIAR O.T. FORESHADOWING** would be **THE TEMPLE SACRIFICES**. The sacrificial lambs portrayed the coming sacrifice the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

S **USING TYPOLOGY, CONSIDER SOME POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS TAKEN FROM THE *CITIES OF REFUGE*:**

#1. WE ARE THE MANSLAYERS

(1 John 3:15), "Whoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

(Mat 5:22), "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

(Rom 3:23), "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

- S BECAUSE WE WERE *MANSLAYERS*, we had **the SENTENCE OF DEATH HANGING OVER OUR HEADS**. The avenger of blood was after us. Like the *manslayer* we had to run to the *city of refuge* in order to *flee the wrath to come*. For those who refuge the safety of that city, there is the fearful prospect of judgment. There is no protection outside the *city of refuge*.
- S SOMEONE MIGHT PROTEST by saying, "I have never murdered anyone." The truth is **WE ARE GUILTY OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST!** Our sins hung Jesus on that cross. Jesus told Peter to put up his sword when he was willing to defend Jesus, because Jesus had to die for Peter's sins, too.
- S Perhaps it is significant to consider whether a person's rejection of Christ is **DELIBERATE**, or **ACCIDENTAL**. Jesus said from the cross, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34). There is a different penalty for murder and manslaughter. If a person is presently choosing to reject Christ, it would be good for them to consider whether that rejection is **deliberate** or **accidental**. The deliberate death of a person was met with certain death in the O.T.

#1. WE ARE THE MANSLAYERS

#2. JESUS ALONE IS OUR CITY OF REFUGE (Heb 6:18)

(Acts 4:12), "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

(John 14:6), ". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

- S **DO YOU NEED A CITY OF REFUGE?** Run to Jesus! Don't run to the city of **BEERSHEBA** when **HEBRON** has been designated as the *city of refuge*. You will not find any help for your sin in any other place than Jesus. **JESUS ALONE** is our *city of refuge*. Many folks think they are safe because they have run to a place they have designated as their refuge. They fail to realize God's refuge is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- S Someone might think that **A BIT NARROW**. It is OK to be narrow minded if you are narrow minded regarding the right things. You want the surgeon to be narrow minded when he cuts on your body. You want the airline pilot to be narrow minded when he lands his airplane. You want the mathematician to be narrow minded when he

plots the course for the space shuttle. You want God's to be narrow minded when He describes the place of safety for the sinner.

- #1. **WE ARE THE MANSLAYERS**
- #2. **JESUS IS OUR CITY OF REFUGE**

#3. JESUS IS OUR HIGH PRIEST

(Heb 4:14), "Seeing then that we have a great **HIGH PRIEST**, that is passed into the heavens, **JESUS THE SON OF GOD**, let us hold fast our profession."

- S The O.T. high priest would enter the **HOLY OF HOLIES** once a year to offer sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of the whole nation. He had to perform that act on **THE DAY OF ATONEMENT** year after year. But when Jesus came as **THE HIGH PRIEST** he entered the holy of holies once and for all. It was an act never to be repeated (Heb 10:10). The act of the O.T. high priest entering the holy of holies was a type of **JESUS' DEATH** on the cross for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). **THE KEY WORD** is **DEATH**. **WHEN JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS HE ENTERED THE HOLY OF HOLIES ONCE AND FOR ALL.**
- S The death of the High Priest was significant for the *manslayer* in the O.T. city of refuge. He could never leave the *city of refuge* until the High Priest died.
- S **APPLYING THAT TRUTH TO JESUS**, our High Priest, there is **SIGNIFICANCE FOR US**. As *manslayers* we could never leave the *city of refuge* until the death of the high priest (Josh 20:6). **THE GOOD NEWS FOR US IS OUR HIGH PRIEST HAS DIED ONCE AND FOR ALL.** By His death we have been granted freedom.
 - **(John 8:36)**, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."
 - **(1 John 3:5)**, "And ye know that he was manifested **TO TAKE AWAY OUR SINS**; and in him is no sin."
 - **(Gal 1:4)**, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:"
- S **THE GOOD NEWS FOR THE WORLD IS THIS CITY OF REFUGE**, JESUS, is available to all who have sinned. Even "**Strangers**" are welcomed into this city (Num 35:15; Joshua 20:9).
 - **(Rom 10:13)**, "For **WHOSOEVER** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
 - **(Rev 22:17)**, "And the Spirit and the bride say, **Come**. And let him that **heareth** say, **Come**. And let him that is **athirst** come. And **WHOSOEVER WILL**, let him take the water of life freely."
- S **JESUS IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE — COME!**

