26-1108p Transcript

26-1108p - *Cities of Refuge, John Nousek*

Bible Reader: Mike Mathis

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Cities of Refuge

Scripture Reading

Scripture Reading (0:04 - 2:33): Mike Mathis **John 21:1-14**: (0:04) The scripture reading for tonight is taken from Numbers, the 35th chapter, verses 6 through 12, (0:17) which reads, and I'm reading from the New King James Version, (0:24) Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites, you shall appoint six cities of refuge, to which a manslayer may flee, and to these you shall add forty-two cities. (0:50) So all the cities you will give to the Levites shall be forty-eight. These you shall give with their common land. (1:06) And the cities which you will give shall be from the possession of the children of Israel. (1:15) From the larger tribe you shall give many, from the smaller you	**continued** shall give few. Each shall give some of its cities to the Levites, in proportion to the inheritance that each receives. (1:40) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you will appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you. (2:03) That the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there. They shall be cities of refuge for you from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment. (2:31) That completes the reading. (2:33)

Transcript (0:04 - 33:20), Preacher: John Nousek

(2:37) Well, good night. It is a good night. (2:41) Thank you, Mike, for reading that.

(2:44) So tonight's sermon is entitled Cities of Refuge. (2:50) So we just heard in Numbers 35. (2:55) There's another passage related to this.

It's in Joshua 20. (3:00) It actually names the six cities of refuge. (3:05) And we'll get there in a moment.

(3:08) But surprise, surprise, you know, you get what you ask for. (3:14) You ask an accountant to come up here and speak to you, and I'm reading from the book of Numbers. (3:20) So there you have it.

(3:24) So now, you heard from verse 6 on, and this is what I want to talk to you about. (3:35) I want to talk to you about the six cities of refuge. (3:39) See, I've kind of couched the subject, right? (3:44) So we're at the point where the Israelites are about to cross into the [promised] land.

(3:50) Forty years, wandering around in the desert. (3:54) Following the flames [pillar of fire by] night and the cloud by day. (4:00) And God has taken them all over the place.

(4:04) And now, finally, it's time to cross. (4:09) But wait. (4:11) Special instruction.

(4:14) Okay, listen up. (4:16) So each of the tribes of Israel are going to be given (4:22) a portion of

land in the promised land. (4:27) And they are to each have a designated area, except for one group.

(4:36) The Levites. (4:37) See, the Levites have a special purpose. (4:40) They're to serve at the temple and do many other things related to that.

(4:46) They're not given a specific region. (4:49) Instead, they're given, as we just heard, 48 different cities. (4:55) Places where the Canaanites live and occupy currently in that moment.

(5:03) And they're going to be driven out. (5:06) And the Levites are being given those areas, those cities, to occupy for themselves. (5:13) Kind of sprinkled amongst the other regions of the promised land.

(5:19) So that's where we're at. (5:22) Okay. (5:23) So in verse 9 in chapter [35] of Numbers, it reads, (5:32) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, (5:34) Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, (5:36) When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, (5:39) then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, (5:44) that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there.

(5:51) They shall be cities of refuge for you from the avenger, (5:56) that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment. (6:06) So this is not a situation where folks are taking law into their own hands. (6:13) The vigilante, you killed someone, and maybe there's not a dispute over that.

(6:19) These things happen intentionally sometimes, but sometimes they happen accidentally. (6:25) That's a true statement. (6:27) So before we get too carried away, there's going to be a trial.

(6:31) That's the setting. (6:34) Verse 13 goes on. (6:36) And of the cities which I give, you shall have six cities of refuge.

(6:42) You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan, (6:46) and three cities you shall appoint in the land of Canaan, (6:51) which will be cities of refuge. (6:54) So, wait a minute. (6:57) They're about to cross the promised land, I thought.

(7:00) They're going to take on all these different areas, (7:03) drive out the Canaanites, (7:06) and we're going to set up these six cities of refuge according to what God's Word says. (7:11) Well, why do I have three on one side of the river and three on the other side of the river? (7:18) Well, see, the answer to that lies in Numbers 32. (7:25) In Numbers chapter 32, Reuben, Gad, and what is called the half-tribe of Manasseh, (7:35) they've already been promised land on the east side of the Jordan.

