

People on the Move the Book of Numbers Lesson 13 4Q 2009

Cities of Refuge

What is your understanding of the cities of refuge?

Did God have more in mind with these cities than just the obvious protection from retribution? As we try to understand the meaning of these cities does context matter? What do you think of a man taking a sharp knife and cutting a child? What if the man is a surgeon seeking to save the child's life? Does context matter?

When we read about the cities of refuge how do we understand the context?

- The plan of life that God gave to Israel was intended as an object lesson for all mankind. If these principles were carried out today, what a different place this world would be! {MH 188.4}
- Had the Israelites obeyed the instruction they received, and profited by their advantages, they would have been the world's object lesson of health and prosperity. The Israelites failed of fulfilling God's purpose, and thus failed of receiving the blessings that might have been theirs. 9T 165

Do you agree with this? Disagree? Why?

Do these passages give us any ideas about context? What was the object lesson the cities were designed to teach? Keep this in mind as we explore the lesson.

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "Though God was faithful..." – thoughts?

They still refused to trust, refused to act in faith, despite witnessing dramatic manifestations of God's power – any thoughts about this?

What is trust based upon? When you consider those people who you genuinely trust is it the people you believe to be the most powerful? When you see the playground bully beat up other kids and are convinced he is the most powerful does that cause you to trust him?

Some would argue that the President of the United States is the most powerful person on the planet. If someone occupies a seat of power does that cause you to trust them? When Hitler was in power was he trustworthy?

Does possessing power and exercising power obtain for God the desire of His heart? What is the desire of God's heart?

- This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 1Tim 2:3,4
- Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Dt 6:5
- But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul." Josh 22:5

God wants all His children to come back into a loving, trusting friendship with Him. Can He achieve this by the exercise of power?

- Flood – they rebelled and built a tower
- Plagues of Egypt – worshipped golden calf
- Earthquake Korah et al – next day rebellion of the camp
- Mt Carmel – people back into idolatry and rebellion
- Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead – immediately they plotted to kill Him
- Jesus put on Malchus' ear – they bound Him and crucified Him

Why does might and power not work? What does work?

- Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zech 4:6

How does the Spirit work? By a revelation of truth and love. What wins you to trust someone?

- The kindness of God leads us to repentance – Romans 2:4

So, in our object lesson – the nation of Israel, God uses power to deliver them and also discipline and what happens? Do they trust Him more? Then why did He do it?

Any parents want to give an example? Have you ever had to use might and power with your child? Does it instantly result in greater trust? Or often is the initial reaction one of anger, opposition and rebellion? Does it sometimes take years before they trust – and do they sometimes never trust? Then why do loving parents use might and power? Because of the need of the child!

SUNDAY

The last sentence of the first paragraph states, “The Lord wanted them, and future generations, never to forget that the whole story of the Hebrew people on the move in the wilderness, was, really, the story about God and His dealings with sinful human beings in an effort to save them and to bring them to the Promised Land.”

Yes, the story is about God and His dealing with humans to not only bring the ancient people to the Promised Land but to teach, as an object lesson, His plan of salvation for humanity!

Read last paragraph, “Compromise with the world...” thoughts? What does this look like today?

Is it –

- Jewelry

- Cosmetics
- Clothing
- Diet

Is this what it looks like to compromise with the world or something else?

Who was closer to the world, the woman caught in adultery or the men who brought her before Christ? Whose heart was open to be reached by Christ? Could people like the woman caught in adultery not be compromising with the world, but suffering under the sickness of the world?

Does compromise with the world look like something else and if so what?

- How about the schools we send our children to? Does it matter?
 - Do we choose schools with the primary focus of having the child know God and develop Christlike character or do we choose schools with the primary purpose of giving our children earthly advantage?
- What is the world's perspective on God? Does the world teach that natural disasters are acts of God? Are they?
 - "I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but in this way; "They place themselves beyond His protection. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them. "It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at

work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of."

