

Title:     **THE CITIES OF REFUGE**

Text:     Joshua 20:1-9

Subject:   *Christ Our Refuge*

Introduction:

**“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms”** (Deuteronomy 33:27). —

What a sweet word of assurance that is to our poor souls in the face of trials, heartaches, and oppression!

**Throughout the Word of God we are assured, again and again, that the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is our Refuge.** The Lord

Jesus Christ is our Hiding Place and Covert from the tempest and the storm (Isaiah 32:2). Blessed are

those people who can lift their eyes to heaven and say of the eternal God, as David did, — “*Thou art my hiding place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble;*

*Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.*” (Psalms 32:7). — “*The name of the*

*LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe*” (Proverbs 18:10).

**No sooner was the law of God given at Mount Sinai than the Lord God promised, “I will appoint**

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**thee a place whither (the guilty) shall flee**” (Exodus 21:13). Then, the Lord God instructed the children of Israel by his servant Moses to set aside six Cities of Refuge in the Land of Canaan.<sup>1</sup> When he divided the land of Canaan to the children of Israel Joshua set aside six Cities of Refuge, **three on each side of the Jordan River**, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

I want to talk to you about those “*six cities of refuge*.” The title of my message is — **THE CITIES OF REFUGE**. But my subject is really Christ our Refuge, for those six cities of refuge appointed by Moses were typical of our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus. My text is Joshua 20:1-9. I want to show you how those six cities of refuge typified our Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation of our souls in him.

Let’s read the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of Joshua together.

(Joshua 20:1-9) “The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, (2) Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you Cities of

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 4:41-43; 19:1-10; Numbers 35:6-29; Joshua 20:1-9

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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 <sup>1</sup>**Kedesh** in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and <sup>2</sup>**Shechem** in mount Ephraim, and <sup>3</sup>**Kirjatharba, which is Hebron,** in the

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mountain of Judah. (8) And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned <sup>4</sup>**Bezer** in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and <sup>5</sup>**Ramoth** in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and <sup>6</sup>**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.”

**Proposition:** These six Cities of Refuge typified and portrayed our great and glorious Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, giving us a picture of God’s mercy, love, and grace in providing his own dear Son to be a Refuge for guilty sinners.

**The word “refuge” carries with it the idea of hope.** A refuge is a place or person to which we flee in a time of danger or trouble with the hope of safety and security. That is exactly what every believer has

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done. **We have fled from the wrath and justice of God, in hope of safety and security to Jesus Christ, our Refuge.** This is how faith is described in Hebrews 6:18-20.

(Hebrews 6:18-20) “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: (19) Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; (20) Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

I want to show you how **these six Cities of Refuge are typical of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

### **REFUGE FOR THE GUILTY**

*First*, I must call your attention to the fact that the Cities of Refuge were **places of safety for the guilty,**

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for men who were to be put to death if found outside the city. According to the law of God, any man who killed another man must die. — “*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*” is the requirement of justice. When a man’s life was taken by another man, even when it was taken accidentally, without malice or purpose, the man who killed another man was, in the Old Testament, **under the sentence of death**. The dead man’s next of kin had a legal right and obligation to avenge his brother’s blood. But, for those who were guilty of such a crime, the crime of taking another man’s life accidentally, without malice or intent, God mercifully provided these Cities of Refuge to which the man slayer might flee for safety from the avenger of blood.

**Why were these Cities of Refuge given for the protection of one who killed another person unintentionally?** Surely, had that been their only purpose, it would have been far wiser, less costly and more efficient, simply to have it decided in court, whether the person’s death was intentional murder or accidental manslaughter. **Obviously, these Cities of**

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**Refuge and everything connected with them were designed by God to be typical of the great shelter and deliverance of sinners from the bloodshedding and destruction of our own souls, when by unbelief and sin we unintentionally murder our own souls!**

### **SIX CITIES**

There were six Cities of Refuge. **A person might be anywhere in the land of Israel, on either side of the Jordan, and easily flee to one of these cities within just a half-a-day.**

- The number “6” is the number of man. These Cities of Refuge were designed to portray the salvation of poor, fallen, guilty sinners in and by Christ Jesus.
- The Cities of Refuge, we discover in Joshua 21, were all taken from the cities belonging to the Levites, the priestly tribe. — Salvation is in and by Christ our Priest.

