

INTRODUCTION: NUMBERS 35

- Israel is at the end of their journey through the wilderness
- We've made a parallel between the betrothal of a bride and groom and the betrothal of Israel to God
- Numbers 1-6 God presents Israel with the Ketubah, the Covenant of marriage and in Numbers 6:24-27 God offers the Mohar (dowry)

This is famously known as the Aaronic Blessing

Numbers 6:24–27 (NKJV)

²⁴ "The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; ²⁶ The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace." ' ²⁷ "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

- In Numbers 7-8, Israel accepts the Ketubah by drawing near to God through the offerings
- Whenever you see the word offering you should think... draw near
- This is the most important thing to God... He wants us to draw near to Him, to live in His Presence for all eternity
- The wilderness is a time of preparation for the wedding day... which will happen in Joshua 8 at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim
- They learn to be led by God through (cloud by day and the fire by night – Numbers 9:16)
- They learn to depend on God (manna and water in the desert – Numbers 11:7)
- They learn to draw near to God (offerings – Numbers 7) and love God (worship – Numbers 10:35-36)
- They learn to use their ONLY weapon (prayer – Numbers 21:7)
- They learn God's thoughts towards them (He delights in them – Numbers 14:8)

Now... they are on the border of the Promised Land

- God instructs them to build 6 cities of refuge
- They were distributed throughout the land... easily accessible by all
- A city of refuge was a place where you could escape to if you committed involuntary manslaughter (killed someone by accident)
- In the pagan cultures of the near east, there were unwritten laws about avenging the death of a loved one... whether by accident or on purpose

- It was considered defending the family honor and you could never stop looking for the murderer until you avenged their death
- This culture still exists in tribal cultures around the world to this day
- In some cultures, if you could not catch the murderer you go after their family...
- In other cultures, you go after the entire family... like the Godfather
- So if you were being chased by Don Corleone, you could flee to the city of refuge
- As long as you were in the city of refuge you were protected from the avenger (as long as it was an accidental death)

In many ways, these cities are a type of Christ

- Man is guilty of murder (knowingly or unknowingly) and the law condemns man to death

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

²³ For the wages of sin *is* death

All of us are being pursued by the avenger, the angel of death

- The statistics on death are astounding
- 1 out of ever 1 person dies
- It doesn't matter how many vitamins you take, how healthy you eat, how much you exercise, how many anti-aging treatments you have
- There is an appointed time for every person to die
- Or as Numbers 32:23 says... be sure... your sin will find you out

However, death is not the final judgment

Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

After death there is another judgment

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- Every man will give account of himself to God (Romans 14:12)

- Because all have sinned, all are guilty of murder... all will be judged

You might say but I haven't killed anyone. How am I guilty of murder?

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- Jesus, an innocent life, was murdered because of your sin so you could be forgiven and released from the guilt of murder
- **NOTE:** It wasn't the Roman soldiers or the Jewish High Priests that killed Jesus it was your sin, my sin
- Therefore, all are guilty of the murder of an innocent life and God will avenge His death

But God isn't willing that anyone should perish

- So God has provide a place of refuge for man in Jesus
- He is within reach of everyone... all who call upon the name of the LORD will be saved
- You can flee to Him and be safe
- As long as you abide in Christ you are FREE from the guilt of murder

NOW... The names of the 6 cities are given in Joshua 20:7-8

- Kadesh (keh'-des), Shechem (seh-kem'), Hebron (heb-ron'), Bezer (beh'-ser), Ramoth (ray-moat') and Golan (gay-lon)
- The names of the cities are significant

Kadesh means "holy place or righteousness"

Jeremiah 23:6 (NKJV)

⁶ In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this *is* His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

- When the avenger threatens and accuses you of your sin... you can simply say you're right, I am guilty, but the LORD is my righteousness.
- I do not stand on my own goodness and I do not fall on my badness
- I am abiding in the goodness of Jesus and I am accepted because He lives in me and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me

Shechem means "shoulder" which is a place of strength and safety

Isaiah 59:1 (NKJV)

59 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.

- Jesus alone is mighty to save and He alone has the power to bring us to and keep us in safety
- You cannot save yourself, you cannot attract God's favor through good works, you cannot earn a good standing with God through performance
- Salvation is a free gift and can only be received by faith

Hebron means "fellowship"

- Through Christ we are brought into fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ our Lord

John 14:23 (NKJV)

²³ Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

- This is the most important thing to God
- God wants to fellowship with you... God wants you to live in His Presence
- He doesn't want you to be separated from Him

Bezer means "strong hiding place"

Colossians 3:3 (NKJV)

³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

- What does this mean? My life is hidden with Christ
- The Bible says the enemy is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour and as long as you are hidden in Christ, the enemy can't find you
- You are safe!

Ramoth means "high place"

Ephesians 2:4–6 (NKJV)

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

- One of the hardest concepts for us to grasp is the truth that we are not earthly people, but heavenly people
- This is not our life, our life is in heaven in Christ Jesus
- Does that mean we ignore life on earth? Neglect life on earth?
- No! But we do live this life on earth as heavenly people, not earthly people which means we live as overcomers, as rulers not victims and slaves

Golan means “enclosure for captives”

- It's a refuge for those who have been set free from captivity

Isaiah 61:1 (NKJV)

61 “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound;

- Jesus is a place of healing, a place of restoration, a place of safety for those He sets FREE and whom the Son sets FREE is FREE indeed

If you put the names of the cities together to form a message

Jesus is our refuge... He alone is our righteousness... He alone has power to save us from death and bring us into fellowship with God which is a safe place, a heavenly place and place of freedom from captivity

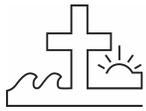
- Christ alone is our city of refuge... no other city can protect you from the avenger
- The city of religion, philosophy, baptism, church attendance, spirituality, good words, charity... they cannot protect us from the avenger
- As long as you abide in Jesus, you are protected from the avenger

You might ask... but what if a man does not abide in Christ?

John 15:6 (NKJV)

⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

- There is only ONE REFUGE, ONE SAFE PLACE... Jesus



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