

The Book of Joshua

The Division of the Land

The Cities of Refuge

Text: Joshua 20

- I. The Planner of Justice (Joshua 20:1-2)
 - A. Men often neglect justice in favor of greed; but God provided justice in the cities of refuge.
 - B. God is still just (Psalm 9:7-10).
 - C. He has planned a place of refuge for His children today - the kingdom (church) of Christ.
 - D. Just like Israel had to turn to God and His cities of refuge for justice, so we must turn to God and His church for refuge today.

- II. The Protection of Justice (Joshua 20:3-5)
 - A. God's justice gives man comfort and assurance.
 1. One guilty of unintentionally (accidentally) killing another did not have to suffer for his error - God provided refuge.
 2. Yet the guilty person (and, he is guilty) had the responsibility of seeking God's protection (cf. Deut. 19:4-6).
 - B. God's justice demands action.
 1. ACCEPTANCE of guilt
 2. ABANDONMENT of situation
 3. ADMISSION of need for refuge
 - C. God's justice provides safety.
 1. From the avenger of blood - "next of kin" - God's instrument of justice
 2. Our avenger of blood is always pursuing us - death, who will bring us before the judgment seat of Christ.
 - D. God's justice requires obedience, even today.
 1. ACCEPT our guilt (Rom. 3:23; 2 Cor. 7:9-11)
 2. ABANDON our sins (Matt. 21:28-32; 2 Cor. 6:17-18)
 3. ADMIT our need for salvation (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37)
 - E. Then, we must enter God's place of safety, the church (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

- III. The Process of Justice (Joshua 20:6)
 - A. When the guilty person reached the city of refuge, his case was tried.
 - B. Generally, there were three key facts to be considered (cf. Num. 35; Deut. 19).
 1. What kind of weapon was used (lethal or non-lethal)?
 2. Was there animosity between the two?
 3. Was the death the result of planned action (premeditated)?
 4. The motive, weapon, and occasion were determined by witnesses.
 - C. If found guilty, the slayer was cast out of the city and delivered to the avenger.
 - D. If not, he was to stay in the city of refuge until the death of the High Priest.
 - E. There are important parallels between the cities of refuge and the church.
 1. Just because one makes it to the city does not mean that he is saved - a sinner will be cast out (cf. Matt. 13:30; 22:8-14; 25:31-33).
 2. The "guilty" in the house of God will be cast out (1 Pet. 4:17-18).

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3. The justified must remain in the church throughout the reign of our High Priest - Jesus, who lives forever (Heb. 6:18; 7:25; cf. Rev. 2:10).
4. Those who leave the city of refuge are in danger of death (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

IV. The Place of Justice

(Joshua 20:7-8)

- A. The names of the cities of refuge are now given and must be considered.
- B. **Kedesh** - means, "Holy Place"
- C. **Shechem** - means, "Shoulder"
- D. **Hebron** - means, "Fellowship"
- E. **Bezer** - means, "Stronghold"
- F. **Ramoth** - means, "Exalted"
- G. **Golan** - means, "Separated"
- H. In Christ we have (1) Holiness, (2) Rest and Protection, (3) Fellowship, (4) Safety, (5) Exaltation, and (6) Separation.

V. The Purpose of Justice

(Joshua 20:9)

- A. That all might be saved - both Jew and Gentile
- B. That innocent blood would not be shed (cf. Deut. 19:10)
- C. That the guilty would be punished (cf. Num. 35:30-34)

Conclusion:

1. God is a God of justice who will punish the wicked.
2. Yet, He is a God of mercy who provides safety for the penitent.
3. The way to the cities of refuge was to be marked clearly (Deut. 19:3).
4. The way to salvation in the church is also defined clearly.
5. The avenger of blood is coming.
6. Are you safe?