(7:45) It says in Numbers 32, verse 1, (7:49) Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock. (7:54) And when they saw the land of [Jazer] and the land of Gilead, (7:58) that indeed the region was a place for livestock, (8:01) the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses. (8:08) To Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the congregation, saying, (8:15) I'll drop down to verse 4, (8:17) The country which the Lord defeated before the congregation of Israel is a land for livestock.

(8:24) And your servants have livestock. (8:30) Therefore they said, (8:32) If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession. (8:36) Do not take us over the Jordan.

(8:43) Oh. (8:45) Those guys don't want to go. (8:48) The land here is good enough.

Come on. (8:51) Ugh. (8:53) So there's some back and forth now.

(8:56) And in the interest of time, I will just tell you. (9:00) There's a deal is struck. (9:03) So Moses agrees to give them a portion that is on the east side of the Jordan River.

(9:12) However. (9:14) Part of the deal is you're still going with us over the river. (9:19) After the Canaanites have been rooted out and removed, (9:24) you can come back.

(9:26) But you're going with us. (9:30) This is Numbers 32 verse 33. (9:33) So Moses gave to the children of Gad, (9:37) to the children of Reuben, (9:39) and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, (9:43) the son of Joseph, (9:44) the kingdom of Sihon, (9:46) king of the Amorites, (9:48) and the kingdom of Og, (9:50) king of Bashan, (9:51) the land with its cities within its borders, (9:55) the cities of the surrounding country.

(10:00) So what do we have? (10:02) On one side of the Jordan, on the east side, (10:06) we have Reuben, Gad, the half-tribe of Manasseh. (10:11) This is Joseph's portion. (10:14) On the west side, (10:17) we have the other tribes.

(10:20) Naphtali, Asher, Zebulun, Issachar, (10:25) the other half of Manasseh. (10:28) Ephraim, which is Joseph's. (10:31) Dan, Benjamin, Judah, and Simeon.

(10:34) Those are the tribes that take land, (10:37) have possession on the east side. (10:41) I'm sorry, the west side. (10:45) I said that backwards.

(10:49) So now in Joshua 20 verses 7 and 8, (10:56) it lists the cities by name that are to be set up (11:02) within each of these regions. (11:05) Bezer, which is in the wilderness (11:08) from the tribe of Reuben. (11:11) That's on the east side.

(11:13) Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad. (11:17) Golan in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh. (11:22) That's up north.

(11:23) You may have heard of the Golan Heights. (11:28) Even in our lifetime, we've heard of that, (11:31) the Golan Heights. (11:33) It's called the Golan Heights (11:35) because the elevation is so high.

(11:38) It's actually the highest occupied [UN Post] (11:42) on the planet. (11:44) There's a place called the, I learned this, (11:47) the Hermon Hotel, (11:49) which is currently occupied by UN forces. (11:53) And it's a buffer zone between the Israelis (11:58) and the… (12:03) Oh, it draws my mind.

(12:06) To the east, yeah. (12:09) It's a, if you will, (12:11) it's an area that you don't want to be in (12:14) unless you're armed. (12:18) So 9,232 feet above sea level.

(12:25) Incredible, at the highest point. (12:27) And I thought to myself, (12:30) well, gee, where's the Dead Sea? (12:32) It's fairly, in that region, (12:34) it's fairly close. (12:36) The Dead Sea, as we know, (12:37) is below sea level.

(12:39) But it's 1,143 feet below sea level [*Current surface elevation is roughly 1,400–1,450 feet below sea level (and continuing to fall)*]. (12:45) Well, gee, from the height to the bottom, (12:50) that's over 10,000 feet difference. (12:54) Two miles, more or less.

(12:56) In a very short area. (12:59) Very small area. (13:02) And so… (13:05) Just point that out.

(13:08) And then there's Kedesh (13:10) in the mountains of Naphtali, (13:13) near Galilee. (13:15) Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, (13:18) and Hebron in the mountains of Judah. (13:21) Those are the six cities named (13:23) in Joshua chapter 20, verses 7 and 8. (13:27) And notice, each one of those, (13:31) it's not an area that you just walk up to, easy.

