

# Christ Is Our Refuge

## LHC: Message Five (050626AM)

### Week 5: Christ Is Our Refuge

(Revelation 1:4)

As the end of days approaches, you can find hope in the safest spot in the universe—Christ, our refuge!

#### SUNDAY: The Safest Spot

***Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come.***  
—Revelation 1:4, emphasis added

As Jesus graphically unfolded the events of the end of days before John's eyes, how did He prepare him for what was to come? He reminded him of His grace and peace. Now, as we see those very days actually unfolding before our own eyes, Christ wants to remind us that we, like John, are securely kept by His grace and peace as well.

Have you ever wondered where the safest spot on earth is *physically*? It is located in Colorado, a little over seven hundred miles from where I live in Tulsa, Oklahoma. There, nestled in the Rockies, under Cheyenne Mountain, a half-mile deep in its granite corridors, is a super-secure missile defense command center called NORAD.

Built at the height of the Cold War, the command center is able to withstand any bomb blast or chemical or biological weapon attack. Anyone residing within can be sustained for two years, but *only if he or she is able to get there in time to avoid the attack.*

The safest spot in the universe, even safer than Cheyenne Mountain, is also the closest. It is closer than any man-made shelter on earth. As we approach the end of days, the safest spot in the universe is in Christ, the perfect refuge only God could design.

Jesus Christ is our hope, our refuge, and our salvation. He is as close as a cry, an outstretched hand, or an upturned heart. He is only one thought or prayer away. From any location, anyone can instantly arrive in that safest of all places. That is our ultimate hope as we approach the end of days.

Christ, our forerunner, has forever anchored our souls safely in heaven, and in coming weeks we will see that Revelation explains what Hebrews 6 promises: *“The heirs of promise . . . **have fled for refuge** to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek* (Hebrews 6:17–20, emphasis added).

When all else is shaken, only Christ is that secure and lasting refuge. But how do we reach that refuge? His Word says we are to *lay hold of the hope set before us*

(Hebrews 6:18). What is that hope? It is the Lord Jesus Christ himself (see 1 Timothy 1:1)! In other words, the safest spot in the universe is in the embrace of Jesus.

Are you resting in His embrace? That spot of safety is only a prayer away!

**My Prayer for You This Week:** *Father in Heaven, we thank You that You've given us this beautiful book—the Revelation of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ—for this book speaks of Him from cover to cover. It is all about You, our hope, and we desire to lay hold of You. You are set before us in all Your glory, in all Your humility, and in all Your suffering in Your great work on the cross for us. I pray that we who know You will lay firmer hold on the hope set before us. For any who don't have this, may today be the day that they see Your arms open wide as You offer salvation to them. Oh Lord, bless us, strengthen us, encourage us, and draw us even closer to You! In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

## **MONDAY: Entering the Refuge of Christ**

[He] is able to **keep you from stumbling**, and to **present you faultless** before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

—Jude 24, emphasis added

To understand one of the clearest explanations of entering into the refuge of Christ, let us look back 3,500 years. When Israel entered the Promised Land, God gave them a constant reminder of His salvation. This reminder was ordered by God to be set up throughout the land as a continual visible symbol of Him as God their Savior.

What was that visible reminder? It was a strategically placed group of six cities called “the cities of refuge”: *These were the **cities appointed for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them, that whoever killed a person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation*** (Joshua 20:9, emphasis added).

The cities of refuge present a clear, but often overlooked, picture of Christ as Savior. In those Old Testament passages describing the cities of refuge, the word for “refuge” used in the Septuagint (LXX, the Greek version of the Old Testament) is the same as the Greek word translated “refuge” in Hebrews 6:18 (KJV, NKJV, and NASB). The writer of Hebrews is telling us that the only way to experience the power of God that saves us is to run to Christ in desperation for refuge—to that safest place.

### **The cities of refuge were wonderful because:**

- **The cities of refuge were easy to reach.** Jewish tradition declares that there were signs at the crossroads: Refuge! Refuge! These signs pointed the way to safety. God expressly commanded that roads be made to these cities to make them highly accessible (Deuteronomy 19:3). Some were even located on hilltops in order to be more prominent.
- **The cities of refuge were open to all:** to the Israelite, the stranger, and the sojourner among them (Numbers 35:15). Joshua 20:9 uses this phrase: “*that whoever killed a person.*” What New Testament verse does “*that whoever*” remind us of? Right! “*For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten*

*Son, **that whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”*  
(John 3:16, emphasis added.)