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- The cities belonging to the Levites were 48 in number, a multiple of 12, the number representing God's elect. — God's salvation is for God's elect.

**The way to these Cities of Refuge was always kept clear**, regularly repaired, so that the roads could be easily traveled and the Cities of Refuge always easily accessible. At least once a year, the magistrates of each city were responsible to survey the roads to their city, making certain that the roads were clear of all debris and easily passable. There must be no obstacles in the way that might hinder any who might flee to the Cities of Refuge. The magistrates would send out work crews to remove all large rocks and fallen trees from the road, taking the greatest possible care to remove every stumbling-block. Any low places in the road would be filled. Any high places would be leveled.

All along the road they placed markers with the word "**REFUGE**" written in bold letters. When the fugitive came to a cross-roads, he did not have to hesitate for a moment. Seeing that blessed word,

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“**REFUGE**,” he kept on his breathless pace with relentless determination until he reached the place of merciful safety. Once he entered the gates of the city, he was secure. — **Those sign-posts are a pretty good portrayal of Gospel preachers.** We are just sign-posts pointing to Christ the Refuge!

**Anyone guilty of manslaughter had a right to flee to the City of Refuge and was guaranteed safety for his life as long as he stayed in the city of his refuge.** — The Lord Jesus Christ is the Refuge for sinners. All who come to him are saved from the wrath of God. The way to Christ is plainly revealed: — “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” Our Lord Jesus Christ, by his righteousness and blood, has removed every obstacle that might keep the sinner who seeks him from finding him. He even sends His Spirit to reveal the way, put us in the way, lead us in the way, and brings us safely to our souls’ Refuge.

## **REFUGE NEEDED**

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*Second*, you and I need a refuge. A refuge is something we need when we are in trouble or sense that we are in danger. We have all taken refuge in a time of storm. But **there is only one Refuge who can shelter our souls from the storm of God's wrath.** The Lord Jesus Christ is that great Friend to whom sinners may turn and in whom alone sinners find refuge. Christ is our Strong Castle, our Walled City, our Mighty Fortress, and our High Tower. Christ is the Ark of Safety to shield us from the impending wrath of God. **Just as Noah fled into the ark and there found refuge from the waters of the flood, we must flee to Christ.** In Him alone we find refuge from the flood of God's wrath.

**(Psalms 62:6-8)** “He only *is* my Rock and my Salvation: *He is* my Defence; I shall not be moved. (7) In God *is* my Salvation and my Glory: the Rock of my strength, *and* my Refuge, *is* in God. (8) Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God *is* a Refuge for us. Selah.”

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**(Isaiah 32:2)** “And a Man shall be as an Hiding Place from the wind, and a Covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

**We all need refuge in Christ because we are all, by nature, guilty sinners, under the sentence of God’s holy law; and the wrath of God is upon us.** Every son of Adam, by nature, stands before the holy Lord God guilty of sin, condemned by the law, and in immediate danger of hell. We are all guilty sinners before the holy Lord God (Isaiah 1:4-6; Romans 3:10-12, 19, 23; 5:12, 18-19).

(Isaiah 1:4-6) “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. 5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head [there is] no soundness in it;

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[but] wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.”

(Romans 3:12) “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

(Romans 3:19) “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

(Romans 3:23) “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

(Romans 5:12) “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

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(Romans 5:18-19) “Therefore as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came] upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

**Because of our guilt and sin, we are all justly condemned by God’s holy law.** Our babies are not born in innocence, but in sin. We did not come into this world on probation, but under condemnation. Will you hear the Word of God?

(John 3:18) “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.”

(John 3:36) “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son

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shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

God help you to hear me. Oh, hear me now, for Christ’s sake. **If you are yet without Christ, you are, right now, under the wrath of God, in immediate danger of hell.** God is offended with you. You have broken his law. You break every commandment constantly. You dishonor his name. You reject his authority. You despise his Son, his Gospel, and his grace. You killed God’s Son!

**God Almighty, the Avenger of blood, is angry with the wicked every day.** You may not know it. You may dare even to laugh at me for telling you, but tell you I must. God has unsheathed his glittering sword. He has set his arrow in his bow. If justice overtakes you outside Christ, without refuge for your soul in him, you will be forever damned! You will be lost forever in hell!

