

Thank you, Aaron. If you have your Bibles this morning, you can turn to the book of Joshua, chapter 20. That is going to be our main text where we are going to start this morning.

Now, most times when I get up and preach, I like to start with a joke. It is a good icebreaker that kind of loosens up the crowd. But I decided not to do that today for time's sake. As you know, I like to stay on time whenever I preach. I am not long-winded, and since it is Father's Day, I want to make sure I get you guys out of here on time today.

## I. The Cities of Refuge

*The Lord also spake unto Joshua, saying,*

*Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses.*

*That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.*

*And when he that doth flee unto one of these 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.*

*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.*

*And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest, which 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.*

*And they appointed Kadesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.*

*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 Ramath in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.*

*These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killed any person unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.*

By way of introduction, I want to just talk a few minutes about what this chapter is about and what is happening from a historical standpoint. In the Old Testament, if you killed somebody, there was somebody who was called an avenger of blood. This was basically a family member of the person that was killed, and that person was allowed legally to go and kill the person that had taken their loved one's life. This is a very different scenario than what we have here in the New Testament.

God certainly and absolutely differentiated, just as we do today, and that is why we do, because He established it in the Bible years and years ago. He established a difference between murder and manslaughter. He said, "if he had smote his neighbor unwittingly and hated him not before time." So there is a difference between murdering somebody because you have hatred in your heart for that person and making a choice and a decision to kill them versus doing it accidentally. Sometimes terrible things happen and accidents happen, but either way, in the Old Testament, if you were responsible for the death of somebody else, one of their family members could track you down and kill you lawfully and rightfully.

But God wanted to make a way for somebody who had done it by mistake, somebody who had committed, as I said earlier, what we basically call manslaughter today, to be able to escape. So He had Joshua appoint and establish these six cities that He called cities of refuge that a man could flee to where the avenger of blood could not touch him. He would come to the gate of the city and state his case to the elders of that city, and they would make a quick assessment to determine his innocence or his guilt. If he was determined to be innocent and not a murderer, then he was allowed to stay in that city and remain safe from the avenger of blood.

Practically, if you look at these cities and what they represent from a practical standpoint, an inspirational standpoint, these cities represent an absolutely amazing picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and what He is for us. That is the focus of my message today. That is what I want to spend a few moments with you this morning talking about.

Let us go to the Lord in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We thank You for everybody that is here this morning, Lord. I thank You for Your Word, Lord. I thank You that You have given me a message that You put on my heart to share with everybody today. I pray that it will be a blessing for everyone. It certainly has been a blessing for me as I have worked on it and prepared it and studied it out, Lord. I just pray that You will give us a good time, Lord. Let Your Holy Spirit speak through me. Give me the right words to say, Lord. We pray for Bob today as he is over preaching at Bob Gregg's church at the same time. We pray that You will use him in a mighty way, give them, everybody over there exactly what they need, and help Bob to be able to preach with the authority that he needs to, Lord. We love You so much, and we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, I want to look at four aspects of these cities of refuge, four ways that we compare them to the Lord Jesus Christ and what He is for us.

## II. Appointed by God

The first thing that we see about these cities is that they were appointed by God. It was an act of grace that God created and appointed these cities. The first thing that we notice is that Moses did not choose the cities. God told Moses about them, but Moses did not choose the cities. Moses in your Bible and your Old Testament is a type of the law. Moses was the one that God used to give the law. The law cannot save anyone. Doing good works and following a written rule of law is never going to save anyone.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

*Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

We are saved through grace. We are saved by grace through faith. It is by putting faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and by the grace that God gave us that allows us to be able to be saved. So God did not use Moses to appoint these cities. He used Joshua because Joshua in your Old Testament is one of the many types of Christ, and He used him to name these six cities because he is a picture of grace. These cities are a picture of the grace that God extends to us, that God gave us through His Son, Jesus Christ. He sent His Son to us as the only place of refuge that we can find salvation in.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. I do not think we appreciate that enough. I do not think we think about that enough and think about what that actually means and what that shows in terms of how God truly loved us. So just as those cities were appointed by God, He sent His Son Jesus Christ to be that place of refuge for us, and the only way that we can find salvation is by going to Him, and the only way that the manslayer in the Old Testament could find safety is by going into these cities of refuge. That is the first thing.