- **The cities of refuge were always open.** If that were not the case, a man might be killed while beating on a door to get someone to let him in.
- **The cities of refuge were a completely sufficient refuge.** They not only provided legal protection but also completely met an endangered person’s needs once inside. As long as the slayer remained in the city, he was safe, and could look forward to being freed after the high priest died.
- **The cities of refuge were the only hope.** The slayer was told to *flee* to the city; such a person could not afford to delay.

Christ himself is your only hope and refuge! Can you afford to delay fleeing to Him for eternal safety?

## **TUESDAY: The Cities of Refuge—A Portrait of Christ**

*We might have strong consolation, **who have fled for refuge** to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

—Hebrews 6:18b, emphasis added

The similarities between the cities of refuge and Christ our refuge are striking when compared point for point. Anyone can come to Christ because:

- **Christ is easy to reach.** We may cast ourselves upon Christ at any time, in any place. His church is to be the teller of this good news that cries “Refuge! Refuge!” to the lost world. This emphasis is made at the very end of Revelation: *Let him who thirsts come* (Revelation 22:17b). The Savior is within the reach of all, even to those who are in the utmost peril of His wrath.
- **Christ is open to all people.** Anyone who wants to may come to Him: “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28; see also Genesis 3:9 and Isaiah 45:22).
- **Christ’s arms are always open—He never locks His gates.** Jesus is “the door” (John 10:7, 9), and that door is never shut. Many have stood by a deathbed and seen sinners come to belief in the last moments of life. There is no gate to unlock, and men can enter quickly. The way to the heavenly city of refuge is clear, and Christ will never turn any sinner away (John 6:37). Just as prominent roads led to each city of refuge, and their gates were always open, so Christ’s gate is always open to whoever will come to Him.
- **Christ is a completely sufficient refuge.** “Christ’s death in space-time history is completely adequate to meet our need for refuge from the true moral guilt that we have. It is final because of who He is. He is the infinite second person of the Trinity; therefore, His death has infinite value. Just as the suburbs or borders of the city [of refuge] were a sufficient security to the offender (Numbers 35:26–27)—so there is virtue even in the hem of Christ’s garment for the healing and saving of poor sinners. If we cannot reach to a full assurance, we may comfort ourselves in a good hope through grace.”<sup>1</sup>

- **Christ is our only hope.** If we do not flee to the refuge, which God has given to us at such a great price, there is no other hope for us. Hebrews relates this negative emphasis to the Old Testament: *Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment . . . will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?* (Hebrews 10:28–29).

The IVP Bible Commentary puts it well:

There isn't one of us who does not stand in that situation. We have heard the gospel, so if in the Old Testament ignoring God's law brought death, what about us if we despise the work of Christ and the grace which He showers upon us? Nor can lost sinners today afford to delay in fleeing to the only refuge, Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Today, meditate upon these soul-gripping truths: Christ is easy to reach; His arms are open to all; His entrance is never locked; He is a completely sufficient refuge; and He is the only hope! How wonderful!

### **WEDNESDAY: Christ — Better Than Any City of Refuge**

*“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest.**”*

—Matthew 11:28, emphasis added

Why is Christ better than any earthly city of refuge? While those cities were only for temporary refuge, Christ offers only permanent refuge. Even though the cities of refuge were strategically placed to be easy to reach, because of angry relatives, they could still only be reached after a hard and dangerous journey. Christ, however, can only be reached through simple childlike faith in His sacrifice on the cross, which makes Him forever closer than any man-made refuge.

Christ is *so much* better because He died only for the guilty, but the cities of refuge protected only the innocent. They were reserved for the man who killed by mistake. When the slayer came to the city, he was admitted and then tried, for the elders of the city only protected someone who was innocent of murder. With us, there is no trial. We are already condemned in our sins, but Christ welcomes and receives guilty sinners. What grace!

Christ died for the deliberate sinner. Who is that? Every one of us can say, “It is I!” How can a holy and righteous God accept those who are guilty? It is not by giving up His holiness; He does not devalue that, or we would have no moral absolute in the universe. Rather, the reason Christ is able to be our Redeemer is that He is the High Priest, and the sacrifice He gave was His own death. Now, think about your life today in these terms: Christ is my refuge—Jesus found me guilty in God's court and convicted me of first-degree sin. Because I am a sinner, God's penalty (or wages) for my sin is death. But instead of forgetting my debt to God's holiness, it was paid in full by another. Jesus died in my place, bearing my sin. That payment made me free.