(13:35) Hard to get to. (13:36) In the mountains, up high. (13:39) In the wilderness.

(13:42) So it's an area of refuge (13:46) for someone who's being chased (13:48) by the avenger of blood. (13:50) And it's not easy to get to, (13:52) but I'll tell you what, (13:53) if someone's chasing me, (13:54) trying to take my life, (13:55) it's probably well worth the trip. (14:01) I'll go back to Numbers, (14:06) verse 15 out of chapter 35.

(14:10) These six cities shall be for refuge (14:13) for the children of Israel, (14:15) for the stranger and for the sojourner among them, (14:18) that anyone who kills a person accidentally (14:21) may flee there. (14:25) And now God gives us (14:26) some very specific instruction (14:27) in how he defines accidental. (14:33) Verse 16, (14:34) but if he strikes with an iron implement (14:36) so that he dies, he is a murderer.

(14:39) The murderer shall surely be put to death. (14:43) If he strikes him with a stone in the hand (14:46) by which one could die, (14:49) and he does die, he is a murderer. (14:52) The murderer shall surely be put to death.

(14:57) Verse 18, (14:58) or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon (15:01) by which one could die, (15:03) and he does die, he is a murderer. (15:06) The murderer shall surely be put to death. (15:12) The avenger of blood himself (15:15) shall put the murderer to death.

(15:18) When he meets him, (15:20) he shall put him to death. (15:24) So the avenger of blood, (15:27) well, who's the avenger of blood? (15:29) In this case, you have maybe a family member (15:32) or you have someone who knows the deceased. (15:37) We're not going to tolerate this.

(15:38) You killed this man. (15:41) I will avenge him. (15:44) But hold on.

(15:45) We have some means of mitigating (15:49) what might be an accidental situation. (15:54) Verse 20, (15:55) if he pushes him out of hatred (15:57) or while lying in wait hurls something at him (16:00) so that he dies, (16:02) or in enmity he strikes him with his hand (16:05) so that he dies, (16:06) the one who struck him (16:07) shall surely be put to death. (16:09) He is a murderer.

(16:12) The avenger of blood (16:14) shall put the murderer to death (16:16) when he meets him. (16:20) However, verse 22, (16:24) however, if he pushes him suddenly without enmity (16:27) or throws anything at him without lying in wait (16:30) or uses a stone by which a man could die, (16:34) throwing it at him without seeing him (16:37) so that he dies (16:40) while he was not his enemy or seeking his harm, (16:44) then the congregation shall judge (16:46) between the manslayer and the avenger of blood (16:50) according to these judgments. (16:55) So I ask, (16:58) can the sinner be cleansed? (17:02) Is there any chance of redemption for the guilty? (17:09) Yes.

(17:11) But how? (17:15) So now comes the refuge. (17:19) So in verse 25, (17:21) so the congregation shall deliver the manslayer (17:24) from the hand of the avenger of blood. (17:27) Hold on.

(17:27) Let's separate the two. (17:31) And the congregation shall return him (17:33) to the city of refuge where he had fled, (17:37) and he shall remain there (17:42) until the death of the high priest (17:45) who was anointed with the holy oil. (17:50) This is where I suddenly caught myself (17:54) almost glossing over this small detail.

(17:58) How long is the person who has caused the death to stay? (18:05) And how is he redeemed? (18:06) How is he made safe? (18:09) Usually it's a case where the accuser dies of natural causes (18:14) and the person who caused the earlier death (18:18) is just off the hook (18:19) because there's nobody there to accuse you anymore. (18:24) Except in this case, it reads, (18:29) and he shall remain there (18:30) until the death of the high priest (18:32) who was anointed with the holy oil. (18:35) But wait a minute.

(18:39) You're telling me until the judge dies? (18:44) That seems strange. (18:49) See, unintentional sin is still sin (18:52) and deserves death (18:54) because the wages of sin is death. (18:58) That's what God's word says.

(19:01) The killer in this case is still guilty. (19:04) There's no mention of innocence (19:05) even in the case of the city of refuge. (19:08) The killer is not absolved of any wrongdoing, (19:11) but he's kept safe from the consequences of sin (19:16) only while remaining inside (19:18) or under the protection of the city of refuge.