### III. Announced in the Word

The second thing is that not only were they appointed by God, but they were announced in the Word. They are named here in the book of Joshua. God laid them out specifically and named six specific cities within the land that were to be these six cities of refuge, and on the authority of the Word of God, any man could enter any one of these six cities of refuge, and no man could forbid him, just as it is with our salvation.

*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

What amazing promises those are, that no matter what, if we come to God and we come to Him honestly and we come to Him repentantly, He will in no wise cast us out. Jesus said He will never leave nor forsake us. The manslayer, when he went into the city of refuge, as long as he was found to be innocent and not a murderer, he could stay in that city as long as he needed to, and he had protection from the avenger of blood. Nobody could ever touch him. He had absolute protection and safety, and it was decreed by the law. It could not be changed.

Here is another interesting thing. There were cities in Israel that were larger, that were more prominent than the cities of refuge. There were cities that were bigger and more prominent and maybe fancier, maybe had more bells and whistles, but none of those cities could shelter the manslayer. He had to go to one of the six cities that was appointed by God and announced in His Word. Just as today for us, there are many religions out there, there are many religious systems, there are many large churches, as they are at least so-called, that are bigger and more grandiose,

have more pomp and circumstance than maybe what we offer here in Bible Christianity. They are bigger and fancier than somebody just sitting down one-on-one and opening up a Bible and saying, "This is what Jesus did for you, and this is what God says, and this is what God says about how you can get saved." Yet despite that, the only way that you can get salvation is by the simplicity of that story of Christ and believing what God said in His Word. There is only one way of salvation that is announced in His Word, and that is faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone.

*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

There is no other name, there is no church, there is no system, there is nothing that you can do to be saved other than getting in Christ and Him alone. Do you remember the story of Naaman in 2 Kings chapter 5? Naaman was a great man, he was a great soldier, he was captain of the host of the king of Syria, but the Bible said in 2 Kings, Naaman had a problem, he was a leper. Leprosy in the Old Testament is a picture of sin, and so Naaman was a picture of each and every one of us as a lost sinner. He was going to die from that disease, and he needed to be cleansed from it.

But part of Naaman's problem, as he was being told what he needed to do, was he wanted a big show to be made about it because he was a great man. The man of God told him to go and wash in the river Jordan seven times, and he would be clean. Naaman said, "Jordan is kind of a dank, dirty, gross river," and Naaman was like, "Surely I could wash in one of the rivers of Damascus. These are great, more beautiful rivers." Also, he wanted the man of God to come out and perform some ceremony and have some great big showing for everybody to see it happen. Yet he was told by the man of God and by God that, "Sorry, it is going to be the Jordan River if you want to get cleansed. That is how it is. That is how it works." There is no big fancy ceremony. There is no big fancy church that you are going to go be a part of. There is no baptism that is going to save you. There is nothing other than a man or a woman simply coming to Christ with a repentant heart and asking to be saved. It is the only way you come to the Lord, hand in hand, not looking for any recognition, not looking for anything other than for Him to accept you into Him and into His church and saving you and cleansing you from your sins. So it was announced in the Word.

#### IV. Accessible to All Men

The third thing that we want to see is that these cities were accessible to all men. They were arranged such that no tribe in Israel was too far away from the place of safety. On the west side of Jordan, you had three of the six cities: Kadesh in the north, Shechem in the central region, and Hebron in the south. Then over on the east side of Jordan, you had Golan in the north, Ramath in the central, and Bezer in the south. So God placed these six cities so they were easily accessible to anybody in the nation of Israel at any point if they needed. They had one that was not too far away to be able to get to. The gates were never shut in these cities, and the way to the city was clear. As I said, it was clearly stated in the Word what these cities were and where they were and where these men or women needed to go.

What a beautiful picture of Christ that is. Christ is never too far for any of us to be able to get to Him. He is never out of reach for any man or woman that wants to trust Him as their Lord and Savior.

*That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

Jesus said He lights every man that comes into the world. You know, we get asked a question all the time, maybe not all the time, but probably you have been asked a question at one point or another about what about somebody that has never heard the story of Jesus, or what about somebody that grew up in another church and they never heard the truth? Well, the Bible says right here that He is a true light that lighteth every man. So every person sees that light at some point in their life. Every person has that opportunity to trust Christ and accept Christ as their Savior if they only will go there, if they will only seek after Him.

