

Cities of Refuge Deuteronomy 19:1-13

I. God Revealed a Plan for the Holy Nation

A. Israel's treasures were God's to distribute as He determined. *When the LORD thy God hath cut off the nations*, whose *land the LORD thy God giveth thee*, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses; (DEUTERONOMY 19:1)

B. God designed cities for refuge until a matter could be adjudicated. Thou shalt *separate three cities* for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it. *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*. (DEUTERONOMY 19:2-3)

C. The provision was restricted to accidental death or manslaughter: the example God provides is unambiguous. . 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*; As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and *his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live*: (DEUTERONOMY 19:4,5)

D. There are genuine accidents. And *if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee*. (EXODUS 21:13)

II. God's Plan Prevented Injustice

A. The cities provided a cooling off period so that justice could not be converted into injustice. *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. Wherefore I command thee, saying, *Thou shalt separate three cities for thee*. (DEUTERONOMY 19:6-7)

1. Avengers do not get to decide their cases for themselves. 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*: (HEBREWS 6:18)

2. The victim's rights must be protected and not only his but God's rights as well. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man*. (GENESIS 9:6)

B. Cities of refuge cannot be separated from the entire Biblical commonwealth design which is expected to expand. And *if the LORD thy God enlarge thy coast, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers; if thou shalt keep all these commandments* to do them, which I command thee this day, *to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three*: (DEUTERONOMY 19:8-9)

C. The key feature is to protect innocent blood from polluting the nation. *That innocent blood be not shed in thy land*, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee. (DEUTERONOMY 19:10)

D. Let the wicked rush to their proper place: The pit. *A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.* (PROVERBS 28:17)

E. Life is too uncertain to treat all killers as a single category. *For man also knoweth not his time:* as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are ***the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.*** (ECCLESIASTES 9:12)

III. Refuge Cities Preserved Justice

A. Murderers could not obtain refuge. But ***if any man hate his neighbour,*** and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, ***and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities:*** 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.*** (DEUTERONOMY 19:11-12)

B. Murder cannot be excused; justice demands the full penalty. And ***he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.*** (LEVITICUS 24:17)

C. Securing justice for innocent blood is a matter of national security. *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.*** (DEUTERONOMY 19:13)

D. When murder goes unpunished, the land becomes polluted. So *ye shall not pollute the land* wherein ye are: ***for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein,*** but by the blood of him that shed it. ***Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell:*** for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel. (NUMBERS 35:33-34)