Because of Christ's death in my place, I will never face God's wrath. Now I can boldly come before God's throne and, surrounded by His mercy and grace, find all that I

need to live life and serve Him. When I sin, I have a Savior who is also my High Priest who actually lives to speak to God on my behalf. It is this powerful picture of Christ that Paul taught the Corinthians: *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come* (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Christ, our High Priest, died once for all, and lives forever. Although we are legally guilty before God, when we cast ourselves upon Christ we are free forever. (Hebrews 7:23–27 says this strongly.) When you humbly come to Christ with a repentant heart, His arms will open wide! If you have not already done so, I urge you to accept His embrace and start living for Him today!

### **THURSDAY: Christ—Our Permanent Refuge**

*This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, **both sure and steadfast**, and which enters the Presence behind the veil.*

—Hebrews 6:19, emphasis added

Hebrews also speaks of Christ as the forerunner who has entered for us (Hebrews 6:20). Christ has entered into God’s presence so that we can enter too. When do we enter this refuge?

We enter in **once for all** at the moment we cast ourselves upon Christ and accept Him as our Savior. At that moment we are declared justified by God who judges us on the basis of Christ’s finished work at Calvary: *We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom **we have now received the reconciliation*** (Romans 5:11, emphasis added). In that verse, Paul uses the Greek aorist tense, which indicates that our justification is a past thing, completed forever. If we were saved, we are saved. Justification (and its subset, reconciliation) means that God has no record that we ever sinned. Our sins are paid for, put on Christ’s account, and are gone forever!

We enter **every daily moment** into this refuge as Christians when we claim the blood of Christ to cover specific sin that has broken fellowship with God: *The blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanses us from all sin**. . . . If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:7, 9, emphasis added).

We will enter in **perfectly and completely** at that great moment when we die, or when the Lord returns: *He is also able to **save to the uttermost** those who come to God through Him* (Hebrews 7:25, emphasis added).

Christ is better than any city of refuge because He is nearer. A man from the city who ran out to help a weary refugee to the gate could fall and not be able to shelter him within the walls of safety before the avenger overtook the fugitive. But a man who looks to Christ to reach safety can never fail. The Bible makes a specific promise: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). In fact, Jesus says, “I stand at the door and knock” (Rev. 3:20). He Himself seeks us.<sup>3</sup>

Have you come to Jesus Christ by faith and allowed Him to save you once for all? If so, you can rest in Christ, for He is your permanent and only refuge!

## FRIDAY: Are You in Christ?

*“And **this is eternal life**, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*

—John 17:3, emphasis added

How near is Christ? To answer that, let me share the following story that was told by Harry A. Ironside (1876–1951), who traveled for more than fifty years as a home missionary, evangelist, and Bible teacher. He was pastor of Moody Memorial Church, a visiting professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, and the author of more than sixty books and pamphlets. The following is drawn from a tract he wrote called “The Way of Peace.” The essence of the story is that a pastor named Dr. Charles Berry served a congregation in Boston. He was part of the movement that denied the deity of Christ, His substitutionary death on the cross and the need of personal salvation. But he was immensely popular to the people of Boston. He could hold vast audiences with his story telling abilities, and everyone always felt better when they left the service.

Those who knew him well noted that at the height of his ministry there was a dramatic change in his life. When asked to explain the amazing changes he had experienced he told them the story. It started on a rainy Saturday night. Dr. Berry was in his study at home just finishing up a moving message for the next morning when the doorbell rang. Opening the door, he found a poor and hungry teen. She asked for the minister. Dr. Berry tried to send her to the local relief agencies and rescue missions—but she insisted that a minister needed to come with her.

Finally, at the point of embarrassment, Dr. Berry agreed to go out into the stormy night following this young lady, totally against his better judgment. It was the event that followed that the Lord used to change his life forever.

The young lady kept repeating over and over as they walked that she needed a minister to, “get her mother in.” Not sure exactly what she meant, Dr. Berry followed. He wondered if she was sick or fallen or even worse in some state of intoxication that she had to be carried. When suggesting that maybe a policeman would be better to help the young lady again repeated, “No, I need a minister to get my mother in!”