- #1. **WE ARE THE MANSLAYERS**
- #2. **JESUS IS OUR CITY OF REFUGE**
- #3. **JESUS IS OUR HIGH PRIEST**

#4. OUTSIDE THE CITY OF REFUGE IS GREAT DANGER

THE O.T. INSTRUCTIONS WERE CLEAR

(Num 35:26-28), ""But **IF THE ACCUSED EVER GOES OUTSIDE** the limits of the city of refuge to which he has fled {27} and the avenger of blood finds him outside the city, **THE AVENGER OF BLOOD MAY KILL THE ACCUSED** without being guilty of murder. {28} The accused **MUST STAY** in his city of refuge **UNTIL THE DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST**; only after the death of the high priest may he return to his own property."

S THE PERSON WHO REJECTS CHRIST **IS LIKE** the **O.T. MANSLAYER** who refused to flee to the *city of refuge* after slaying someone. Surely some *manslayers* bet against the odds. They must have felt confident the *avenger of blood* would never pursue them and put them to death. For whatever reason he chose not to run to the *city of refuge*. As a result he kept farming his land and pretending that things were OK even though he was guilty of putting a person to death. Perhaps that is an accurate description of some O.T. people who rejected God's Word regarding the *cities of refuge*.

S AS A **TYPE**, this is **A PICTURE OF THE NONBELIEIVER** BETTING AGAINST THE ODDS that he can get along without Jesus, even though he is guilty of manslaughter. How many people are betting against the odds that they can make it through life without Jesus. They would say, "I don't need the *city of refuge*." They would say, "I don't need Jesus." "I have made it safe thus far" "I am OK."

S **WELL**, JESUS IS MORE THAN JUST *THE CITY OF REFUGE* and *THE HIGH PRIEST*. Jesus is also **THE AVENGER OF BLOOD**. Jesus is **THE REDEEMER KINSMAN** for all those who have believed. With that thought in mind listen to **SOME CHRISTIAN MARTYRS CRY OUT TO THE AVENGER OF BLOOD**:

(Rev 6:10), "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and **AVENGE OUR BLOOD** on them that dwell on the earth?"

S **WHEN A PERSON HAS REJECTS JESUS**, that person is without the *Redeemer Kinsman* to buy him out of the slavery of sin. That *Redeemer Kinsman* becomes **THE AVENGER OF BLOOD**. That *manslayer* is **IN GREAT DANGER** with **time** and **opportunity** running out. A **DAY OF JUDGMENT** is rapidly approaching. If you are found guilty of *man slaying* and you are outside the *city of refuge*, you will be executed. You will meet with sure and certain doom.

(Heb 10:27-31), "But a certain fearful looking for of **JUDGMENT AND FIERY INDIGNATION**, which shall devour the adversaries. {28} He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: {29} Of **HOW MUCH SORER PUNISHMENT**, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath **TRODDEN UNDER FOOT THE SON OF GOD**, and hath **COUNTED THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT**, wherewith he was sanctified, **AN UNHOLY THING**, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? {30} For we know him that hath said, **VENGEANCE BELONGETH UNTO ME, I WILL RECOMPENSE**, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. {31} **IT IS A FEARFUL THING** to fall into the hands of the living God."

(Prov 18:10), "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; **THE RIGHTEOUS RUN TO IT** and are safe."

S **ARE YOU "RIGHTEOUS?"** Are you in the place of safety? The path is clearly marked. Will you come? The way is not difficult. All are welcome!

S **COME!**