

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 15 (April 9-15, 2017)

In 2016, I used weeks 11-15 to do a thorough study of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You may want to review those lessons during the current Holy Week. Jesus' death and resurrection provide us with the ultimate Sanctuary City (Heaven, see John 14:1-3)). Since sanctuary cities for illegal aliens is a hot political topic in our country, I will show you what God's Word says on the subject in this week's devotions.

Sunday, April 9 (read Numbers 35:1-8)

Six of the towns you give the Levites will be cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone may flee. (Numbers 35:6a)

At face value, it would seem that the printed verse, which establishes the cities of refuge, endorses today's **sanctuary cities** harboring those who are in our country illegally. A closer examination will tell a different story, however. We saw last week that God has established the government to **enact** and **enforce** the laws of this country, even to the right of execution. Originally, the Levites were designated by God to teach the laws and to judge the people according to the Word of God. God gave them no inheritance in the land other than the cities and surrounding pasturelands, so they lived on the contributions of other citizens (v. 1-5). Another point from this text is that **all the tribes** contributed in this distribution of land to the Levites (v. 8). Of course, the larger tribes contributed the most, but everyone gave a similar percentage. America could learn a lot simply by returning to God's Word.

Monday, April 10 (read Numbers 36:9-15)

They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that a person accused of murder may not die before he stands trial before the assembly. (Numbers 35:12)

The purpose of these cities of refuge was to provide a safe place for the accused to live until he stood trial before the Levites. Unlike yesterday's printed verse, today's text introduces the word "accidentally" into the equation (v. 11, 15). The deceased's family members assigned someone (called the avenger) to hunt down the person responsible for the death of a loved one in order to take his life. The places of refuge prevented the accused from being executed without a trial (v. 12). As a side thought, I often talk about the difference between "oops" sins and willful defiance. Jesus covers the "oops" sins on Calvary when He says, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Are you dealing with the willful sins in your life?

Tuesday, April 11 (read Numbers 35:16-21)

The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death. (Numbers 35:19)

The text we are using deals only with murders, but it has an application for all crimes. Today's passage deals with those who **intentionally** take another's life. God does not spare the death penalty in those cases. The accused person murders the victim with full knowledge aforethought, whether he uses an iron object, a stone, or a wooden object, or an intentional shove (v. 16-20). In all cases, he harms the person out of his hostility (v. 21). In other words, the guilty party cannot find safe harbor in a city of refuge, because he has clearly broken a law. Unlike this example, the people finding safe harbor in **today's** sanctuary cities are in America **illegally**; therefore, they are guilty of breaking our law by entering the country illegally. They may or may not be criminals by breaking other laws, but none of them is innocent. Are we a nation of laws or do we support anarchy? That's the vital question!

Wednesday, April 12 (read Numbers 35:22-25)

The assembly must protect the one accused of murder from the avenger of blood and send him back to the city of refuge to which he fled. (Numbers 35:25a)

Today's text deals with a person who **accidentally** kills someone **without hostility** (v. 22). The accused stands before a civil court and is judged by the assembly of Levites. A modern example would be someone who blows a tire while driving the speed limit, causing him to swerve into the other lane and striking another vehicle, causing a death. Compare that to a drunk, who is driving too fast, striking another car and causing a death. Both are tragedies, but the latter is definitely the fault of the drunk driver. In this text, the city of refuge will be the home of the innocent killer until the death of the high priest of Israel. He is not allowed to go back to the place where the murder took place, but the avenger of blood is not allowed to pursue him to the city of refuge. We will see the spiritual application of this in the next three devotions.

Thursday, April 13 (read Numbers 35:26-30)

The accused must stay in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest; only after the death of the high priest may he return to his own property. (Numbers 35:28)

Even though the accused man did not intend to murder his victim, he is protected **only** in the city of refuge. If he returns to his homeland prior to the death of the high priest, the avenger of blood can legally kill him (v. 26-28). No person can be convicted on the testimony of only one witness, however (v. 30). Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15 tell us that there must be two or three witnesses. This protects the person from being falsely accused by a hostile witness. In one of my previous church denominations, the minister could be immediately dismissed upon any large or small accusation from a member. Powerful men of God could be removed because of one angry parishioner. For this reason, God required several witnesses before a man could be accused and convicted.

Friday, April 14 (read Numbers 35:31-34)

Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it. (Numbers 35:33b)

The unintentional murderer is not allowed to have someone pay a ransom in order for him to return to his land before the high priest dies (v. 32). No matter much money is offered for his release, he cannot buy his way back into the good graces of the family he has hurt. His own blood is required to make atonement for the land that has been polluted. Are you seeing the parallel between this legal requirement and the gospel of Jesus Christ? Jesus, our High Priest, has already died, both for our "oops" sins and our willful sins. He cannot die again! He purchased our place in the ultimate Sanctuary City, Heaven itself (see John 14:1-3). Tomorrow, we will look at a New Testament passage to amplify this truth.

Saturday, April 15 (read Hebrews 9:11-15)

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised inheritance—now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:15)

The Old Testament sacrifices cleansed the worshipper **outwardly** according to the law, but they did nothing to change the person (v. 13). The blood of Christ, however, permanently pays the penalty for our sins, but He doesn't stop there. He sends His Holy Spirit to abide within the believer so that He can change the sinner's life through the power of God, allowing him to serve the Lord in an acceptable manner (v. 14). Only the blood of Jesus could have accomplished that feat (v. 12)! Therefore, "Christ is the mediator of a new covenant," a **permanent** covenant, because it is based on His promise, not on our performance. Praise Him for providing a Sanctuary City where your mansion awaits, because Calvary covers it all!