

The Man Slayer.

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In Numbers 35 we have a striking picture of the holiness and grace of God in His dealings with the slayer. He instructed His people here, and in Deut. 19, to set aside certain Levitical cities on either side of Jordan, "that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither." The *holiness* of God is seen in that He would not shield the guilty (for when the case was gone into before competent judges and witnesses, the guilty was to be given up); and the *grace* of God shines brightly in preserving the unintentional slayer within the refuge that the revenger of blood might not lay hands upon him. Here we have set forth in a typical way the gracious dealings of Jehovah with Israel — the beloved yet blinded nation, which is responsible before Him for the shedding of the blood of Christ. He graciously regards Israel as a "slayer," rather than a "murderer," to be restored in due time to the good land, the land of their possession. The Lord, when crucified, made intercession for the transgressors, and put the deed upon the ground of ignorance: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34). And Peter, when bringing home to them their great sin in Acts 3, echoes his Master's word: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; Whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life." But he proceeded further to say, "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your fathers." Saul of Tarsus is in many respects a type of his nation, in this particularly "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1: 13). Some have been charged directly by God with the murder of Jesus witness Stephen's defence before the Sanhedrim (Acts 7: 53) and have been handed over to judgment accordingly. But the nation as a whole, or at least the remnant, is treated by God as a manslayer to be restored.

When once the slayer reached the city of refuge, he was safe under Jehovah's care; away from his possessions certainly, but preserved by Jehovah. This exactly describes the position of Israel today. Away from their possessions for the proud Turk still holds sway in the city of David — but with the eye of the ever faithful God upon them, they are preserved as a nation still. What a striking witness to the man who disbelieves God's word! After all their unparalleled vicissitudes, and heavy discipline under the holy hand of God, after all the hatred and persecution of the boastful Gentile, east and west, they abide. Where is Moab? Where Edom, Assyria, Babylon, &c.? Men may excavate and discover the ruins of their palaces and fortresses; but as nations they are dead and gone, they have long ceased to exist. But Israel *abides* as distinct a people as ever, in striking confirmation of the Lord's own words, "This generation shall not pass away, until all be fulfilled." The term "generation" here must be regarded not as historical, or the beauty of the scripture is lost, but as moral; the words really guarantee the preservation of Israel as a distinct people until the end, and until the whole prophetic word is fulfilled.

The servants of God (the Levites who dwelt in the cities of refuge) were in Jehovah's mind about this, they knew the slayer was being preserved for ultimate restoration. This is our privilege as Christians. Our God not only tells us in His word what He is doing for us, in bringing us into wondrous blessing before Himself, but He acquaints us with all His purposes. And in such scriptures as Rom. 11 we have the unfolding of the divine mind concerning the people in question. God will yet restore them;

they shall yet possess the good land, on the ground not of law, but of mercy. Can we wonder that Paul, when writing of these dealings of God, broke out with, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out"! (Rom. 11: 33.)

It is interesting to note *when* the manslayer was restored to his possessions "He shall abide in it (the city of refuge) unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil." "After the death of the high priest the slayer shall return unto the land of his possessions."

Not, while Christ carries on His present priestly work within the rent veil on high, will Israel be restored. While He ministers there in the presence of God for us, they remain out of their lands, in the places whither they have been driven. But the moment will arrive when the present work of Christ will come to an end (for we shall be in glory beyond the need of it), and then God will turn His attention once again to the seed of Israel. There are two characters of priesthood belonging to our Lord Jesus, which it is important to bear in mind, the Aaronic and the Melchisedec. He is not a priest after Aaron's *order*, His priesthood being intransmissible; but Aaron's functions furnish the type of what He is now doing on behalf of His saints in the sanctuary above. This will come to an end; and then will follow the Melchisedec priesthood which is directly in connection with the remnant of Israel. Melchisedec's priesthood was not characterized by sacrifice and intercession but he brought forth bread and wine to the man of God, and blessed him in the name of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.

Thus will Christ act in the latter day. He will come out for the blessing of those (Jews) who will stand for Him in an evil day His overcoming ones; and He will bless and refresh them, as the patriarch was refreshed of old. So, while the Lord carries on His present gracious work as Priest in the presence of God, Israel as a nation remains unblessed; but blessing is in store for them, through the mercy of God. He "hath not cast away His people which He foreknew" (Rom 11: 2). Then shall they know and understand that the precious blood, shed once by their fathers, is that which alone makes atonement for the soul, and is the only foundation of blessing for them as for us. Zechariah tells us of their mourning in that day: "they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech. 12: 10). The manslayer in that day will not attempt to justify his deed, but will adore the grace that covers all. W. W. F.