

The Church, Our City  
Of Refuge  
Joshua 20:1-7

# Introduction

- Canaan in scripture is not a symbolic picture of Heaven. The song, “I am Bound for the Promised Land” has “Biblical Issues.” *“On Jordan’s stormy banks ... and cast a wishful eye. To Canaan’s fair and happy land where my possessions lie”*
- Canaan is not to be interpreted as symbolic of where we go after we die
- Canaan is really a symbolic picture of “Victorious Christian Living” in the Here and Now!
- Remember, Canaan was inhabited by the enemy then; and it is a territory where we are challenged by the enemy today
- Think about the song, “Camping in Canaan’s Happy Land?”  
Are we “Camping in it” or “Camping towards it?”

I suggest to you that Christians are in the Land of Canaan right now! (Canaan was a place of battles, unlike Heaven, none)

We’ve travelled from sinful bondage into Christian living

## In Canaan the Children of Israel Were a Nation in a New Land and Needed Laws to Settle Disputes

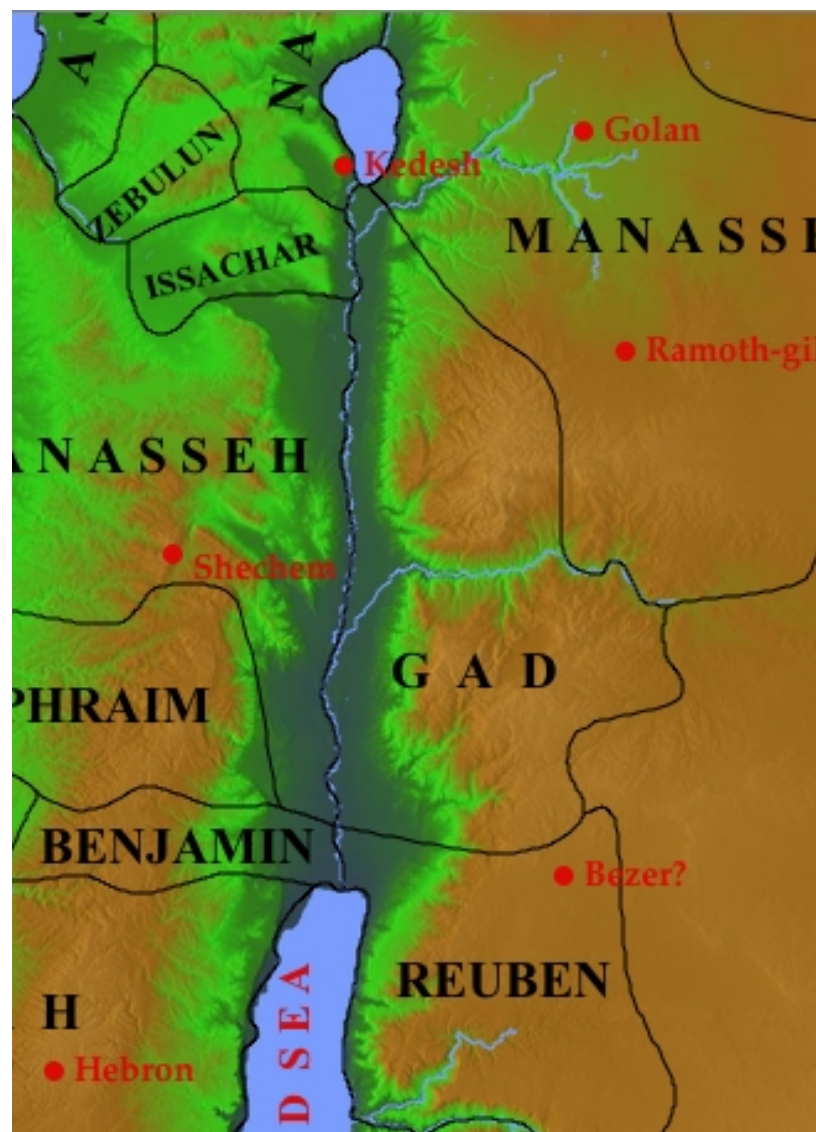
- God, through Joshua, set up laws that had to be fair to all the Israelites who now owned these lands. The Cities of Refuge (C.O.R.) were one of these laws: Joshua 20:1-4

*Then the Lord said to Joshua, “tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed you through Moses, so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood. When they flee to one of these cities, they are to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state their case before the elders of that city. Then the elders are to admit the fugitive into their city and provide a place to live among them.*

- The “Avenger of Blood” — Next of kin whose duty it was to avenge justice for the family, Lev. 24:17-22; Deut. 19:11-12

*... If the avenger of blood comes in pursuit, the elders must not surrender the fugitive, because the fugitive killed their neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought. They are to stay in that city until they have stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then they may go back to their own home in the town from which they fled.”*

Joshua 20:5-6



## #1 God is Merciful

- God recognized that accidents happen in the lives of His people. How often are we involved in accidents and unintentional mistakes?
- God knows wrongdoing can be intentional or unintentional, Heb 4:12
- God allowed the accused to flee to the C.O.R. until they had a trial-by-assembly and until the High Priest died. We become free from our past sins due to the death of our High Priest, Jesus, Christ no matter the sin.