At last Dr. Berry began to understand as the young lady continued by explaining that her mother was not drunk but afraid to die. She then explained that she had assured her mother that she would find a minister, and the minister would explain to her how to get in—to Heaven! At that point Dr. Berry slowed down. He asked if he could send a local inner city missionary or someone from the rescue mission. The trembling daughter looked at him so intently and begged him to wait no longer. She said again:

“Do come, sir. I want you to get my mother in before it’s too late. Please, sir, do come with me.”

At last he consented to go, and the girl led the way to one of the worst sections of the city. In this miserable neighborhood she took him into a tenement house and up a rickety flight of stairs to a poverty-stricken room. Downstairs many men and women were drinking and carousing, and the air resounded with horrid oaths and vile language. The minister found the poor woman lying on a miserable makeshift of a bed, evidently near to death.

“I’ve brought him!” exclaimed the daughter. “I’ve got the minister from the big church where the swells go. He’ll get you in, Mother. Just do what he says.”

“What can I do for you, my poor woman?” he inquired as kindly as he could.

“Why, sir, I’m dying, and I want you to get me into heaven. I’ve been a great sinner, and I don’t know how to get in.”

The minister began to speak of the necessity of a good life, of building a noble character, and how goodness always paid in the end.

“You don’t understand, sir!” she cried. “That won’t do! I’m dying and I’ve lived a bad life. It’s too late for me. Oh, can’t you get me in?”

He tried again and gave some good advice and endeavored to comfort her by expressing the hope that all would be well if she would only seek to lead a Christian life.

“That won’t do!” she exclaimed. “I’m a poor sinner! I’ve no time to lead a Christian life. I’m dying and I want to go in. Oh, can’t you tell me how I may get into heaven?”

Dr. Berry did not know what to say or how to comfort her. At last he thought, “Why not tell her what my mother used to tell me? Why not give her some of the simple texts and Gospel stories I learned as a child?”

With this in mind he began to repeat some of the precious Gospel verses telling of God’s love for sinners and of the Savior who had died to redeem. The woman listened eagerly. “That’s it! That ought to get me in, shouldn’t it! Did he die for sinners? Then that should get me in.”

Stirred to the depths of his own being he told the story of the cross as he had not preached it for years. Like a thirsty soul, she drank in the living water. Finally, he knelt and prayed with her.

She trusted Christ for herself. Her fears were allayed and she entered into peace.

“Jowett,” said Dr. Berry years afterward, “I helped get her in that night, and while I was helping to get her in, I got myself in also!”<sup>4</sup>

Are you in? If not, I exhort you to bow before Him this moment; believe on Jesus and freely receive His salvation!

## **SATURDAY: Christ’s Wonderful Benefits**

*“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls.**”*

—Matthew 11:29, emphasis added

Once you are in the safe arms of Jesus, what will you find? You will find the perfect refuge, the One who has so much to offer all of us. The six cities of refuge named in Joshua 20:7–9 are representative of six truths for those who flee to Christ, the safest place in the universe.

Each of the following Hebrew words that name the cities of refuge speak of one powerful facet of Christ's present ministry to us:

- **Kedesh** means a “holy place” or “righteousness.” Christ is our “holy place” and our “righteousness.” He is the only refuge for us when we feel unclean, defiled, or guilty (1 Corinthians 1:30).
- **Shechem** means “shoulder.” Christ is our safe and strong “shoulder.” He is the only refuge for us when we feel weary, exhausted, or stressed (Matthew 11:28–30).
- **Hebron** means “fellowship.” Christ is the only refuge for the lonely who feel left out, left behind, homeless, or forsaken (John 14:21).
- **Bezer** means a “stronghold” or “fortress.” Christ is our “stronghold,” or “fortress.” He is the only refuge for us when we feel helpless, fearful, and powerless (Matthew 28:18).
- **Ramoth** means “exalted” or “heights.” Christ is the only refuge for us when our hearts darken and we feel hopeless (Ephesians 2:6).
- **Golan** means “separated.” Christ is the only refuge for us when we struggle and feel weak when we are tempted (Hebrews 4:16).

**Make a choice to live in hope:** Each of these city names portray details of the refuge Christ offers for us to lay hold of every day, every hour, and every moment of our lives. Jesus is the closest, safest, and only refuge we can turn to when we are unclean, weary, homeless, helpless, hopeless, tempted, and fearful.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), in loc.

<sup>2</sup> *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), in loc.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer, Hebrews 7* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1985), in loc.

<sup>4</sup> Harry A. Ironside (Garland, TX: American Tract Society, 1940).