

# CHAPTER 20

## INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA 20

The contents of this chapter are the renewal of the order to appoint cities of refuge for such that commit manslaughter ignorantly, to flee unto, and have shelter in from the avenger of blood, (<sup><0610></sup>Joshua 20:1-6); and the execution of this order, (<sup><0610></sup>Joshua 20:7-9).

**Ver. 1.** *The Lord also spake unto Joshua*, etc.] Out of the tabernacle, at the door of which he with the high priest and princes were; the Lord had spoken to him before concerning dividing the land among the tribes, (<sup><0610></sup>Joshua 13:1-7); and this being done he speaks to him again:

*saying*: as follows.

**Ver. 2.** *Speak to the children of Israel, saying*, etc.] Whom the affair concerned the Lord spake to Joshua about, they having now the whole land divided among them:

*appoint out for you cities of refuge*; of the name, nature, use, and number of these cities, (see Gill on "<sup><0610></sup>Numbers 35:6");

*whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses*: (<sup><0610></sup>Numbers 35:1-34) (<sup><0610></sup>Deuteronomy 19:1-21).

**Ver. 3.** *That the slayer that killeth [any] person unawares, [and] unwittingly, may flee thither*, etc.] Who through mere accident, and without design, killed a person, friend or foe, one of his own kindred, or a stranger, without any malice against him, or intention to take away his life:

*and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood*; from any of the relations of the deceased, who might be stirred up to avenge the blood of his kinsman on the slayer; (see <sup><0612></sup>Numbers 35:12).

**Ver. 4.** *And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities*, etc.] Any one of them, that was nearest to him:

*shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city*; for he might not rush in without leave:

*and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city*; lay before them the whole matter, how that he had killed a person unawares, by what means it came about, and that it was merely through error, without any malicious design, and was a mere accident:

*they shall take him into the city unto them*; directly, lest the avenger of blood should come and seize on him, and kill him; and they were to take him into the city, not only to prevent that, but to examine him still more closely about the matter, and get further satisfaction; and being satisfied, were to continue him in it:

*and give him a place, that he might dwell among them*; until his death, or the death of the high priest, if that was first. Kimchi observes from their Rabbins, that he was not to hire a house all the time of his dwelling there, but was to have one freely, because it is said, “and give him”, etc.

**Ver. 5.** *And if the avenger of blood pursue after him*, etc.] To the city of refuge, whither he is fled, and demand him:

*then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hands*; to be slain by him, but shall protect him:

*because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime*; (see Gill on “<sup><0852></sup>Numbers 35:22-23”), and (see Gill on “<sup><0896></sup>Deuteronomy 19:6”).

**Ver. 6.** *And he shall dwell in that city until he shall stand before the congregation for judgment*, etc.] That is, until his cause was heard in the court of judicature in his own city, or in any other to which the avenger of blood should appeal: (see <sup><0854></sup>Numbers 35:24,25); who if they found him guilty of death, they put him to death; but if only guilty of accidental manslaughter, then they delivered him up to his city of refuge for safety, where he was to abide

*until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days*; (see <sup><0855></sup>Numbers 35:25);

*then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled*; and live with his family in the enjoyment of his possessions and estates, honours, and privileges belonging to him, as before; (see <sup><0858></sup>Numbers 35:28).

**Ver. 7.** *And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in Mount Naphtali*, etc.] Of which (see <sup><6687></sup>Joshua 19:37); the appointment of this and the two cities following was made by the children of Israel at this time:

*and Shechem in Mount Ephraim*; called Sichem, (<sup><0126></sup>Genesis 12:6); and Shechem from a prince of that name that possessed it, (<sup><0342></sup>Genesis 34:2); it fell to the lot of the tribe of Ephraim; its name in the New Testament is Sychar, (<sup><8045></sup>John 4:5); and it is now called Neapolis, or Naplouse:

*and Kirjatharba, which [is] Hebron, in the mountain of Judah*; it stood in the hill country of Judea, (<sup><0139></sup>Luke 1:39,65); of which (see <sup><6645></sup>Joshua 14:15) (<sup><6654></sup>Joshua 15:54). There seems to be a difficulty here, since this city was before given to Caleb, (<sup><6643></sup>Joshua 14:13,14); and yet afterwards given to the Levites, and appointed a city of refuge. The Jews reconcile this by observing, that the city and suburbs were given to the Levites, and fixed for a city of refuge; but the villages and fields, and country around it, and belonging to it, were given to Caleb, (<sup><6612></sup>Joshua 21:12); and Abarbinel makes no doubt that the children of Judah gave something else to Caleb in lieu of it. As these cities of refuge were typical of Christ, as has been observed on (<sup><0829></sup>Numbers 35:29); their names are applicable to him. “Kedesh” signifies “holy” or “holiness”; Christ is holy in both his natures, divine and human; and so abundantly qualified to be the Mediator, Saviour, and Redeemer; and is the fountain of holiness to his people, and is made sanctification to them, (<sup><1960></sup>Psalm 16:10 <sup><8075></sup>Hebrews 7:26) (<sup><6013></sup>1 Corinthians 1:30); and “Shechem” signifies the “shoulder”; and not only the government of the church and people of God is on the shoulder of Christ, but all their sins have been laid upon him, and bore by him; and every particular soul in conversion, every lost sheep, is looked up by him, and taken up and brought home on his shoulder, (<sup><2396></sup>Isaiah 9:6 53:6) (<sup><6154></sup>Luke 15:4). “Hebron” signifies “fellowship”; in the effectual calling, the saints are called into fellowship with Christ, and their fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ; through him they have access to God, and communion with him now, and shall have uninterrupted communion with him to all eternity, (<sup><4009></sup>1 Corinthians 1:9 <sup><6108></sup>1 John 1:3 <sup><6028></sup>Ephesians 2:18) (<sup><8174></sup>John 17:24).

**Ver. 8.** *And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward*, etc.] In the country possessed by the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh:

*they assigned Bezer in the wilderness, upon the plain, out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh*; of these places, and the signification of their names, and of the application of them to Christ, the antitype of the cities of refuge, (see Gill on “<sup>f504</sup>Deuteronomy 4:43”). These last cities were not appointed now, they were appointed in the times of Moses, and severed by him, (<sup>f504</sup>Deuteronomy 4:41); nor are they here said to be appointed, but to be assigned or “given”<sup>f505</sup>; they were now delivered up into the hands of the Levites for cities of refuge, for they were before severed for that use; they were not, according to the Jews<sup>f506</sup>, made use of as such, until the other three were appointed.

**Ver. 9.** *These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel*, etc.] For the common use of them all, and not for that tribe only in which they stood:

*and for the stranger that sojourneth among them*; not only for the proselytes of righteousness, but for the proselytes of the gate also, as well as for the natives of Israel; Christ is a refuge for Jews and Gentiles, for all sinners that flee to him:

*that whosoever killeth any person unawares might flee thither*; and find shelter and safety:

*and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood*; getting thither before he could overtake him:

*until he stood before the congregation*: either before the congregation, the elders of the city, or court of judicature in the city of refuge, or before the court of his own city, from whence he fled, if summoned thither.