## What Do We Learn About God From the Cities of Refuge?



## #2 The Cities of Refuge Were Appointed By God

- A man who accidentally killed another man couldn't just flee to any city for safety (it had to be a God-Ordained city)
- That's why any Church won't do! It has to be one designated by God and that abides in God's Holy Word, 2 John 9
- That's why the Berean Jews in Acts 17:11 were commended by the word of God:

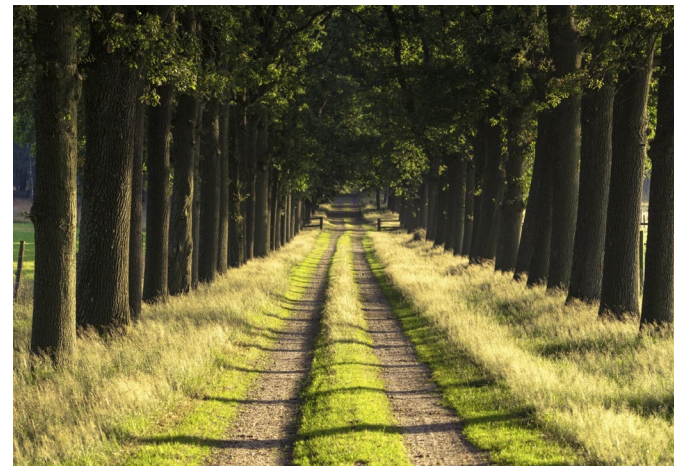
*“These (Bereans) were more noble (had better character) than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”*

- They had “the audacity” to compare what the apostle Paul was saying with the word of God (the scriptures), to see if Paul was “legitimate!”



- So if anyone left their plow or another obstacle in the road, it might prevent getting to the C.O.R. quickly
- Christians are to keep their roads (lives) clear, so that others don't stumble over us trying to get to safety.
- *"... no man should put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." Romans 14:13*

### #3 The Roads to The Cities of Refuge Had to be Kept Clear for a Manslayer to Find His Way Deuteronomy 19:3



## #4 If the Manslayer Was Caught Outside the City He Could Be Killed. If He Was Inside, He Was Safe

- It was very important to follow the Law: Get to the City of Refuge and Stay Inside! (don't be lazy, your life is at stake)
- "Hanging around the City" didn't save you but inside you were safe
- "Hanging around members of the body of Christ," won't save you (Husband, Wife, Children, Parents) Matthew 24:40-41, "two men in the field or two women grinding at the mill, one taken and one left"
- Your relationship with Christ in the Body of Christ, which is your City of Refuge, will save you

*"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." 2 Timothy 2:10*

- Baptism puts one into Christ, our City of Refuge, Gal. 3:27



# An Example of the Tragedy of Hanging Around the City But Not In, Is the Death of Abner

- The House of David and the House of Saul were rivals for the Throne of Israel and they fought against each other, 2 Samuel chapters 2 and 3
- There were 3 Israelite soldiers who were blood brothers in the House of David (Joab, Abishai, and Asahel)
- Abner, the Chief Commander in the House of Saul, murdered Asahel and set up residence in Hebron, a City of Refuge
- Sometime later, Joab, Asahel's brother, travelled to Hebron and asked Abner to come beside the gated city, ostensibly for a private conversation 2 Samuel 3
- HE THEN PLUNGED A KNIFE INTO HIS STOMACH TO AVENGE HIS BROTHER'S BLOOD (He was *around* but not *in* the C.O.R.)

# #5 The Body Of Christ is Our City of Refuge!

## There Is One Key Difference

- In the Book of Joshua, only the “accidental killer” could find refuge from the sentence of death
- In the Body of Christ, guilty sinners like us who have sinned willfully, still have the privilege to find refuge in Christ
- In Acts 2, when Peter preached the first gospel sermon, he accused his audience of, “The Intentional Murder of Jesus Christ the Son of God!”

*“Ye men of Israel hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, ... Him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up ....”*

*Acts 2:24*

# Jesus Christ Died For Our Intentional and Unintentional Sins

***“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.***

***For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again according to the scriptures;”***

**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**

# The Plan of Salvation

**Hear the Gospel**

**Acts 15:7**

**Believe the Gospel**

**Acts 15:7**

**Repent of Sins**

**Acts 17:30**

**Confess Christ**

**Acts 8:37**

**Be Baptized**

**Acts 8:38**

