

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

While the Jews were on their historic journey from Egypt to Canaan, God Almighty commanded them through His servant Moses that when they got to Canaan, they should set aside three cities on either side of the River Jordan to be known as Cities of Refuge.

The six cities were for the benefit of the “manslayer” among the Jews as well as the strangers and sojourners dwelling among them to the end that the strict law of retribution in force at that time will not overtake the person who kills another unknowingly or accidentally. (Deuteronomy 4:41-43) After the death of Moses, God repeated the command regarding the Cities of Refuge to Joshua in Joshua 20:1-6. In verses 7-9 the names of the cities designated as Cities of Refuge were given. – See also Joshua 20:9

The command of God Almighty in regard to the Cities of Refuge fore- shadowed matters of great spiritual significance particularly in this age of Christ’s Second Coming. As St. Paul said “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” – Romans 15:4. 1 Corinthians 10:11; see also Hebrews 10:1

In these last days when the mysteries of God have been made bare, it has pleased Him to reveal the spiritual significance of the Cities of Refuge. (See Ephesians 3:3-9; Psalm 25:9,14; 1 Corinthians 2:14; etc). The fact that the City of refuge is for the benefit not only of the natural Jews but for strangers and the sojourners among them shows that its application is universal and not limited to the natural Jews. It is a provision God has made for mankind in this end of the world for their protection against impending doom. In the anti-type the cities stand for God’s Kingdom now set up in this end of the world. (Matthew 24:15,16; Hebrews 11:10,11) These are set up through the saints or anointed servants. (Isaiah 62:11-12 ; Isaiah 60:14, Matthew 5:14,15) That three of the cities were located on one side of River Jordan and three on the other side shows that the remnant of the anointed Christians are to be chosen from all parts of the world. (Matthew 24:31) Because they are places of protection, these “cities” founded through the anointed remnant are called “Mountains” where people of Judae, that is those who love to praise God, shall flee to for safety and protection. (Isaiah 2:2; Matthew 24:15,16) These people of goodwill who love to praise Jehovah are called “birds of the air” in Matthew 13:31,32.

The “manslayer” or murderer refers to people of the world who were doing things contrary to the will of God and therefore by God’s law deserved to die (Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:11-12; 1 John 3:15; Galatians 4:8;1 Timothy 1:9) The ignorant manslaughterers are men of goodwill who were breaking the law of God and opposing the truth due to ignorance. These are people who are drawn into an undesirable position because of circumstances over which they had no control: as a result of inherited sin. Such ones are given opportunity for life in exercise of Jehovah’s mercy for the fact that that they were breaking the laws of God in ignorance, unintentionally. All mankind who had not come to the light of Christ are in this abject condition. St Paul in his letter to Titus clarifies the point further “For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.”-Titus 3:3

The stubborn and disobedient ones who deliberately oppose the truth and righteousness of God class themselves as willful manslaughterers and will be destroyed by God through Jesus Christ (the

Avenger of blood). In this wise, St Paul stated "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." – Hebrews 10:26-29. See also Hebrews 6:4-6; Matthew 12:31,32; 2 Peter 2:20-22.

The Avenger of Blood is Jesus Christ who is Jehovah's Chief Judge, Field Marshall and Vindicator. It is through Jesus Christ, God Almighty will destroy Satan the devil and his hosts including all unrepentant sinners from off the surface of the earth. – 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Psalm 145:20; 9:17

The elders who judge the manslayer are Jesus Christ, his body members, and their companions. (John 5:22,27; Psalm 149:5-9) Having become convinced of their evil ways, through the preaching of the truth, the ignorant sinners flee to the antitypical City of Refuge, (the true Church of God) and submit themselves to the judgement of God as expounded by the anointed servants, or their companions and to the ecclesiastical courts in God's organisation. Such a one must "declare his cause" that is take his stand on the side of God and repent from his old ways and walk in harmony with the laws of the city of refuge (i.e. the true Church of God) so as to be allowed to remain in the city. In the words of the prophet Isaiah "for when they judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isaiah 26:9). When the people obey God by forsaking evil, they are being cleansed spiritually. –Psalm 119:9-11; John 15:3 Jesus Christ had in his days on earth made it clear that the words he had spoken "shall judge men in the last day" – in which we are now living in. (John 12:48). The Lord "shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." –Psalm 96:13.

In the type, the manslayer who is judged by the congregation and found to be worthy to remain in the City of Refuge is required to remain there until the death of the High Priest. The antitypical High Priest is Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 3:1;9:11) The death of the High Priest symbolises the end of the priestly work on earth. (Revelation 20:7-9). In 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 St. Paul declared: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. *For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that he (God Almighty) is excepted, which did put all things under him.* And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." (emphasis ours).

This is a warning that no Christian should for any reason "go out of the city of his refuge" thus exposing himself to danger in the hands of the Avenger of Blood. There can be no excuse or remedy for willful disobedience to the Lord's instructions. See Luke 13: 23-27; 2 Peter 2:20-22;Jeremiah 22:10

This is the time therefore for all men of goodwill to demonstrate their faith in God Almighty and Jesus Christ by fleeing to the Lord's Organisation (the Church organisation where the truth is preached unadulteratedly) and there continue to seek righteousness and meekness as commanded by God so that they may be spared in the great devastation due to take place at Armageddon. – Zephaniah 2:1-3; Isaiah 55:6,7.