

Will We Trust the Lord
Part 22
“Cities of Refuge”
Joshua 20:1-9

I. Identifying the types of Murder (v1-6)

(Exodus 21:12-15, Deuteronomy 19, Numbers 35)

- A. Man Slayer- Was a premeditated murder or the taking of a life intentionally without just cause. (Num 35:16-18, 20,21)(Exodus 21:12-15)
- B. Avenger of Blood- family member taking justice for the slain family member into his own hands and killing the murder without proper trial (Num 35:21, 27)
- C. Accidental Murder- (Deut) 19:5

II. Insight of Mercy for murder

Five facts about cities of refuge:

Fact 1-

1. Cities of refuge were to be strategically located three to east from N to S and three west from N to S so that there would be easy access to them for anybody seeking refuge.
2. In Deuteronomy 19:3 God commanded that the nation build highways-not just foot paths-to the cities of refuge.
3. Bridges were to be built across every ravine that the highways came to, so that the person running for refuge wouldn't have to waste time climbing to the bottom of the ravine and then up the other side.
4. The highways were supposed to be rebuilt every spring after the heavy winter rains so that the road surface would be smooth and easy to run on.
5. At every crossroad or intersection on these highways, there were to be big, bold signs pointing the way with the word REFUGE in large letters. If someone was running flat-out, they wouldn't have to lose any time slowing down to read the sign.

Fact 2 - Gates of the cities of refuge were never to be locked.

Fact 3- is that the city was to be well stocked to provide for any fugitives who came to stay, possibly for a period of years. They could leave after the High Priest died that had anointed them. Number 35:28

Fact 4- Numbers 35:25-29,

1. If the killer didn't flee to the tabernacle at first, and to the city of refuge later, there was no other place of guaranteed safety.
2. If they went outside the city once they got there, the city could do nothing to protect them from the avenger of blood.

Fact 5- (v9)

1. These were the cities designated for all the people of Israel, and for the stranger sojourning among them [the Gentiles], that any one who killed a person without intent could flee there, so that he might not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, till he stood before the congregation.
2. Everybody was welcome in these cities, even non-Jews who were permanent residents of the land. The same justice, the same protection and provision, the same atoning grace were free to all.
3. What God was doing in establishing these cities of refuge was setting the wheels in motion for what would ultimately be due process of law. Our western legal system finds its roots in this kind of Biblical teaching that declares that a person is innocent until proven guilty. Until everything was investigated by the elders and justice was handed down in a full hearing before the entire congregation, he enjoyed the security of presumed innocence. Doug Goins

III. Insight for living

1. The picture of Christ mercy and forgiveness
2. The picture of Gods judgment and punishment
3. The purpose of the law