

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

Col 2:16-17 “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body (substance) is of Christ*”

“**Treat the New Testament as a commentary of the Old**”—
John Thomas

Heb 6:18-20 “That by two immutable things, in which *it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec*”

Num 35:1 And the LORD *spake unto Moses* in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying

Jos 20:1-2 The LORD also *spake unto Joshua*, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, *whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses*:

Moses and Joshua—The Law and Grace: City of Refuge Fulfilled

According to the “shadow” and “substance” this commandment was given to Moses, but it was not fulfilled until Joshua. The Law manifested sin, and Christ provided forgiveness of sin.

1Jn 1:9 *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”*

The proper order is important

Pro 28:13 *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”* The Jews refused to admit sin, therefore it remained

Numbers 35 (Deu. 19—Jos. 20)

Num 35:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan *near* Jericho, saying,

Num 35:2 Command the children of Israel, that they give unto *the Levites* of the inheritance of their possession *cities to dwell in*; and ye shall give *also* unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them.

“Cities of refuge” only among the “Levites.” Who were the Levites?

Remained faithful when Moses tarried in the Mount (Exo 32); and therefore were given the status of “firstborn” (Num 3:12); had no lot of inheritance but were scattered among the other tribes; they were encamped about the tabernacle (Num 1:50); were not a part of the general census (Num 1:46). **THUS** represent the seed of Abraham, whom no man can number, the firstborn & priesthood of faithful.

THE LEVITES—TEACHERS OF THE SCRIPTURES IN ISRAEL

2Ch 15:3 “For a long season Israel *hath been* without the true God, *and without a teaching priest, and without law*”

2Ch 17:8-9 “With them *he sent Levites...priests. And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people*”

2Ch 30:22 “And Hezekiah spake comfortably *unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD*”

2Ch 35:2-3 “He set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD, *And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel...*”

There is no “refuge” apart from the Word of God. The Scriptures alone manifests sin, and provides the remedy. This process cannot be circumvented: Moses-then-Joshua

Num 35:5 Ye shall measure from without the city on the east side *two thousand cubits*, and on the south side *two thousand cubits*, and on the west side *two thousand cubits*...the city in the midst.

Num 35:6 And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites *there shall be six cities for refuge*, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: *and to them ye shall add forty and two cities.*

Amazing Witness of Numbers

Note the borders of the city” “*2,000 cubits*” (remember)

Note the cities: “*six cities of for refuge*” Six is the number of flesh. Man created the sixth day (Gen 1:31); the number of the man is six hundred three score and six (Rev 13:18)

Note the cities could be extended by “*forty and two*” This is the generation that rejected Christ (Mat 1:16), and is associated with false religion (Rev 13:5).

Num 35:9 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **Num 35:10** Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *When ye be come over Jordan* into the land of Canaan;

Jordan—baptism (John 1:28; at 3:6). The cities were not allotted until passage through Jordan. Thus, “refuge” only available for those baptized into Christ! The old man of the flesh must be cut off to find forgiveness.

Deu 19:2-3 *Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and *divide the coasts of thy land*, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither *evenly spread

Prepare thee a way—a specific path was established that led to the six cities. Significantly, John Baptist came to “prepare the way” (Mat 3:3); and Christ is “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). The Truth is used synonymously with “the way” (Acts 16:17; 18:25-26).

Num 35:11 Then ye shall *appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you*; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person *at unawares. mg. by error*

According to the Jews, distinct paths were cut through every hill and forest, bridges across every river, and broad roads were well-maintained. Guide posts were erected to show the way, and two teachers of the Law were to accompany the man who sought refuge from the avenger. **Expositor**

Deu 19:4 And this is the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he may live: Whoso killeth *his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past*;

Ignorantly—by accident. This is a metaphor for *sin*. The word *chata* means to to “miss” a mark, and translated such: “every one could sling stones at an hair *breadth*, and not *miss*” (Jud 20:16). Unintended! “For all have sinned and *come short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23)

Accident—though it was not deliberate, like “sins of ignorance” under the Law (Lev 4), the offense had to be acknowledged, because “death” was the result. Thus, SIN is personified as the “avenger” in pursuit to bring us all to death! All in need refuge!

“Sin...bringeth forth death” Jam 1:15...“sting of death is sin” 1Cor 15:56
“wages of sin is death” Rom 6:23...“sin hath reigned unto death” Rom 5:21

Rom 7:14-20 “We know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, *sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.* If then I do that which I would not...in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for *to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.* For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, *but sin that dwelleth in me*”

Deu 19:6 Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, *while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him*; whereas he *was* not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.