Every man that committed manslaughter in Israel had a city of refuge that they could go to that was close by, but I bet not all of them went there when they did it. Some of them were probably too stubborn. Some of them probably thought they could outsmart the avenger of blood and they could escape, and I bet there were a lot of people that lost their lives because they were not willing to go and do what God had given them very simply.

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

That is a promise and a principle right there that you can share with anybody that says, "I do not understand how a loving God could send somebody to hell." The bottom line is He says right here, God is not willing that any should perish, and it says He is not slack concerning His promise. He does not violate His Word. He does not slack off with the promises that He makes us the way that we do with the promises that we make to the Lord. But it says He is long-suffering to us-ward. He gives us every opportunity that He possibly can to get saved, and He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. When Jesus came and died on the cross and He shed His blood when He did not have to, He did it for everybody. He did it for every man and every woman that has ever lived on planet earth and everyone that ever would, and it was up to each and every one of us to decide if we were going to accept that or not. It was available to everybody. Jesus Christ is accessible to everyone.

Now before we move on to the next point, we have got to see a contrast here. As you know, when you study your Bible and you are taught this, we have been taught it many times by Bob, that anytime you look at types in the Bible, they are always going to break down at some point. You are going to find some little spot or a few spots maybe there where it does not perfectly line up. But there is an interesting point in this story, and as we look at this, where the type sort of breaks down a little bit, but I have never seen a type break down in a way that works in our favor as much as this one does.

When the slayer in the Old Testament came to one of the cities of refuge, it says he was admitted, but he was tried by the elders to determine if he was guilty or not. So based on whether he was guilty, it was determined whether he was allowed to stay. If he was guilty of murder, they would

do a trial, and he would be sent back and put to death as the law required for somebody that was guilty of murder. But for us, praise God, there is no trial for us when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ because we are already condemned, the Bible says.

*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

So one small difference that I guess I have to apologize to you about in this story, because in the Old Testament, when the manslayer wanted to come to the city of refuge, they would hold a hearing to determine whether he was guilty or not, and if he was innocent, he was allowed in. But for us, we come to the Lord already guilty as charged. I am as dirty of a rotten sinner as anybody that has ever existed in this world. There is no trial needed. The Bible says if I violate the law in one point, I am guilty of the whole thing. So I have already committed every sin that there is to commit, and I have done it a lot unfortunately in my life. So when I came to God, when I came to this place of refuge that He offered me, I was already condemned. There was no trial needed, yet Christ still brought me in, still allowed me to come into the place of refuge. What an amazing thing that these elders of the city would only receive a man if he was found innocent of murder, but Jesus Christ receives guilty sinners every day. All we have to do is come to Him and ask Him.

## V. Adequate to Meet the Need

These cities were accessible to all men, but the fourth thing is, and we are going to sit here for a little while, is that these cities were adequate to meet the need. Not only were they appointed by God and announced in the Word and accessible to all men, they were adequate. They were adequate to meet the need. As long as the manslayer stayed in the city, he was safe. As long as he stayed in the city, nobody could touch him. Nothing could be done to him.

Now we know that a Christian obviously cannot leave Christ once he enters Christ. Once a man or a woman gets saved, you cannot leave Christ and lose your salvation. We know that much, and praise the Lord for that. But we are told something interesting in 1 John chapter 2 verse 28.

*And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

Although we can never leave Christ, as the manslayer could leave the city and he was subject to grave physical danger, for us we are told to abide in Him. So once we get saved, we can never leave Him, but we have to abide in Him. It is about how we live our life. It is about the commitment that we make to Christ. It is about our dedication to serving Him and staying in the Word of God, abiding in Him in that relationship with Him, because if the Christian stops abiding in Christ, although he can never lose his salvation, he exposes himself to great spiritual dangers and, as it says here in 1 John chapter 2, obviously the likelihood of standing before Him at the judgment seat of Christ naked and ashamed because we did not live our lives the way that God had commanded us to, and we lose the inheritance and the rewards that God wants us to have.

Now, the time that we have left, and as I said, I am going to be shorter today than I normally am, and I want to spend a little bit of time though considering the adequacy of Christ to meet our needs as we look at these six cities that are listed out for us because they all have a different meaning, and every single one of them represents a different aspect of how Christ is adequate for us as a place of refuge.

