

Cities of Refuge

God commanded, through Moses, that the children of Israel give 48 cities to the Levites. Six of these were to be “cities of refuge”. (Num. 35:6)

Miqlat' (mik-lawt') - Heb...in the sense of “taking in”; “an asylum”; refuge ...Strong's Concordance

There were three in Transjordan, (east of the Jordan River), Bezer in the north, Ramoth in the center, and Golan in the south. (Deut. 4:43 & Josh. 20:8) There were three in Canaan, (west of the Jordan River), Kedesh in the North, Shechem in the center, and Kiriath-arba, (Hebron), in the south. (Josh. 20:7) These were for the manslayer who kills anyone accidentally, (unawares- Num. 35:11).

In ancient Israel, if someone was murdered, the victim's closest relative was required to take the life of the murderer, (Num. 35:19-21). It was his duty to the family. A murderer could not live! But, if the killing was accidental, the manslayer could flee from the avenger to one of these cities of refuge for asylum, (Deut. 19:4-6), to await trial by the court. The avenger could not touch him there. If the congregation found him guilty of premeditated murder, he would be turned over for execution. But, if the killing was found to be accidental, he was acquitted, but he had a price to pay; he had to remain in the “city of refuge” for as long as the current high priest was in office. (Num. 35:22-28)

This meant being apart from his family for a long time or moving his family to this city of refuge. If the high priest died, he could then return to his hometown and pick up his life, again; but if he was caught outside the city of refuge before this time, he could justifiably then, be killed by the avenger of blood.

While reading about the “cities of refuge”, I was reminded of the analogy of Jesus as our “city of refuge”. And, of course, He is much more than that.

We are certainly not all murderers, but we all have sinned. (Rom. 3:23). Because of Adam's sin, we are born sinners, and sinners sin. But, when we repent, (turn away from or flee sin), and run to Jesus, our “city of refuge”, we find sanctuary in Him. Jesus is our salvation. If we abide, or remain in our “sanctuary”, nothing can touch us except Him.

Just as in ancient Israel, when the manslayer entered the “city of refuge”, he found sanctuary, so too, when we enter our “city of refuge”, ie..we have faith in Jesus and receive Him as Lord and Savior.. We are saved from our enemies, satan, sin and death.

Gal. 5:16(KJV) “This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”. This verse tells us that if we are walking after the Holy Spirit, (remaining in our sanctuary), that we will not sin. The enemy cannot reach us there. (Also read Rom. 6:11-18) But, if we do not walk in the Spirit, (or walk outside our sanctuary), we are fair game for the enemy.

Of course Jesus, our High Priest, will never die and we have everlasting life in Him!

As Christians, we really don't want to walk outside our sanctuary, or not walk after the Holy Spirit, do we? We don't want to make ourselves available to sin. But it seems so easy to be distracted by our busy lives and temptations all around us. If we are not in daily communication with our Lord in prayer and in reading His Holy Word, we can become spiritually weak and not even know we are becoming vulnerable. We are told in Eph. 4:27 not to give place to the devil.

PLEASE, read Eph. 4:22-32!

Let's make pleasing God our first priority. Let's do it His way.

“Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children: and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.” Eph. 5:1-2

God Bless You!
NJW