Way is Long—there can be no resting on our laurels; no letting up in our Walk in the Truth. Sin and death are continually in the pursuit. The “heart is hot” is an indication of the urgency need. We have to develop a spiritual attitude to see sin as Yahweh sees it: *an aggressive opponent*.

Flee—a word used throughout; means to literally *run for your life!* We are told “flee fornication”; “flee idolatry”; “resist the devil and he will flee from you”; “flee youthful lusts”; “flee” the desire for wealth—(1Cor 10:14; 6:18; Jam 4:7; 1Tim 6:11; 2Tim 2:22)—“Let us *lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us*” — Heb 12:1

Num 35:12 And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, *until he stand before * the congregation in judgment.* **the ecclesia**

Jos 20:4 And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, *and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city,* they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.

1Ti 6:11-13 "O man of God, *flee these things;* and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, *lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.* I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate *witnessed a good confession"*

Elders—1Ti 5:17-19 “*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, ESPECIALLY THEY WHO LABOUR IN THE WORD AND DOCTRINE. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses*” **Warning: not to slander elders who maintain the Word**

Tit 1:5-9 “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest SET IN ORDER THE THINGS THAT ARE WANTING, and *ordain elders in every city*...If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly...as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre...*Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*” **Lifestyle & Doctrine**

1Ti 3:1-7 “*This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil*”

Tit 2:1-2 “But speak thou the things which become SOUND DOCTRINE: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, * *in patience*”

* An elder knows the *way is long* and has personally abode in the *city of refuge* a long time. Many novices leave the Truth with time.

Num 35:15 These six cities shall be a refuge, *both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them:* that every one that killeth any person **unawares* may flee thither. **by accident*

Refuge for All—whether a natural Jew or one who has become a Jew, refuge was to be provided for all those “in Israel.” **“What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one”** Rom 3:9-11

No Refuge For Blatant Sin—

Heb 10:25-26 “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins”*

Num 35:16-20 “ And if he smite him with *an instrument of iron ...with throwing a stone... weapon of wood...*, wherewith he may die, and he die, *he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.* The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. But if he thrust him *of hatred...* he that smote *him* shall surely be put to death; *for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him”*

Hatred & Murder—

Hating brethren is the same as murder under the New Covenant:

1Jn 3:15 “Whosoever *hateth his brother is a murderer:* and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (Mat 5:20-26)

The two greatest commandments require total Love of Yahweh and Our Brethren (Mat 22:37-40)

The Epitome of the Atonement—

1Jn 4:7-21 “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another...If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: *for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also”

- The key to truly understanding the Atonement requires a comprehension of what has been done on our behalf by the sacrifice of Yahweh’s Son. Those who realize this will manifest that same self-sacrificial servitude toward their brethren. This requires living the principles of the Atonement; which goes well beyond the mere academic teaching.

Num 35:16 And if he smite him with *an instrument of iron*, so that he die, he *is* a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

It is not “love” to permit false doctrine in our midst. While this is the claim of those that promote liberal scope for varying views in the Ecclesia, the end result is “death” to those who embrace it. Thus, true elders will see the need to convince the gainsayer!

Iron—this metal is specifically used in Scripture to represent false religion (i.e. Dan 2; 4; 7).

1Ti 4:1-3 “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times *some shall depart from the faith*, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared WITH A HOT IRON; Forbidding to marry, *and commanding to abstain from meats...*”

Num 35:17 If he smite him with *throwing a stone*, wherewith he may die, and he die, he *is* a murderer...shall surely be put to death.

1Ti 1:6-7 "Some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm"

We are not free from principles of the Law, but its condemnation!

Stone—this represents the Law throughout the Word. The ten commandments were etched in stone, and severe judgment was executed by "stoning." Thus, this is a misapplication of the Law— Act 15:1-2 "Men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved...they determined... certain of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question" **1st Century Ecclesia**

Num 35:18 Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer...shall surely be put to death.

Wood—reps. human nature, and specifically the Lord, who was “hanged on a tree” (Acts 10:39). Throughout the times of the Gentiles, perhaps the foremost controversy in the brotherhood.

- **Jesus shared our very same Adamic nature, yet being full of the spirit-word, overcame sin’s flesh; having never sinned. Jesus’ mind was one with the Father, and therefore was brought from the grave and is now mediator at the Right hand of the Father.**

2Jn 1:7 -11 “Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh...if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds”

Num 35:22 But if he thrust him suddenly *without enmity*, or have cast upon him any thing *without laying of wait*,
Num 35:23 Or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing *him* not, and cast it upon him, that he die, *and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm*:

Num 35:24 Then *the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments*:

Inadvertent Sin—we do at times harm one another unintentionally: for this God provides refuge.