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- Do we compromise with the world by incorporating into our beliefs the worldly views of God? Any examples of worldly views of God?
 - God inflicting torture and death on the wicked
 - God who needs to be appeased
 - God who can't stand to look at a sinner so looks at His Son
 - God who is arbitrary
 - God who decides who is saved and who is lost
 - A God who is prejudiced, favors one genetic group over another, favors one country more than another, loves His friends and not His enemies thus the poor and ill are cursed of God.

MONDAY

Read the last paragraph, "The Levites..." thoughts? What lesson is being taught by scattering the Levites throughout the entire nation?

What were the Levites to do for the people? Be God's representatives to continually teach the people about God. After the Babylonian captivity the Levites acted as supervisors for the construction of the temple and instructed the people in religious matters.

What application does this have for us?

How can we instruct people on the rebuilding of the temple? Would it include:

- Principles of healthy living?
- Avoiding mind damaging media?
- Studying God's word?
- Presenting the truth about God?
- Ministry of giving to others?

- Helping our fellow church members in crisis?
- Others?
 - What can we do to further spread this gospel message?
 - Our class sponsors Simple Solutions radio program – Just found out this week that we are now the number one rated radio program on the life talk network! And we are still growing – Thank you for all who support this ministry
 - Another avenue, which doesn't cost money is our website and facebook page. Encourage your friends to become a fan of our comeandreason facebook page. This is a great networking tool to help bring people together and share this message. In two weeks we already have over 230 fans from all over the US and more than 8 countries around the world.

How do we as a group here in Collegedale come into the unity of fellowship that God designed? What needs to happen in our lives here? What prevents us from experiencing such oneness?

TUESDAY

Cities of Refuge – what were they and what were they designed to do for the people at that time? What lessons do we draw from them in regard to the plan of salvation?

If someone accidentally killed another person they could run to the city of refuge to have his case heard. If it was determined that he had no malice and it was an accident then he could live in the city until the High Priest died without fear of reprisal from the one seeking blood vengeance. However, if he left the city before the death of the current High Priest he could be killed by the one seeking blood vengeance. Once the High Priest died he could return to his own land without fear of reprisal. But someone who committed premeditated murder could not use the cities as refuge and was to be stoned. (Numbers 35:9-21).

Thoughts? What is the object lesson?

Our quarterly in Thursday's lesson states, "the parallel is not exact, because our understanding of the Cross is that even those who have committed premeditated sin, even murder, can be forgiven by the Lord."

Thoughts about this? Agree, disagree?

The cities of refuge were part of the Levitical cities and represented Christ. Sinners can find refuge in Christ from death that comes from sin. We could only truly be free once our High Priest came and finished His mission, which means gives His life to save us. If we leave Christ we will be lost as sin will still destroy us.

What about the premeditated murderer? Can he find refuge in Christ? Then why couldn't they run to the cities of refuge? Did God somehow make an inadequate teaching tool?

Read last paragraph "Some people..." thoughts? What is seriously flawed with this logic? Notice how the lesson states that the gospel of Christ doesn't mean crime goes unpunished, even if someone repents.

What do you think about the idea that heinous crimes should be punished by society and this is what God was doing setting up social justice standards?

Let's examine some of the crimes God instructed should carry the death penalty:

- "Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. ¹³ However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate. ¹⁴ But if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death.
- ¹⁵ "Anyone who attacks his father or his mother must be put to death.
- ¹⁶ "Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death.

