

the P law. You notice that there are here two steps, not three. They say that the steps correspond to the change of place for the altar; that where there were altars everywhere, there was no need of a place of asylum. This claim that the altar was a place of asylum rests upon Exodus 21:13, 14, back in the Book of the Covenant. He claims that in the original situation there were altars scattered throughout the land, and that they were places where the people could go for protection. But see what the law really says in Exodus 21:13,14, starting with verse 12, “He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place to which he shall flee. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.”

Does this law say that in the first code the altars of God scattered up and down through the land are the places of asylum, so there is no need of any other? It does not say anything of the kind! God says, “I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.” This was at least thirty-eight years before they would enter the land. There would have been no point in giving details about the cities of refuge at least thirty-eight years ahead of time. God says, “I will appoint thee a place.” If He meant the altar, why did He not say so? Does it say a man should wait for God to lower him into his hands, then he shall flee to the altar and there be safe? It does not say anything of the kind; anyway, that would be rather ridiculous! How can a man hang on that altar for the next ten years? How will he live there, hanging onto that altar? There would be no point in it at all unless an arrangement was made so that there would be a place around the altar where one could live. This would not fill the need of asylum at all. God said, “I am going to appoint a place.” It stands to reason that it will be a place that fills the need, and, of course, that was done by providing cities of refuge. You notice that He said, “But if a man comes presumptuously upon his neighbor to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him away from mine altar, that he may die.” How does this mean that the place God is going to appoint is the altar? All it means is that if a person is in this situation, even if he should be hanging on to the altar – that sacred place where you would think it would be utterly wicked to injure anybody – you could take them away from the altar without hesitation.