(19:25) Or until the death of the high priest (19:28) who was anointed with the holy oil. (19:32) Verse 26. (19:34) But if the manslayer at any time (19:36) goes outside the limits of the city of refuge (19:39) where he fled (19:41) and the avenger of blood (19:43) finds him outside the limits of the city of refuge (19:46) and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, (19:50) he shall not be guilty of blood.

(19:53) He was under the protection of the God-designed, (20:01) you're okay, you didn't do this intentionally. (20:06) God's giving an option or protection, (20:11) but it has to be under certain circumstances. (20:14) It has to be the way God designed it.

(20:20) He shall not be guilty of blood (20:22) because he should have remained in the city of refuge (20:25) until the death of the high priest. (20:27) But after the death of the high priest, (20:29) the manslayer may return to the land of his possession. (20:37) That's where I got, (20:40) just scratching my head a little bit.

(20:43) Okay. (20:45) So now the high priest has died (20:51) and he's now off the hook, so to speak. (20:57) He can go back to the land he used to live in.

(21:00) He used to do what he did before. (21:02) He might work there. (21:03) He might have a whole family there.

(21:05) He might have land and crops and all kinds of things (21:10) that he could go back to possibly. (21:15) And I thought, the accuser, the avenger of blood, (21:21) might not be happy with that. (21:25) But still, what needs to happen and how? (21:31) How does this happen? (21:34) So who needs to die before the consequences change for the guilty? (21:41) The avenger of blood? (21:43) No.

(21:46) He might still be alive. (21:49) No, it's the high priest who is anointed with the holy oil. (21:57) Think of this.

(22:00) There's something going on here, and I thought to myself, (22:03) wait a minute, I've read in the New Testament, (22:05) I'm going to read this in Matthew chapter 2, 19 and 20, (22:11) referring to Joseph. (22:13) It says, (22:17) Now when Herod was dead, (22:19) behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, (22:25) saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother (22:29) and go to the land of Israel, (22:31) for those who sought the young child's life are dead. (22:37) Then he arose, took the young child and his mother, (22:41) and came into the land of Israel.

(22:44) I thought to myself, that's the example I was kind of expecting. (22:50) So what is really going on here? (22:55) Well, the passage in Numbers is a type, (23:01) a type of salvation, (23:04) a type and anti-type. (23:06) For clarity, I know we've discussed this before, (23:11) but I'll give the example, (23:12) I'll give a definition of type and anti-type.

(23:15) A type is a symbolic foreshadowing of a future event or person, (23:21) while an anti-type is the fulfillment or realization of that type. (23:30) And I read this passage in Numbers and I said, (23:33) We have that. (23:36) We almost have a double type and anti-type.

(23:40) The accuser or avenger of blood is the evil one. (23:48) The high priest anointed with the holy oil, of course, is Jesus Christ. (23:56) When the high priest anointed with oil dies, (24:02) the offense is removed, (24:04) and the offender who was previously guilty of sin and worthy of death (24:09) can be made clean and free of condemnation.

(24:13) The accuser, who is the avenger of blood, (24:18) is no longer condemned for those that are in Christ. (24:26) So, of course, who is our high priest? (24:30) Jesus Christ. (24:32) He is our high priest anointed with oil.

(24:36) This event is recorded in all four Gospels. (24:40) It's in Matthew 26, verses 6-13, and I'd like to read that to you. (24:48) It's also found in Mark 14, verses 3-9, Luke 7, 36-50, (24:55) and John 12, the first eight verses.

(25:00) And it's the anointing at Bethany. (25:05) So in [Matthew 26:6–13], (25:08) and when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, (25:12) a woman came to him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil. (25:21) She poured it on his head as he sat at a table.

(25:25) But when the disciples saw this, they were indignant, (25:31) saying, why this waste? (25:34) This fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor. (25:41) But when Jesus was aware of it, he said to them, (25:45) why do you trouble the woman? (25:47) For she has done a good work for me. (25:50) For you have the poor with you always, but me, you do not have always.

(25:56) For in pouring this fragrant oil on my body, she did it for my burial. (26:01) Now, assuredly I say to you, whenever this gospel is preached in the whole world, (26:09) what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her. (26:19) And I have the pleasure of standing here tonight, (26:23) offering a memorial to her by preaching those words.

