

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Joshua 22: Confrontation and Misunderstanding

Review

1. What is the theme of the book of Joshua? What verse summarizes the book?

"Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled." Joshua 21:45

2. Who is Joshua?

3. What has happened so far in the book of Joshua?

Joshua 22

⁹ So the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home, parting from the people of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, their own land of which they had possessed themselves by command of the LORD through Moses. ¹⁰ And when they came to the region of the Jordan that is in the land of Canaan, the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by the Jordan, an altar of imposing size.

4. Where was the land allotted to the people of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh?

5. Why were they on the west side of the Jordan?

6. What do they build?

¹¹ And the people of Israel heard it said, "Behold, the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built the altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region about the Jordan, on the side that belongs to the people of Israel." ¹² And when the people of Israel heard of it, the whole assembly of the people of Israel gathered at Shiloh to make war against them.

7. What kind of relationship do the east tribes have with the west tribes previous to this?

8. Why, then, is it surprising that they want to make war? Does this reflect positively or negatively on the tribes of the west?

9. Do we see this kind of zeal for the holiness and worship of God in our day?

"I would to God that the church of the twentieth century would learn this lesson. The holiness of the God who exists demands that there be no compromise in the area of truth. Tears? I am sure there were tears, but there had to be battle if there was rebellion against God." Francis Schaeffer

¹³ Then the people of Israel sent to the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, ¹⁴ and with him ten chiefs, one from each of the tribal families of Israel, every one of them the head of a family among the clans of Israel. ¹⁵ And they came to the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, and they said to them, ¹⁶ "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this breach of faith that you have committed against the God of Israel in turning away this day from following the LORD by building yourselves an altar this day in rebellion against the LORD?' ¹⁷ Have we not had enough of the sin at Peor from which even yet we have not cleansed ourselves, and for which there came a plague upon the congregation of the LORD, ¹⁸ that you too must

turn away this day from following the LORD? And if you too rebel against the LORD today then tomorrow he will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. ¹⁹ But now, if the land of your possession is unclean, pass over into the LORD's land where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and take for yourselves a possession among us. Only do not rebel against the LORD or make us as rebels by building for yourselves an altar other than the altar of the LORD our God. ²⁰ Did not Achan the son of Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity."

10. What is good about the west side's approach to the situation?

11. Is this kind of confrontation right? Do we see it much in the modern church?

12. Was the west side being "judgmental"?

13. Do you struggle with looking down on others for their sins, or with having the confidence in the Lord to confront those in sin?

14. What do you think about the manner in which the tribes went about appealing to the east side? What are their arguments?

²¹ Then the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh said in answer to the heads of the families of Israel, ²² "The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows; and let Israel itself know! If it was in rebellion or in breach of faith against the LORD, do not spare us today ²³ for building an altar to turn away from following the LORD. Or if we did so to offer burnt offerings or grain offerings or peace offerings on it, may the LORD himself take vengeance. ²⁴ No, but we did it from fear that in time to come your children might say to our children, 'What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?' ²⁵ For the LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you, you people of Reuben and people of Gad. You have no portion in the LORD.' So your children might make our children cease to worship the LORD. ²⁶ Therefore we said, 'Let us now build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice, ²⁷ but to be a witness between us and you, and between our generations after us, that we do perform the service of the LORD in his presence with our burnt offerings and sacrifices and peace offerings, so your children will not say to our children in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD.'" ²⁸ And we thought, If this should be said to us or to our descendants in time to come, we should say, 'Behold, the copy of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifice, but to be a witness between us and you.' ²⁹ Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away this day from following the LORD by building an altar for burnt offering, grain offering, or sacrifice, other than the altar of the LORD our God that stands before his tabernacle!" ³⁰ When Phinehas the priest and the chiefs of the congregation, the heads of the families of Israel who were with him, heard the words that the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the people of Manasseh spoke, it was good in their eyes.

15. What is the response of the two and a half tribes?

16. What can we learn about responding to confrontation from this?