SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

LESSON V. OCT. 1, 1905.

The Cities of Refuge.—Josh. 20:1-9.

Commentary.—The duties of the cities of refuge are, briefly, spoke, up to Joshua—As soon as the tribes had received their inheritance, the Lord directed that Joshua should carry out the injunctions which Moses had left respecting the cities of refuge for the accidental homicide.—Com. Bib. See Exod. 21, 12-15; Num. 35, 9-34; Deut. 19, 2-13.

2. Appoint—Select. Cities of refuge — Prior to the time when it was required of the nearest relative, as a matter of duty to avenge the death of one who had been slain. He was called the "Goel," or "Avenger." Some times a whole family took upon them this duty (2 Sam. 14:7).—Com. Bib. 3. Unawares and unwittingly — That is, by accident, or without guilty intent. Mad. Rev. This is the primitive method of justice exposed the people to three great dangers. 1. There was the danger of making it an instrument of private revenge. 2. There was danger of long, bloody feuds, revenges, continued enmity, and almost extermination. 3. There was danger of gross injustice by not making a distinction between deliberate murder and accidental homicide.—Peloubet.

4. The gate of the city—The tribunal of justice was at the city gate. The refugee was not kept out of the city till his innocence was proved, but was permitted to enter and remain his cause and receive the protection of the city.—Steele. May dwell among them—When a refugee arrived was the duty of the elders, or rulers, to receive him, care for him and assign him a place to live.

5. If the avenger of—pursue—it was the duty of the avenger of blood to pursue a wilful murderer, but when once sheltered in one of the cities of refuge the refugee was safe until after his trial. If, however, after hearing both sides, and after examining the witnesses (Num. 35, 19-30; Deut. 17, 6-12; 18, 12-17), the rulers decided that the slayer proceeded from malice and that the refugee was guilty of murder, he was condemned and executed. No pity, no money could shelter a murderer.

6. Shall dwell in that city—Even if exonerated from the charge of murder, he was safe only while he remained in the city and its suburbs. Even in accidental killing there is usually some fault or carelessness, and the hardship of being required to remain away from home and friends would cause the people to be careful. Until he stand—The judges and elders of the people in trying civil and criminal cases always sat; the person who came for judgment or who was tried, always stood.—Bush. Before the congregation—Deut. 19, 12. Whether he hunted for him or not (Exod. 21; 13; Num. 35, 20, 22); whether he smote him in secret (Deut. 27, 24). Were the most presumptuous sins—that is to say, malicious (Exod. 21, 14)? Was it with guile (Josh. 20, 14)? Especially, was there enmity previously between the two men (Num. 35, 21, 22)? Was there hatred of the slain on the part of the slayer (Num. 35, 20, 22; Deut. 19, 4, 6, 11; Josh. 20, 5)? The fact that so many particulars are enumerated shows that the trial contemplated was to be a careful one.—Beecher. Death of the High Priest—The administration of a high priest was regarded as a period complete in itself. With the accession of his successor a new period began, and with it a new order of things.

II. The cities of refuge appointed (vs. 7-9).

7. They appointed—Rather, they sanctified, set apart for a sacred purpose.—Cam. Bib. Six cities were appointed for this purpose, three on either side of the Jordan, easy of access from all parts of the land. None but Levitical cities were chosen, and there the refugees, during their stay, would have the benefit of the assistance and instruction of the Levites. The cities were on hills and could be seen afar off. They were so situated that one of them could be reached from any part of the country in a half-day. The roads to the cities were to be kept in good repair; no hillock was left, no river or stream was allowed over which there was not a bridge; the road was to be at least thirty-two cubits (three rods) broad, and every kind of obstruction was to be removed that might hurt the foot or hinder the speed of the fugitive. At every turning or branching of roads posts were erected bearing the words, Refuge, Refuge, to guide the fugitive in his flight.—Bush. Immediately greater pains has God taken to lead guilty souls to the refuge of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.—Steele. Kedesh—There is some significance in the names of the cities. Kedesh means to separate, or set apart. It implies the consecration of person or place to the worship or service of God alone. Thus, as we look for the comparison of Christ as a Saviour from sin. This city was in the extreme northern part of the promised land in Galilee, on the west of Jordan. Shechem—Shoulder, hence its readiness to bear burdens, sustain, etc. We read of Christ, "And the government shall be upon His shoulder" (Isa. 9, 6.) This city was in the tribe of Ephraim, near the centre of the promised land, west of Jordan. Hebron—This signifies fellowship, friendly association, to unite as friends. Through Christ sinners are brought into fellowship with God. Hebron was situated in the southern part of Canaan, among the mountains near Kedesh, a city of Judah.

8. Bezer—A stronghold, a fortification. Jesus is a stronghold, a fortress to those who trust in him.) This city was located east of Jordan, in the plain opposite Jericho. Ramoth—Meaning high or exalted. The name of Jesus is above every other name. He is exalted to be the Saviour of the world. This city was east of Jordan, about the middle of the mountains of Gilead. Golan—Rejoicing or exaltation. As Jesus will believers rejoice and are justified. He is their joy and their hope for salvation. This city was the capital of a district in the land of Bashan, in the north. Besides all these cities of refuge, the horns of the altar were a refuge to those who took hold on them, if the person was not guilty of crime. This is implied in that law, Exod. 21, 14. A wilful murderer shall be taken from God's altar and he put to death. And we find the altar used for this purpose (1 Kings 1:50; 2:28). Christ is our altar, who not only sanctifies the gifts, but protects the giver. 9. for the stranger—"As these typified the great provision which God was making for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles, hence the stranger had the same right to the institution of the cities of refuge as held in the highest degree the sacredness of human life.

Each city in its name is a type of the character of Christ.

I. Kedesh. Holiness. Sanctuary. Christ the holy One. Christ is our sanctuary, our holy of the holies. The "secret place of the most high," where dwelling we shall sing, "He is my refuge and my fortress" (Psa. 91:1, 2). There "both he that sanctifieth and those who are sanctified are all of one" (Heb. 2:11). He (1:30). For our sakes he sanctified himself (John 17:19). Abiding in his refuge we are secure from the intrusion of sin. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not" (1 John 3:6). "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked" (1 John 2:6).

II. Shechem. Shoulder. Christ the burden-bearer. He it was who "bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4). "Who his own self bare our sins in his