- Kadesh: Righteousness
- Shechem: Shoulder
- Hebron: Fellowship
- Bezer: Fortress
- Ramath: Heights
- Golan: Complete

## VI. Do Not Delay

I have got one last thing I want to share with you and we will close. That is simply this. If you are listening today, whether it be here in person or watching on YouTube today, but if you are listening today and you have not trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, you have none of these six things that I have just described.

You have no righteousness but your own, which the Bible calls filthy rags. You have no eternal shoulder to give you rest and comfort. You can pray to God. You can ask God to help you, but without being in Him, those prayers, I am sorry to say it, those prayers will go unanswered. In fact, they go unheard. You have to be in Him to get access to that shoulder of rest, that shoulder of comfort, that shoulder of refuge. You have no fellowship. You have no fellowship with God. As a result, you have no true and real fellowship with other people. It is all going to be based on worldly, selfish things. You will never experience what that real fellowship is. You have no protection from your enemies and from the dangers of this life. You have no ability to rise up above your problems. We see it everywhere in this world. That is all this world does, is just sit and wallow in their problems and blame everybody else for them because they do not have the ability to rise above them. They do not have the ability to get up into the heights that Christ offers us. Lastly, you have no satisfaction because you are incomplete. You search and you try to get everything in your world that you can find to satisfy you, and yet nothing ever satisfies you. You go down the road of doing drugs, and there is no high that is as good as the one that you had yesterday. So you keep having to try for something else, and you keep having to try for something else. But you are never going to be fully satisfied. It never lasts. You simply cannot have this thing.

The last thing I want to share with you is when you go back to the original story in Joshua chapter 20, it tells us this. It says the slayer is told to do what? He is told to flee to the city of refuge. If you were in that Old Testament and you killed somebody accidentally, you were to run

to the city of refuge. You get there as fast as you can because you are in grave danger. He could not afford to delay. He could not say, "I just, I got a little bit of work, I have got to get done around the house. I just want to go on this vacation first. I just want to get through college. I just want to go get a job and then I will do this. I just want to be able to have this time with my friends." He could not afford to delay. His life was in danger. He had to flee immediately to the city of refuge.

Let me tell you today, if you are here today or you are listening on the internet and you have never trusted Christ as your Savior, you cannot afford to delay. You have to run to Him immediately. You have to run to that place of refuge and accept that free gift of salvation that He is offering you. So I encourage you today, find me after the service. Ask me, talk to the person that invited you today. Talk to somebody, anybody that can show you, that can open up a Bible and show you how you can be saved today. It is just not worth the risk. You do not have time to delay. Just as that slayer had to flee to the city of refuge, you should be fleeing to the Lord Jesus Christ because He is calling you. All of these things that we have talked about today are right there for the taking. All you have to do is get in that place of refuge. All you have to do is accept Christ and get in Christ.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Again, Lord, we thank You for, we just thank You, Lord, for how great You are. We thank You for Your Son. I thank You, Lord, that You loved us enough to send Him down on this earth to walk a perfect and lead a perfect and sinless life. Then He willingly went to the cross of Calvary, Lord. He became sin for us who knew no sin so that we might become Your righteousness, Lord. We do not deserve it. We do not deserve Your grace. We do not deserve that gift, but we thank You for it. We thank You for the sacrifice that He made, Lord. We thank You for giving us a book, Lord, that tells us everything that we have in You, Lord. We thank You for being in that place of refuge. We thank You for being adequate to meet every need that we could possibly have and for protecting us, Lord, and for completing us. We just pray, and I pray today, Lord, that if there is anybody here that does not yet know You as their own personal Lord and Savior, that they will ask somebody. They will ask somebody to open up the Bible and show them how they can be saved today and that they will flee to You, Lord, the way that manslayer was to flee to the cities of refuge, that they will not delay because they simply cannot afford to, Lord. Now we just pray as we go on with the rest of our day, I pray for all of the fathers out there, pray that they will have a good day. They will enjoy their time with their families, Lord, and let each and every one of us remember the tremendous responsibility that we have as fathers to lead our families and to be the men that You have called us to be, Lord. So I just pray that You will watch over us and protect us throughout the day. Be with Bob as he closes things out over at Bob's church today and just bring us all safely back together Thursday night at Bible study. Lord, we love You so much. We ask this all in Jesus' name, amen.