

Cities of Refuge
Joshua 20:1-9, Numbers 35:14-16, 20-29, Hebrews 9:23-26
Sermon Outline

Introduction: The cities of refuge reveal numerous things about God.

I) God weighs our motives

A) This is why he instituted the cities

v. 1-3

1) The setting

- avengers of blood
- Limiting violence: *Exodus 21:23—Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for*

2) The distinction between the act and motive was very precious to God

- Kept talking about the cities
- Ordered easy access
- Subsidized them
- Protection (*v. 5*) and full welcome (*v. 4*)

B) Take away: Be gentle with one another

II) God wants his people safely home

A) The pattern

- Good—as far as it went—but...
- Witness protection program

B) Meaning for us

- Justification versus adoption
 - *Psalm 90.1: Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations*
 - *John 14.2: In my Father's house are many rooms*
- What do we want the most from God—to be right or to be home?

III) God must pay to bring us safely home

A) The meaning of the “avenger of blood” and the high priest’s death.

No way home except through death

B) Christ our refuge and redeemer

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Where were the cities of refuge located (consult a Bible atlas) and why (see Joshua 20:7-8 and Deut. 19:3)?
- 2) How, according to Joshua 20:4-5, were involuntary manslayer's to be treated by the leaders and people of the cities of refuge? Why?
- 3) Some cynics have said that the church is "the only army that shoots its own wounded." Have you seen this happen? Why do we do this to each other?
- 4) What are the top three areas in which Christians tend to be particularly critical of each other? Why?
- 5) How was living in a city of refuge like participating today in a witness protection program that relocates you? What are/were the upsides—what are/were the downsides?
- 6) Reflect on the following: "Justification and adoption are both necessary and foundational—and they come to us together. But there is a difference between them. To be justified is to be declared 'not guilty' by God the Judge. It means you can leave the courtroom free of the fear that you will be condemned. But where now do you go? To be adopted is to hear the Judge say, 'I want you to come home with me—to be loved by me as I love my only begotten Son.'" Which is more precious to you—justification or adoption? How can you tell?
- 7) The term "avenger of blood" is literally "redeemer of blood" suggesting that the person who fulfills that role is finding a way to pay back a debt. What is the debt and how does the "redeemer of blood" pay it back?
- 8) The only grounds upon which the innocent manslayer could hope to see his home again is if he outlived the high priest. What questions might he have asked while he was waiting? What help would it have been to him to know Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, and Hebrews 9:23-26?