



you have been my refuge, a  
strong tower against the foe

# Six Cities of Sanctuary

Joshua 20:1-9

# Preparation Of The Cities

- Joshua 20:1-9
- Ex. 21:13; Num. 35:6-34; Deut. 19:2, 9
- The Cities of Refuge were towns in the Kingdom of Israel and Kingdom of Judah in which the perpetrators of manslaughter could claim the right of asylum; outside of these cities, blood vengeance against such perpetrators was allowed by the Law of Moses.

# Preparation Of The Cities

- The Torah names six cities of refuge: Golan, Ramoth, and Bezer on the east of the Jordan River, and Kedesh, Shechem, and Hebron on the western side.



# Preparation Of The Cities

- The rabbinic writers differentiated between four forms of killing under the law:
  - Complete innocence, for which no further action was necessary. When someone is killed while the perpetrator was fulfilling legal duties
  - Negligence, which required exile to a city of refuge. When someone was killed as a result of legal activity, but which the perpetrator was not required to perform
  - Severe carelessness, for which exile is insufficient. When someone was accidentally killed as a result of illegal activity by the perpetrator
  - Murder, which was subject to the avenger of blood.

# Preparation Of The Cities

- The area covered by these rights of sanctuary varied from the limited area within the tabernacle complex in the beginning, to a large area beyond the limits of the sanctuary towns, later defined in the Law of Moses.
- It was considered a greater crime to drag an individual from the sanctuary or to kill them there than it was to defile the sanctuary itself.
- Over time, the general rights of asylum were gradually curtailed, as some cities of sanctuary had become hotbeds of crime

# Purpose Of The Cities

- They were to serve as a refuge
  - When the Lord gave Israel His Law, He made no provision for a police force.
  - Every crime was to be dealt with swiftly and in measure with the nature of the offense

# Purpose Of The Cities

- Full restitution plus a penalty amount - Ex. 22:1-5.
- The punishments were designed to fit the crime - Ex 21:24-25.
- If the crime took the life of another human being, the nearest kinsman of the victim had a right to avenge his fallen relative - Num. 35:19-21
- God acknowledged the difference between murder and manslaughter. He wanted them to learn to distinguish between intentional and unintentional sin

# Purpose Of The Cities

- They were to serve as a reminder.
  - God shows mercy, and they were to learn mercy
  - They were to be involved in the practice of both justice and mercy
  - Num. 35:24-25 - “Then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments. 25 'So the congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall return him to the city of refuge where he had fled, and he shall remain there until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.”

# Purpose Of The Cities

- Likewise, death is our avenger of blood
  - Rom. 3:23 - “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
  - Rom. 6:23 - “For the wages of sin is death...”
  - Psalm 9:17 - “The wicked shall be turned into hell...”
- We need a place to flee for refuge
  - Heb. 6:18 - “That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.”

# Provision Of The Cities

- They were provided by God
  - Humankind did not come up with the idea of cities of refuge
  - A revolutionary concept in a time of the law of vengeance and might

# Provision Of The Cities

- Salvation through the blood of Jesus did not originate in the minds of humans. It was God's idea from start to finish
  - John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

# Provision Of The Cities

- Salvation and works of righteousness are from God
  - Eph. 2:8-10 - “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

# Provision Of The Cities

- They were provided by grace.
  - God could have allowed the manslayer to die like any other person who had taken a life.
- God could have allowed us to die in our sins - Isa. 53:6
  - He initiated the process - John 6:44; Eph. 2:1
  - He provided the means - Rom. 3:25; Acts 4:12
  - He saves obedient believers - Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18
  - He preserves the saved - 1Peter 1:3-5

# Power Of The Cities

- They had power to save.
- So it is in Christ
  - John 5:24 - “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”
  - Mark 16:16 - “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

# Power Of The Cities

- They had power to secure.
- There is security in Christ
  - John 10:28-29 - “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.”
  - Heb. 7:25 - “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

# Power Of The Cities

- Their power was sufficient. The cities of refuge would work for anyone who fled to them.
- Jesus will not turn anyone away
  - John 6:37 - “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”
  - Rev. 22:17 - “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”

# Position Of The Cities

- They were available to everyone: son, stranger, or sojourner
- Jesus made salvation available to everyone
  - Isa. 55:6 - “Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.”
  - 2Cor. 6:2 - “...Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”
  - Matt. 11:28 - “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
  - Rev. 3:20 - “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

# Position Of The Cities

- They were accessible to all
  - They were prominent
    - Built of white limestone on hilltops
  - They were prepared
    - The roads were never blocked.
    - The gates were never closed.
    - The directions were clear - “miklat”

# Position Of The Cities

- Likewise with the Lord
  - He can be seen from a distance by the weary sinner
  - The road to salvation is always clear and unobstructed
  - He receives everyone regardless of when they come to Him
  - The way to Him is clearly defined
  - John 14:6 - “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

# Pictures In The Cities

- There are pictures in their names
  - Kadesh is Righteousness - “You are clean” - Isa. 64:4-6; 2Cor. 5:21
  - Shechem is Shoulder - “I care for you” - Luke 15:3-7
  - Hebron is Fellowship - “You are not alone” - 1John 1:7
  - Bezer is Fortress - “You are safe” - Psalm 18:2
  - Ramoth is Exalted - “I am your God” - Eph. 2:6
  - Golan is Joy - “You are My people” - 1Peter 1:8

# Pictures In The Cities

- There is a picture in their nature.
  - They were visible manifestations of the grace of God; He did not want to lose a single soul unnecessarily
- And so it is in Christ
  - 2Peter 3:9 - “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”
  - Rom. 5:8 - “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

# Six Cities of Sanctuary

- 2Samuel 2:18-34 - Abner, Asahel, Hebron, Joab, King David
- “Abner, you died like a fool! You were right at the gates of the refuge. All you had to do was walk in. Nobody had you tied up. You could have been saved, but you died foolishly.”
- I wonder how many others will die foolishly just outside the gates of salvation?