**There is nothing keeping you out of hell right now but the mercy of God!** You deserve to be damned

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forever. You court destruction. You hate the fact that God is God. Yet, He is merciful! So merciful, so gracious, so magnanimous is our God that he whose justice is offended has made his own dear Son a sin-atonement Refuge for guilty sinners!

**Do you know your guilt before God?** I hope you do. It is no common mercy to be made aware of your guilt. Few people ever experience such a thing. **But knowing your guilt is not salvation.** Salvation is fleeing for refuge to Christ!

**We who are believers, sinners who have fled for refuge to Christ, are in constant need of our dear Savior as a Refuge for our souls.** Children of God, never be reluctant to flee to Christ for refuge! He delights for us to take refuge in him (**Hebrews 4:16**).

- Christ is our Refuge **to preserve us** in temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).

(1 Corinthians 10:13) “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but

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God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.”

- Christ is our Refuge **to comfort us** in trouble (John 14:1-3).

(John 14:1-3) “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. (2) In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.”

**My brother, my sister, cast all your care on him.**  
— **“He careth for you!”**

- Christ is our Refuge **to protect us** from every danger (Psalms 56:3; 112:7).

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(Psalms 56:3) “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.”

(Psalms 112:7 “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.”

(Proverbs 3:5-6) “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

## **CHRIST OUR REFUGE**

*Third*, the Lord Jesus Christ is just the Refuge we need. **The six Cities of Refuge beautifully portray our Lord Jesus Christ.** We understand that no type of Christ is a perfect representation of him. But there are numerous details given about these Cities of Refuge which appear to be specifically designed by God to point us to Christ, as he is presented in the Gospel as the only Refuge for guilty sinners.

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1. **The Cities of Refuge were appointed by God himself.** They were not devised and concocted by men. Even so, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior appointed by God to be the Refuge for our souls (Romans 3:24-26).

(Romans 3:24-26) “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, [I say], at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

As these Cities of Refuge anticipated the need of criminals before any crime was committed, so the Lord God, anticipating our great need, appointed Christ to be our Refuge.

2. **The Cities of Refuge were given to provide shelter, safety, and life for people who justly**

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**deserved to die**. Christ was given by God so that we who justly deserve to die might never die, but have safety, security, and eternal life in Him.

If the avenger of blood caught the guilty man outside the City of Refuge, he was obliged to kill him; and if God almighty finds you outside of Christ, he is obliged to destroy you with everlasting death in hell! — *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die!”*

If the guilty man fled into the City of Refuge, so long as he was there, he was **under the protection of God’s law**. Even so, every guilty sinner who flees to Christ by faith is under the protection of God’s holy law and justice!

**In Christ God’s elect are totally free from all possibility of condemnation**. The law of God cannot do us any harm. The justice of God cannot exact one tithe of an ounce of satisfaction from us! Indeed, the law of God, being fulfilled for us by Christ, is on our side. The justice of God, being fully satisfied for us in Christ, demands our eternal salvation.

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Christ, our Ark has born all the furious fulness of God's wrath to the full extremity of the law's justice. There is nothing left to be born by his people (Romans 8:1, 33-34; Galatians 3:13).

“Payment God cannot twice demand,  
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,  
And then again at mine!”

### **Illustration: *Noah in the Ark***

3. **The Cities of Refuge were easily seen.** They were built on hills or mountains, so that they might be readily kept in sight by those fleeing for their lives. Here again is a picture of Christ and the Gospel. Our great and glorious Christ sits upon God's holy hill of Zion. He is lifted up to draw all men unto himself (John 12:32; Acts 5:31).

- Every time the Gospel is faithfully preached, Christ the Refuge is held up before the eyes of sinful men. Before your very eyes, “*Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth*” (Galatians 3:1).

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- Every time a preacher lifts up Christ before his congregation, he is like “*a city that is set upon a hill*” (Matthew 5:14).

4. **The road to the City of Refuge was clearly marked.** God said, “*Thou shalt prepare the way...that every slayer may flee thither*” (Deuteronomy 19:3). As I told you a few minutes ago, signs were posted everywhere in the land pointing to the cities, which read, “**REFUGE!**” And in the Gospel of Christ God has so plainly declared the way of salvation in His dear Son that “*way faring men, though fools, shall not err therein*” (Isaiah 35:8; Rom. 10:6-10).