(26:31) So I thought, first of all, what's meant by very costly? (26:38) Well, in Mark 14, it describes what very costly was. (26:46) Apparently, it was an alabaster jar, and the perfume inside of it, (26:55) the oil inside of it, was called spikenard oil or nard. (27:04) Alabaster, I know, because I have here in my hand (27:09) what is referred to as an alabaster egg.

(27:13) Alabaster is a type of stone. (27:17) This one's cut in the shape of a chicken egg. (27:22) I don't know why, but it was.

(27:26) And then it was polished really pretty. (27:30) And I actually have two of them. (27:31) One is pink and one is this bluish green color.

(27:37) Apparently, they're valuable to some degree, (27:41) although I saw them on eBay. (27:44) You could buy a few of them for 20, 30 bucks. (27:52) So alabaster was the container in which the oil was kept.

(27:59) And the spikenard oil, it says in ancient times, I read this, (28:04) spikenard was regarded as one of the most precious oils. (28:08) It's been used as a perfume, a medicine, (28:13) and in religious contexts across a wide territory from India to Europe. (28:20) Why is this stuff so expensive, a bottle of it? (28:24) I mean, I know perfume.

(28:25) You could buy perfume, cologne. (28:27) They'll sell it in one-ounce containers, half-ounce, even quarter-ounce. (28:32) Even quarter-ounce is expensive.

(28:35) Okay. (28:36) Well, what makes this stuff so expensive? (28:40) Well, it comes from a flowering plant kind of like in a honeysuckle family, (28:52) and it grows in the Himalayas of Nepal, China, and India. (28:58) Well, this is not Nepal, China, or India that we're talking about.

(29:03) It's got to be processed, grown, processed, containerized, shipped in safely. (29:12) All that costs money. (29:16) And it says this oil has been used over centuries as a perfume (29:20) and a traditional medicine.

(29:24) Oh, here's an interesting observation. (29:29) And see, this is how you do it. (29:30) You read these passages, and sometimes you read it more than once or twice (29:36) or three times even, and all of a sudden a little, hey, I didn't catch this before.

(29:43) So, spikenard is an antifungal. (29:46) It promotes skin health and helps heal ailments caused by fungal infections. (29:54) Okay.

(29:57) Well, let's rewind a little bit. (30:00) Whose house were we in? (30:02) Whose house was this taking place when Jesus was anointed with oil? (30:08) Simon the leper's. (30:14) Oh, what's leprosy? (30:18) An ailment of the skin.

(30:22) And I thought to myself, there's the leper. (30:26) He probably has little or no opportunity to work, be productive. (30:31) No one wants to be around him.

(30:33) Unclean, unclean. (30:34) I can hear the words as he approaches someone. (30:38) He has to say that because no one wants to be infected with this horrible disease (30:43) called leprosy.

(30:46) Oh, we have a huge bottle here of this stuff to help you. (30:54) In his house. (30:56) This woman brings it to the house.

(30:58) And what does she do with it? (31:01) She puts it on Jesus' head and his feet. (31:06) I imagine he might have thought something about that when the words, (31:12) this waste, were uttered. (31:17) It's just an observation.

(31:25) So we have our high priest anointed with oil. (31:31) And at his death, we can be made clean through his death. (31:41) But I will remind you of something, and that's in Acts 17.

(31:45) It's two verses, Acts 17, verses 30 and 31, which reads, (31:55) Truly these times of ignorance

God overlooked. (31:59) Referring to the sins of men. (32:04) Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked.

(32:07) But now commands all men everywhere to repent. (32:15) Because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness (32:20) by the man, of course that's Jesus Christ, (32:23) by the man whom he has ordained. (32:27) He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead.

(32:39) So when that day comes, I pray that all those who can hear the gospel, (32:47) who have a heart willing to accept the truth and follow what it says, will do that. (32:54) So when that day comes, I pray that those won't be, if you will, (33:02) off the reservation outside of Christ. (33:06) Because as the truth is, the consequences are final and eternal.

(33:11) And that's the sermon. (33:13) May God's word pierce our hearts as they need to be. (33:19) Amen. (33:20)