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THE CITIES OF REFUGE

- JOSHUA 20:1-9. - NOVEMBER 3. -

Golden Text: – "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." – Heb. 6:18.

THE cities of refuge were appointed in Israel for the protection against summary punishment of any who might accidentally take human life, but not for any wilful murderer. There were six of these cities in central localities, to any one of which the manslayer might fly and there find protection until his case could be legally tried. These cities did not shelter the wilful murderer; but the authorities, after a fair trial, delivered such up to the just penalty of their crime, which was death. – Deut. 19:11-13; Num. 35:30-34.

If the killing proved to be accidental the man-slayer must still remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest then in office. This restraint upon his liberty was the penalty for his carelessness, and thus an additional protection to human life.

This feature of the typical Mosaic Law strongly foreshadowed the refuge which the sinner may find in Christ. He is our shield and hiding-place from the penalty of all sin, save that which is wilful. He is no shelter for obstinate, unrepentant sinners; but for every one born in sin and shapen in iniquity – and thus sinners by the accident of birth or heritage, yet earnestly desirous of escaping from sin and its just consequences, and seeking refuge in him by faith – there is protection. We are all under sentence of death; Justice is the avenger; and only those in Christ are shielded. [R4080 : page 317]

But, mark you, the sinner must continue to abide in this city of refuge as long as the high priest liveth – *i.e.*, as long as Christ

continues in the priestly office, which will be until he is able to present all the redeemed who abide in him under the New Covenant conditions faultless before the throne of God, at the end of his Millennial reign as King and Priest. Then, being made actually perfect by the great Redeemer-Physician, they will be able to stand, not in the imputed or reckoned righteousness of another, but in their own glorious perfection, yet never forgetful of the great atoning sacrifice, and the patient work of restitution which made possible such a glorious consummation.

Like the cities of refuge, Christ is easy of access to all who diligently seek him, and who have no will in opposition to righteousness, nor to any of his measures of just and righteous discipline.