(Romans 10:6-10) “But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*:) (7) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) (8) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we

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preach; (9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

### 5. **The six Cities of Refuge were easily accessible.**

They were all located in the midst of the land, so that they could be reached easily and quickly. The road was kept clean and smooth. Every obstacle was removed. What is the significance of that? It is just this: — **The way to Christ is short and easy.** — *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”*

**Many obstacles laid in the way between guilty sinners and the place of safety. But Christ removed them all!**

- The law must be fulfilled. Christ did it!
- Justice must be satisfied. Christ did it!
- Sin must be removed. Christ did it!

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- Satan must be conquered and bound. Christ did it!

**It is the task of every Gospel preacher to make the way to Christ plain and keep the way clear of rubbish** (Isaiah 40:4; Luke 3:5).

(Isaiah 40:1-5) “1 ¶ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.”

“3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, **Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.** 4 **Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:** 5 **And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see [it]**

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together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it].”

6. **These Cities of Refuge were, by the command of God, open to both Jews and Gentiles.** Our Lord Jesus Christ is a Refuge for sinners out of every nation, kindred, tribe, and tongue under the sun.

**Don't miss this:** — The Cities of Refuge were provided only for those men who were guilty of manslaughter; but our blessed Christ is the Refuge for sinners guilty of every kind of sin! **The Son of God is the sinner's Refuge** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11) “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, (10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but

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ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

7. **The safety of those criminals who fled to the Cities of Refuge was completely wrapped up in the life and death of God’s high priest.** The Cities of Refuge were all in the inheritance of the Levites because there is no hope of mercy from God but by God’s appointed Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. **There is a double type here.**

- When the high priest died, the guilty man went free. When the Lord Jesus Christ died at Calvary, He obtained eternal redemption for God’s elect and bought our everlasting freedom by his precious blood.
- So long as the high priest was living, no harm could befall those guilty criminals who dwelled in the Cities of Refuge. Though Christ died, He lives forever at God’s right hand, as the High Priest over the house of God. All is safe, child of God, because our great High Priest lives forever (Hebrews 7:25; 10:11-14).

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(Hebrews 7:25) “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

(Hebrews 10:11-14) “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made his footstool. 14 For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

8. **Only those cities appointed by God were Cities of Refuge.** There is no refuge for sinners but that one appointed and ordained by God Himself. The only refuge for our guilty souls is the Lord Jesus Christ.

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(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.”

- Not Sinai — Christ!
- Not Religion — Christ!
- Not Feelings — Christ!
- Not Baptism — Christ!
- Not Good Works — Christ!
- Not Morality — Christ!

The only place of refuge for our souls is in him who died for sinners at Mt. Calvary, the crucified Christ, the Son of God, our Savior!

“Other refuge have I none,  
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.  
Leave, ah, leave me not alone;  
Still support and comfort me.  
Hide me, O my Savior, hide!  
Till the storm of life is past!  
Safe into the haven guide,  
Oh, receive my soul at last!”

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“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee!  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy wounded side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure:  
Save from wrath and make me pure!”

9. **The man slayer had to be within the city to be safe.** This might be the most important part of my message for some of you. Listen carefully. Knowing all about the city was of no benefit to the guilty. He might know all the history of the city, know all the inhabitants of the city, and be able to recite all the laws of the city; but if the avenger of blood caught him outside the city, he was a dead man! It was not enough for him to admire the city, talk about the beauty and wonders of the city, or even defend the city. He must be in the city! — My friend, if you would be saved, you must be in Christ! To know about Christ, to profess faith in Christ, to admire Christ, or even to defend the

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name and doctrine of Christ is nothing. You must be in Christ. Salvation is in Christ. Everything is in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-7; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

### **ABIDE IN THE CITY**

*Fourth*, the man-slayer had to remain in the City of Refuge; and, having fled to Christ for refuge, we must abide in Him.

(Numbers 35:25-28) “And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and **he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest**, which was anointed with the holy oil. (26) But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; (27) And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood: (28) Because he should have remained in the city of

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his refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession.”

(John 15:5-6) “I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. (6) If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.”

We must abide in Christ. True believers never leave him. Believers continue in faith.