- ¹⁷ “Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death. Exodus 21:12-17, Lev 20:9
- “If a bull gores a man or a woman to death, the bull must be stoned to death, and its meat must not be eaten. But the owner of the bull will not be held responsible. ²⁹ If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull must be stoned and the owner also must be put to death. ³⁰ However, if payment is demanded of him, he may redeem his life by paying whatever is demanded Exodus 21:28-30
- ¹⁹ “Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must be put to death.
- ²⁰ “Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the LORD must be destroyed. Exodus 22:19,20
- Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. ¹⁵ For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. Exodus 31:14, 15
- The LORD said to Moses, ² “Say to the Israelites: ‘Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. Lev 20:1,2
- “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death. Lev 20:10
- “If a man sleeps with his father’s wife, he has dishonored his father. Both the man and the woman must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. Lev 20:11
- “If a man sleeps with his daughter-in-law, both of them must be put to death. What they have done is a perversion; their blood will be on their own heads.
- ¹³ “If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

- ¹⁴ “If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it is wicked. Both he and they must be burned in the fire, so that no wickedness will be among you.
 - ¹⁵ “If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he must be put to death, and you must kill the animal.
 - ¹⁶ “If a woman approaches an animal to have sexual relations with it, kill both the woman and the animal. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. Lev 20:12-16
 - If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, ² and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, “Let us follow other gods” (gods you have not known) “and let us worship them,” ³ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. ⁵ That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God... Dt 13:1-5
- Murder
 - Battery
 - Kidnapping
 - Reckless homicide or involuntary manslaughter
 - Bestiality
 - Idolatry
 - Sabbath breaking
 - Infanticide
 - Verbal abuse of parents
 - Adultery
 - Homosexuality
 - Clairvoyance

What do you think about this? Would you like a society in which everyone of these “crimes” was met with the death penalty? Is the quarterly right that God was making a distinction between His

character of love, forgiveness and grace and how society should operate?

When Jesus said,

- “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’^a ³⁹ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. Mt 5:38-42

Was Jesus talking about their civil law or not? How do we understand the OT laws?

What is the context? What kind of people are receiving these laws? Are these laws representative of God’s ideal? Do they demonstrate God’s true standard? Do they represent what God does to sinners?

- God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—Romans 3:25

What is the punishment for sin? Death – sleep death or eternal death? What was being given in the OT? Was this the punishment for sin? No, the punishment for sin was left unpunished so that God could demonstrate His righteousness in resolving or curing the sin problem!

Let’s consider further the idea that God was setting up social justice:

- What is the reason society punishes crime?
 - To keep society safe

^a Exodus 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21

- Other reasons?
- What if a person has a change of heart, repents, is no longer a person who is a danger to society – someone like king David – wouldn't he deserve the death penalty? Did he get it?
- What about Manasseh? Sacrificed his son to Molech – what did God do to Manasseh after he repented?
- What should society do with an 85 y/o man whose wife of 63 years has a major stroke and is comatose on a ventilator and he, in harmony with her wishes, poisons her to end her life, and himself. She dies, he doesn't, should we take him out and stone him?

Then how do we understand the fact premeditated murderers couldn't run to the cities of refuge? Remember the cities represent Christ – therefore the crime of murder represents what? Why could premeditated murderers not run to the cities for refuge?

Does Jesus give us any insight?:

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44

If the cities represent Jesus then what does the person who kills accidentally represent and those who murder with premeditation? Satan is a murderer how? He lies about God. How do lies about God murder? They sever our relationship with Him. Then murderers represent those who believe lies about God and purposely tell lies about God. They can find no refuge in Christ but will die.

However, those who were born in sin and suffer the result of what sin has done to humanity, and have experienced and caused injury to others, yet don't hold to lies about God can find healing and salvation in Christ! – thoughts?

WEDNESDAY

Middle question, “Even though...” thoughts?

Even though it isn't our fault we were born into sin, we still have a terminal condition that unless cured will kill us. Without the death of Jesus, our High Priest, there is no remedy for sin therefore we can never leave this world of sin. But once Christ finished His mission a remedy exists and those who are hidden with Christ will leave this world of sin.

Last question, “Why do you think...” thoughts

THURSDAY

Read the first paragraph, “The cities of refuge...” thoughts?

Who can take you out of the hands of Christ? Only yourself.

FRIDAY

Questions 3 and 4 read and discuss