

31—Jesus, Our Refuge

Hebrews 6:17-20

Introduction: What comes to mind when you think of “refuge?”

- Families in war-torn countries fleeing their homeland for protection.
- Those in the path of hurricanes, tornados or wildfires... leaving to find safer ground.
- Ships at sea looking for a lighthouse so they might find the refuge of harbor.
- Women and children in abusive relationships needing safety and seeking refuge.

We sometimes wonder why people who have a place of refuge from danger ignore it. Why didn't they flee? Why didn't they run? Why didn't they find a place of safety? Why'd they risk it? We ask all those questions. Yet, spiritually, I often wonder the same thing. When the trials and tribulations of life hit us we sometimes try to face those things alone or look for worldly solutions. God has a place of refuge and so many times we turn our back on it.

In both the Old and New Testaments, a place of refuge was offered by God to those in peril or danger. The Old Testament cities of refuge will do us no good today...but, they look ahead to Christ's refuge for us and we want to consider the Biblical typology this morning.

I. “Refuge” From A Hebrew Mind

- A. Under Old Testament law, Israel could avenge “life for life”—this was their justice system.
- B. Yet, in the case of unintentional, involuntary manslaughter God allowed a refuge.
 1. However, the accused was required to flee to a “city of refuge” where he could plead his case and receive protection.
 2. Moses, before Israel entered the promised land, spoke of these cities.
 - i. Exodus 21:13, “*But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee*” (ESV).
 - ii. Deuteronomy 19:1-13 sets out the law which would free the innocent party.
 - iii. Numbers 35:9-34 designates the six Levite cities of refuge chosen out of the 48 Levite cities given during the land allotment.
 3. Joshua appointed the various cities of refuge once they entered the promised land, just as Moses required (Joshua 20:7-9).
 - i. “*So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which is Hebron) in the mountains of Judah. And on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness on the plain, from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them, that whoever killed a person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation*” (Joshua 20:7-9).
 - ii. Notice that three of these cities were on the east side of the Jordan River and three were on the west side so they could be easily accessible.

- ii. Each of these cities has an interesting meaning.
 - a. Kedesh— “To set apart.”
 - b. Shechem— “Shoulder” or “burden bearer.”
 - c. Hebron— “To associate, join” to have “fellowship, friendly association.”
 - d. Ramoth— “To be raised, made high or exalted.”
 - e. Golan— “To remove, transmigrate, or pass away.”
- C. The Old Testament “cities of refuge” prefigured or foreshadowed the refuge of Jesus Christ!
 - 1. Today, Christ is the refuge for any and all who hope to escape sin’s consequences!
 - 2. The Hebrew writer used the term “refuge” for those who have “run for cover” to Jesus Christ.
 - 3. Hebrews 6:18-20, “...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.** This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

II. New Testament Teachings About Jesus, Our Refuge

- A. We need a place of refuge (Romans 3:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).
 - 1. God cannot allow sin to go unpunished.
 - 2. We have all violated God’s law and stand in need to escape the penalty of unforgiven sin!
- B. To “flee” is our choice (1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22; Romans 6:23).
 - 1. As God provided a place in the Old Testament he has done so in the New.
 - 2. Yet, it is our choice whether we flee from sin and its consequences or not.
- C. The path is clear for all (1 John 2:1-3; John 14:6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Eph 5:17).
 - 1. The Old Testament cities were all located on a high place so they could be easily seen and the roads to these cities were well-kept.
 - 2. Christ, our refuge, is in heaven—a place of authority and peace (1 John 2:1-3).
 - 3. The path to heaven is clearly set forth for us.
 - i. It must be through Jesus Christ... no other Savior will do (John 14:6).
 - ii. We learn of His will through the teaching of Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - 4. God has not made the path too difficult or the way unclear (Ephesians 5:17).
- D. Faith is essential (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 5:1; Acts 2:36-41)
 - 1. The accused of the Old Testament might never have been to the “city of refuge.”
 - 2. Yet, they had to have faith to believe it existed and desperately pursue it.
 - 3. Likewise, faith is essential if we ever expect to be provided refuge by our God (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 5:1).
 - 4. We must stay in the place of refuge to remain same (Numbers 35:25-28).

Conclusion: Our world is being hampered and harmed by sin and its consequences. Yet, there is a place where you can find peace, solace and freedom from a hopeless despair. It is in the forgiveness Jesus offers through His sacrifice and as our Mediator. Flee to Him. Will you turn to Him for refuge?