

=THE LIFE OF JOSHUA=
Lesson 8
Joshua and the Cities of Refuge

AIM: to teach my pupils the plan of salvation in the story of the cities of refuge.

INTRODUCTION: The Israelites are now in the Promised Land. They have conquered all the inhabitants and have divided the land according to the plan that God had given them. The tabernacle was set up at Shiloh. Now there must be law and order, and there must be justice. A part of this justice was the establishment of what was called “the cities of refuge.” These were six cities located strategically where someone who killed accidentally could flee for safety. It must be understood that the murderer had to pay for his murder with his life. This is very plainly stated in Numbers 35:16-21. However, if someone killed another without hatred, without premeditation, accidentally, he could run or flee to one of these cities and find safety from the person or persons who would want to gain revenge by killing him. For the lesson today we will notice the teaching about these cities as told in Joshua 20. (Read it carefully, teacher, to get the details.)

POINT OF CONTACT: Take the class and act out the story. Have a pupil pretend to be the one who killed someone accidentally; have a pupil be the avenger who is running after the murderer to kill him; have some place be the city of refuge; have two people be the elders at the city, and perhaps the class will more vividly understand the story. It should be explained very carefully to the class that the entire picture represents the plan of salvation as follows:

- I. THE CITIES OF REFUGE ARE A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST.
- II. THE SLAYER IS A TYPE OF THE SINNER.
- III. THE AVENGER IS A TYPE OF THE JUSTICE OF GOD WHICH DEMANDS PENALTY FOR SIN.
(An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, etc.)
- IV. PROVISION WAS MADE FOR THE MURDERER IF HE MURDERED UNAWARES. Tell the class the provision that God has made for our salvation. Go through the Romans Road: (1) Man is a sinner. See Romans 3:10 and Romans 3:23; (2) There is a price on sin, and that price is eternal death. Read Romans 6:23 and Romans 5:12; (3) Jesus paid that price on the cross. Notice Romans 5:8; and (4) By faith in Christ we can be saved. Read Romans 10:13.
- V. THE GUILTY HAD TO BE WILLING TO GO. Notice Joshua 20:3. Though the protection was completely provided by God, the guilty party had to be willing to go. He had to flee to the city. This is also a picture of salvation. God makes the salvation, but He does not drag us to the city. We must go on our own accord.
- VI. WHEN ENTERING THE CITY, THE GUILTY ONE WAS TO MEET THE ELDERS AND DECLARE HIS CAUSE. In other words, he was to admit publicly that he was a sinner and declare his faith in the city of refuge. Notice Romans 10:9-11. When a person is saved, he is to declare that salvation publicly. (Teacher, talk here about walking the aisle and professing faith in Christ. Then talk about baptism. Stress the importance of each Christian being baptized to declare publicly his faith in Christ. Perhaps some pupil should go forward in the service this Sunday.)
- VII. THE AVENGER COULD NOT ENTER INTO THE CITY. See Joshua 20:5. Satan cannot reach us once we are in Christ, our city of refuge.
- VIII. THE GUILTY ONE COULD STAY IN THE CITY AS LONG AS THE HIGH PRIEST LIVED. Notice Joshua 20:6. Here is a wonderful truth. Jesus is our High Priest. We come to Him for salvation; we can stay in the city (salvation) as long as the High Priest liveth. The Bible says that our High Priest “ever liveth to make intercession” for us, as we read in Hebrews 7:25. Talk about security, talk about assurance, talk about safety—here it is! As long as the High Priest lives, we are saved!

- IX. THESE CITIES WERE EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL. They were not located closer to the rich than to the poor or closer to one area than to another. They were scattered strategically so that all might be close enough. Salvation is the same way; it is as much for one as the other. The same chance is given to all men that they might be saved.
- X. THE SAME PRIVILEGE WAS GIVEN TO A STRANGER OR A SOJOURNER. Notice Numbers 35:15.

CONCLUSION: Now, act it out again. Have a member of the class go through the motions of killing someone accidentally. Have one of the class members pretend to drop dead; have one of his relatives see what happened and then chase the killer. Have the killer flee. Have him tell the elders of the city it was accidental and convince them that it was. Then have the avenger also try to get in the city only to be rejected by the elders.

QUESTIONS:

1. How many cities of refuge were there?
2. Why do you think there were six instead of one?
3. Could all murderers go to the cities?
4. How long could they stay in the city?
5. What did they have to do upon entering?
6. What if a person killed someone on purpose?
7. How would you tell a person to be saved?
8. What if a stranger or a tourist accidentally killed someone?