- We abide in Christ because we find in him, and in him alone, everything we need.
- We abide in Christ because he is the only refuge who can stand the scrutiny of divine judgment.
- Behold in his head, his hands, his feet, and his side the marks of that judgment!

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who aught to my charge shall lay,

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While through Thy blood absolved I am  
From sin's tremendous guilt and blame?"

## **THE NAMES OF THE CITIES**

*Fifth*, let me wrap this message up by showing you the significance of the names of these six Cities of Refuge.

(Joshua 20:7-8) “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.”

The man slayer in Israel had to flee to one of the Cities of Refuge which God had appointed. If he had fled to any other city for refuge, he would have found no mercy. The avenger of blood would find him and

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slay him. **If he would be saved, he must flee to the refuge God had appointed.** Even so, all who would be saved by the grace of God must flee by faith to the Refuge God has appointed, and that refuge is Christ. — *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). The only refuge for our souls is the Lord Jesus Christ. Both for salvation and for the consolation of our souls in any time of trouble, we must flee to Christ alone.

- Christ is our Refuge, not the Church.
- Christ is our Refuge, not our works.
- Christ is our Refuge, not a creed, confession, or catechism.
- Christ is our Refuge, not a religious ceremony.

**Salvation is obtained only by fleeing to Christ.** There was no place of mercy, peace, safety, and rest for the man slayer until he ran through the gates into one of those Cities of Refuge. It was not enough that he knew where the city was located, how large the city was, what provisions were in the city, and how to get to the city. If he would be saved he must enter

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the city. **Once he entered the city four things happened:**

1. He declared his cause, confessing his offense.
2. He came under the protection of the city.
3. He received a complete acquittal of all guilt.
4. He was cleansed from all guilt, representatively, when the high priest died.
5. He was safe in the city as long as the high priest lived.

None of these benefits were his until he entered the city. But once he entered, all were his, and his soul was safe, peaceful, and at rest. These six Cities of Refuge are so clearly, beautifully, and fully typical of Christ that **even the names of the cities are full of instruction and comfort** for our souls.

**KEDESH** means “holy.” — Christ is the Holy One, both as God and as Man. Being the holy God-man, He is abundantly qualified to be our Mediator, Savior, and Redeemer. Christ is made of God unto us righteousness and holiness, justification and

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sanctification (Psalms 16:10; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

**SHECHEM** means “the shoulder.” — Christ carried the enormous load of our sin in His own body upon the cursed tree and put it away (Isaiah 53:6). The government of the world in general and of His Church in particular is upon His shoulder (Isaiah 9:6). And in conversion, He finds His lost sheep, lays it upon His shoulder and carries it home (Luke 15:4).

**HEBRON** means “fellowship.” — *‘Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ’* (1 John 1:3). In Christ we have access to and fellowship with the eternal God, and shall have uninterrupted communion with Him in heaven’s eternal glory (1 Corinthians 1:9; Ephesians 2:18; John 17:24).

**BEZER** means “a fortified place.” — *“I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress: my God; in Him will I trust”* (Psalms 91:2). — *“The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into*

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*it, and is safe*” (Proverbs 18: 10). Christ is the Fortress and Defense of His people, the Stronghold in which the prisoners of hope are secure.

**RAMOTH** means “exalted.” — Christ is our exalted Savior. “*God hath highly exalted him*” (Philippians 2:9). Christ is the one by whom we have been exalted from our low estate to sit among princes and to inherit the throne of glory (Ephesians 2:4-7). And Christ is the one we exalt, honour, and magnify (Revelation 5:9-10).

**GOLAN** means “revealed” or “manifested.” — Christ is God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). He is the one revealed to us, to whom we are called, and by whom we are saved (Galatians 1: 15-16). In Christ the glory of God is revealed (2 Corinthians 4:6). And that revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is salvation.

It is my prayer that God, by His Spirit, will manifest and reveal Christ Jesus in you, and cause you to flee for refuge unto Him who alone is the Refuge for

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sinners. Christ himself bids you flee to Him for refuge (Matthew 11:28). Flee away to Christ, flee away to Christ, and live forever!

Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Danville — Sunday Morning — March 18, 2012  
Sovereign Grace Fellowship — Wasilla, AK — (TUE – 03/13/12)

Tape #      AA-55

Readings:    *Deuteronomy 19:1-10 and Numbers 35:6-29*