

A City of Refuge Numbers 35

A City of Refuge Introduction

- We sometimes think of cities as dangerous.
- A City of Refuge was a place of exceptional safety.

- *Merriam-Webster* on Refuge:
 - 1: shelter or protection from danger or distress
 - 2: a place that provides shelter or protection
 - 3: something to which one has recourse in difficulty

- The Hebrew word gives the sense of “taking someone in” and “providing a safe place.”
- The Cities of Refuge were Levitical cities that provided a place of protection.

A City of Refuge Numbers 35:1-5

- Each of tribes of Israel received a territory.
- The Levites did not.
- They were scattered among all the tribes.
- The other tribes gave them numerous small cities with their surrounding land.

- The Levites were the priestly tribe.
- They and their ministry were available to all Israel.
 - Instruction in the Law
 - Enforcement of the legal code
 - Sacrifices and offerings

A City of Refuge Numbers 35:6-8

- The Levites received 48 cities total.
- They were evenly distributed throughout the land.
- Again, no one was far from their ministry.
- Six cities were set aside as Cities of Refuge.

A City of Refuge Numbers 35:9-15

- Avenging the wrongful death of a family member was the typical form of justice in the ancient Near East.
- We can still observe this practice there today.
- The City of Refuge provided a helpful bridge to civil law.

- These cities provided a safe haven for anyone in danger of death by an avenging relative.
- The six Cities of Refuge were evenly dispersed.
- There were three on each side of the Jordan.
- 35:15 A refuge for all, not just native-born Israelites.

A City of Refuge Numbers 35:16-21

- The Bible clearly distinguishes between killing and murder.
- For the murderer, the punishment was death.
- The City of Refuge would provide no safe haven.

A City of Refuge Numbers 35:22-29

- 35:22-24 If there was no malicious intent, the manslayer would be protected.
- 35:25-29 On one condition: He had to stay within the boundaries of the city.
- With one exception: Upon the death of the high priest the manslayer was free to go.
- The death of the high priest set him free!

A City of Refuge Numbers 35:30-34

- There was no ransom for the life of a murderer.
- There was no ransom for the freedom of the manslayer.
- His life depended upon him staying within the City of Refuge until the death of the high priest.
- 35:34 God required a high level of holiness and purity for the nation of Israel.
- They were the one nation and this was the one land in which God chose to supernaturally reveal himself.

Christ Our Refuge

- Psalm 7:1
- Psalm 34:8
- Psalm 46:1
- Psalm 59:16
- Psalm 143:9
- Nahum 1:7
- Hebrews 6:18 Hold fast to Jesus, our only refuge!
- The Cities of Refuge were Levitical cities.
- The Levites knew God's ways best.
- They were devoted to his law.
- Their communities were devoted to ministry.
- Those who were closest to God had the responsibility to provide others with safety and protection.
- We should be like a City of Refuge for all who flee to Christ.
- Those who see their sin need a safe place to run.
- As Christ's church we must be that safe place.
- We should be a community that welcomes the outsider who has come here looking for Jesus.
- The City of Refuge was not far from any place in Israel.
- Christ is not far from any of us.
- The City of Refuge was open to all people, not just native-born Israelites.
- The same goes for Jesus.

- If you fled to the City of Refuge you had to stay there.
- To go outside the city would put you in danger of death.
- We come to Jesus to stay.
- Through him we receive eternal life.

- The City of Refuge was the only way God provided to protect the needy person.
- There is no alternative to Jesus Christ.
- God has given us a way, but only one way, to be saved.

- The death of the high priest brought freedom.
- So it is with Jesus Christ.
- See Hebrews 9:24-28.

- Christ is unlike the City of Refuge in one big way.
- The City of Refuge protected only the innocent.
- Christ died to save the guilty.

- If God has shown you your sin, then He invites you to Jesus.
- There is forgiveness and freedom under his protection.
- See Romans 5:8-10.

- *Christ ... is not a refuge provided for men who are innocent, but for men who are guilty — not for those who have accidentally transgressed, but for those who have wilfully gone astray.*
 - Charles Spurgeon