

Elder Vernon Johnson

Numbers

Seven

Seven Cities of Refuge

The establishment of cities of refuge and their purpose and order of use are set forth in Num. 35:11-28: 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. 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.

13 And of these cities which ye shall give six cities shall ye have for refuge. 14 Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. 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.

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

19 The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. 20 But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die; 21 Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: 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.

22 But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait, 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: 24 Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments: 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.

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

There were six cities appointed as cities of refuge for the children of Israel that the man-slayer may flee unto to seek refuge from the revenger of blood. If the man-slayer slew someone by accident or without intent to do harm to the person, then he would be safe from the revenger of blood in the city of refuge. However, he must remain in the city of refuge unto the death of the High Priest.

If the man-slayer purposely slew the individual then he was to be turned over by the city to the revenger of blood that he may be slain.

While only six cities of refuge are listed in the Old Testament, yet there is a seventh set forth in the scriptures. Heb. 6:17, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 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: 19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

The Lord's church is that seventh city of refuge. It is there in the preaching of the gospel and the teaching of God's grace that we find refuge in the hope that is set forth before us. In the Old Testament cities of refuge, the innocent found refuge from the revenger of blood, whereas the guilty had no refuge. In our city of refuge, we find that the guilty find refuge in the finished work of Jesus and have an eternal refuge from the revenger of blood. Furthermore, our High Priest has already died to redeem us from sin and he ever lives to make intercession for us. Our city of refuge is far better than the six cities of the Old Testament.