Congregation To Judge—Distasteful but necessary.

We must, at times “judge” some situations of “sin.”

Immortality had to be judged (1Cor 5-6); also matters of false teaching (1Tim 1:18-20); as well as laziness (2The 3:8-15). “Deliver unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”

Deu 19:12 Then *the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.*

Elders—are wiser in the manner of how to administer “righteous judgment.” Whether it be issues of morality, doctrinal trouble, or personal dispute, the gray head is able to rightly divide the Word

Deu 19:13 Thine *eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.*

1Co 5:1-6 “It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you... For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed... deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*”

Judge Righteous Judgment—The Word of God is Very Clear:

- We are prohibited from being bias in judgment toward friends and family, but must be the first to condemn (Deu 13:6-9)
- We cannot allow family ties to distort the forthright application of the Word (Mat 12:46-50; 1Sam 2:22-24; 3:13)
- We must not wrest judgment for the rich or poor (Exo 23:1-9)
- Yahweh hates “diverse weights and balances” in judgment.

Deu 13:6-9 “If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which *is* as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods...Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; *neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him:* But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death”

Num 35:25 And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall *restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil.*

Abide in City of Refuge—if, after an ecclesial interview, the slayer acknowledges the fundamentals of *sin and death*, he enters in among them. **NOTE:** even though the incident of death has been found accidental and not at all intentional, the “manslayer” *does not return to his former life!* His identification must be with the death of the High Priest.

Those provided refuge now “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4)—“live not henceforth unto themselves” (2Cor 5:15)—“put off concerning the former conversation” (Eph 4:21)—“deny themselves and take up the cross” (Mrk 8:34)—“put off the body of the sins of the flesh” (Col 2:11): whether raised in the Truth or not! Baptism changes our way of life.

Num 35:26 But if the slayer shall *at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge,* whither he was fled;

Num 35:27 And the revenger of blood *find him without the borders of the city of his refuge,* and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood:

Borders—the principles of the Atonement do have limitations! The Truth has boundaries, and if not careful, we can cross them into dangerous territory: death!

Dinah, Lot, Samson are but a few examples of those who went into a worldly environment and suffered the consequences. The Divine protection and covering can be lost by our inappropriate conduct: *without the borders.*

Rev 3:4 “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis *which have not defiled their garments;* and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy”

Rev 16:15 *“Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame”*

Luk 21:34-36 *“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares...Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man”*

1Co 10:7-12 *“Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication...Neither let us tempt Christ...Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured...Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”*

1Th 4:1-7 “We beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God...For this is the will of God, *even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that THE LORD IS THE AVENGER OF ALL SUCH, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness”*

- **Avenger—the same word as “redeemer” in the Old Testament and is translated 18 times as such; and 50 times as “redeem.”**

Rev 6:10 “And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and *avenge our blood* on them that dwell on the earth?”

The Two-Edged Sword of the Truth (Heb 4:12)

- The world perished at the flood waters, while the same waters saved Noah and his family (1Pet 3:20-22)
- The Red Sea provided salvation for Israel, and yet destruction for Pharaoh's army (Exo 14).
- Christ will come to reward some with everlasting life, and others with everlasting condemnation (2The 1:9).

2Co 2:14-16 “Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.”

The Redeemer for One is also the Avenger for Others.

Num 35:28 Because *he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest*: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall *return into the land of his possession*.

Distance of Borders—2,000 cubits; the same as the Ark went before the children of Israel into the Land under Joshua (Jos 3:4)

We're almost there! We must not give up now.

Mat 26:29 "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, *until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*" **The End Goal: Inheritance with Christ**

Heb 3:12-14 "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, *if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end*"

Num 35:31 Moreover ye shall *take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.*

Num 35:32 And ye shall *take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest.*

Warning—the Truth is not about vain “personalities” of men! The ecclesia is often ruined by pride of men and fleshly gloating in success or failure in the Truth.

We are entrusted with the Truth, which we did not author; to be partakers of the Divine nature, which we do not possess; and inherit the Earth, which does not belong to us. We have no right to display personal glory in anything related to Yahweh!

2Co 4:7 “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us”

Final Point: *“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”*

1Kin 2:36-46 “(Solomon) sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither...And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away unto Achish...Shimei arose, and saddled his ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants... And the king...said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the LORD...on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die?... Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head... So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died. *And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon”*