

The Wednesday Word , August 18,2021: The Cities of Refuge (Part 2)

“Then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there. (Numbers 35:11).

In Joshua 20:7-8, they appointed six cities to which a person, guilty of manslaughter, could flee for refuge. When inside the city, the guilty person was safe. As you remember, from last week, each city, in its name, gives us a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus.

Last time we considered the city of Kedesh and in it saw Christ as our Holiness. This time let's think about Christ, our Shechem.

2) **Shechem.**

What does the name Shechem tell us about Christ? In the Hebrew language, Shechem means 'shoulder.' A shoulder is often used for carrying things and so it is that Jesus carries His people.

Moses speaks of God conducting the children of Israel through the wilderness as a man carries his weak and weary child (see Deuteronomy 1:31). Carrying is the kind of thing the Almighty does. And David knows something of this carrying for he says, "I am poor and needy; yet the LORD thinks upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer (Psalm 40:17). Yes indeed, we are helped, we are delivered, we are carried by the Lord. Jesus is our Shechem!

Jesus is the true Shechem. It was prophesied of Him that *“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows”* (Isaiah 53:4). This prophecy was fulfilled by Christ at Calvary. Literally, our sins have been lifted off us and carried away by Him.

This lifting and taking away is a fact. Think of Him in the garden of Gethsemane when the pressure of our sins was coming upon Him. See the drops of blood falling from His brow (Luke 22:44)! What immense pressure! By the way, only Jesus could have carried such an awful load and burden as this. Neither angel nor archangel could have carried this. But Jesus, being the God/Man, was alone "able to save unto the uttermost" because His shoulders, as it were, could sustain the entire weight of the sins of His people.

Another way of seeing Jesus as our Shechem is in Isaiah 9:6. There we read that the *“The government shall be upon His shoulder.”* This indicates that Jesus, the God/Man, whether we see it or not, is ruling all things in heaven and earth.

Let's break that down. Simply speaking, it means the Lord Jesus, right this moment, is graciously in charge of our lives. He is able to carry and bear those things that weigh us down. The poorest and weakest of believers are welcome in Shechem. He can bear the entire weight of His people. Right this moment, He is loving, caring and providing for us all. Food, clothing, health, sickness, difficulties, strength, friends and home, are all gifts from Him. He is our Shechem. He can be trusted!

So, what should we do in times of trial? We are invited to flee to the city of refuge, the Lord Jesus, our Shechem, and remember that He bears us on His shoulders!

You say, 'I'm too far gone to even flee. Then consider the New Testament picture of Jesus, the good Shepherd, carrying the lost lamb back home. That poor creature had gone astray but the great and gracious Shepherd had gone after it and found it; and when He found it, He laid it on His shoulders rejoicing and brought it back to the fold (Luke 15:4-5).

What wonderful security and safety we have in the Lord Jesus. Just as the guilty one, back in Israel, was safe inside the city of refuge so the believer, today, is safe in Christ. We can say in full confidence, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; because thou, Lord, only makes me to dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8).

He is our Shechem.

And that's the Gospel Truth!