

God's Provision Cities of Refuge and Cities for the Levites Joshua 20 and 21



I. Background Verses

Numbers 35: 9 - 15

⁹Then the LORD said to Moses: ¹⁰“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, ¹¹select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee. ¹²They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that anyone accused of murder may not die before they stand trial before the assembly. ¹³These six towns you give will be your cities of refuge. ¹⁴Give three on this side of the Jordan and three in Canaan as cities of refuge. ¹⁵These six towns will be a place of refuge for Israelites and for foreigners residing among them, so that anyone who has killed another accidentally can flee there.

Deuteronomy 4: 41 – 42

⁴¹Then Moses set aside three cities east of the Jordan, ⁴²to which anyone who had killed a person could flee if they had unintentionally killed a neighbor without malice aforethought. They could flee into one of these cities and save their life.

Deuteronomy 19:1 – 13

¹When the LORD your God has destroyed the nations whose land he is giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their towns and houses, ²then set aside for yourselves three cities in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess. ³Determine the distances involved and divide into three parts the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, so that a person who kills someone may flee for refuge to one of these cities.

II. God’s Great Provision of Mercy – a foreshadowing of the gift of Salvation

A. The cities of refuge were a provision of mercy.

Romans 3:23

Romans 6:23

Our salvation (refuge) is found in Christ.

B. The cities were within reach and accessible to all.

Mark 16:15

The grace of God has appeared to all men – Titus 2:11.

C. The cities of refuge were designated and the roads to them were well marked.

Jesus is our way, truth and life – John 14:6, John 3:16

D. The slayer was safe only in the city of refuge.

There is only one way to Christ

Satan, the great blood avenger, is our accuser.

E. The slayer had to appeal to the elders who could decide if he should come in.

Today, the sinner must confess his sins to God.

F. The city of refuge is a place of freedom.

III. The significance of the meaning of the names of the cities.

Name of city	Meaning of the name	Suggested scriptures
Kedesh	Sanctuary	Psalm 91: 1, 2
	Place of rest	Matthew 11: 28 - 30
Golan	Rejoicing	Psalm 16: 11
	Joy in the Lord	Jude 1: 24
Ramoth	Heights, lifted	Psalm 40: 2
	Raised and lifted by the Lord	Ephesians 2: 6,7
Shechem	Shoulder	Isaiah 9: 6
		Luke 15: 5 - 7
Bezer	Fortress	Psalm 18: 2
	Defense	
Hebron	Communion	II Corinthians 13 14
	Fellowship	Acts 2: 42
	Friendship	

IV. Cities for the Levities

- A. The Levites were given 48 cities (including the 6 cities of refuge).
- B. The Levites were responsible for the spiritual care of Israel.

V. Concluding verses of Chapter 21

⁴³ So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. ⁴⁴ The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hands. ⁴⁵ Not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

Questions to consider:

1. Why did God command that the cities of refuge be established?
2. Why does the perpetrator have to suffer consequences when it was just an accident? What important lesson does this teach about personal responsibility?
3. What are unintentional sins? What kind of sins may fit in this category? If we don't know we're committing them, how can we receive forgiveness?
4. Can you think of other ways that Jesus Christ is like a city of refuge?
5. When is Christ a sure refuge for me? How can I help others find this?
6. How should the church be a city of refuge for many?
7. How has God been faithful to you?

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