

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**5-10-23**

**Joshua 22**

**Joshua Thanks Them For A Job Well Done – Verses 1-4**

**<sup>1</sup> Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, <sup>2</sup> And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you: <sup>3</sup> Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. <sup>4</sup> And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan.**

**22:2-4** Before the conquest had begun, these tribes were given land on the east side of the Jordan River. But before they could settle down, they had to first promise to help the other tribes conquer the land on the west side (Numbers 32:20-22). They had patiently and diligently carried out their promised duties. Joshua commended them for doing just that. At last they were permitted to return to their families and build their cities. Follow-through is vital in God's work. Beware of the temptation to quit early and leave God's work undone.

**Before They Leave, Joshua Gives Them An Exhortation And A Blessing – Verses 5-6**

**<sup>5</sup> But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. <sup>6</sup> So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents.**

**22:5** Here Joshua briefly restated the central message Moses gave the people in Deuteronomy: Obedience should be based on love for God. Although the Israelites had completed their military responsibility, Joshua reminded them of their spiritual responsibility. Sometimes we think so much about what we are to do that we neglect thinking about who we are to be. If we know we are God's children, we will love him and joyfully serve him. We must not let daily service take away from our love for God.

**The Armies Of The Two And A Half Tribes Depart, With Much Spoil – Verses 7-9**

**<sup>7</sup> Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given possession in Bashan: but unto the other half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, then he blessed them, <sup>8</sup> And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren. <sup>9</sup> And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.**

**22:7-8** Return with much riches to your tents: Their obedience to God and faithfulness to their brethren has been rewarded. God has allowed them to gain much plunder that they can take back home with them. We believe that when we obey God, we will be gainers, not losers. Perhaps not always in this obvious material sense, but in real, wonderful gains none the less.

**22:9** So the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh: We might imagine that this was a somewhat emotional departure of brothers who had known the closeness of fighting side-by-side. These were true veterans of the army of Israel.

### **The Eastern Tribes Make An Impressive Altar – Verse 10**

**<sup>10</sup> And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to.**

**22:10** When they came to the region of the Jordan: Before crossing over the Jordan, the soldiers from the two and a half tribes built a great, impressive altar near the Jordan River. This was significant not only because of its size, but because of the meaning of an altar. An altar was a place of sacrifice, and both the Israelites and pagans had altars they used for sacrifice.

### **The Tribes West Of The Jordan River Learn Of The Great Altar – Verses 11-15**

**<sup>11</sup> And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel. <sup>12</sup> And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them. <sup>13</sup> And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, <sup>14</sup> And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel. <sup>15</sup> And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying,**

**22:11-15** When the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar by the Jordan River, the rest of Israel feared that these tribes were starting their own religion and rebelling against God. But before beginning an all-out war, Phinehas led a delegation to learn the truth, following the principle taught in Deuteronomy 13:12-18. He was prepared to negotiate rather than fight if a battle was not necessary. When he learned that the altar was for a memorial rather than for pagan sacrifice, war was averted and unity restored.

**22:11-15** As nations and as individuals, we would benefit from a similar approach to resolving conflicts. Assuming the worst about the intentions of others only brings trouble. Israel averted the threat of civil war by asking before assaulting. Beware of reacting before you hear the whole story.

### **Phinehas Brings The Accusation Against The Eastern Tribes – Verses 16-18**

**<sup>16</sup> Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the LORD?<sup>17</sup> Is the iniquity of**

**Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD, <sup>18</sup> But that ye must turn away this day from following the LORD? and it will be, seeing ye rebel to day against the LORD, that to morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel.**

**22:16** What treachery is this: Clearly, they thought that the altar at the Jordan represented a rival place of sacrifice and worship, to compete with God's tabernacle, presently at Shiloh. God had clearly commanded that there was one place of sacrifice and burnt offerings for Israel.

**22:16-18** We understand from this that we cannot worship God any way we please, or justify a manner of worship just because we like it. First and always, our worship must be pleasing to God. We must worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)

**22:17-18** Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us: Phinehas reminds the eastern tribes that Israel has been punished for rebellion against God before, using the rebellion at Peor as an example. At Peor, Israel's men had sex with Moabite women, and they gave themselves over to the worship of the Moabite gods. In judgment, God sent a plague that killed 24,000 people.

**22:17-18** This incident would be especially meaningful to Phinehas because he was the one who stopped the plague by making a dramatic stand for righteousness on an occasion of gross sin. Phinehas also knew that the sin of these tribes would reflect on the whole nation. He knew that no one really sins all by himself.

### **A Willingness To Sacrifice To Keep A Brother From Sin – Verse 19**

**<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the LORD, wherein the LORD's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the LORD, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the LORD our God.**

**22:19** Take possession among us: To Phinehas, anything was better than seeing these tribes drift away in rebellion against God. If there was something unclean in their land, he invited them to come and live with the tribes on the western side of the Jordan.

**22:19** Do not rebel against the Lord, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar: This was an invitation made at great cost. It would have meant a much smaller area of land for the western tribes. But it didn't matter, because they were willing to sacrifice to see their brothers free from this sin. Too many of us lack this willingness; we tell people to stop sinning, but are not willing to help them if it costs us something.

### **The Sin Of Achan & Eastern Tribes Respond – Verses 20-23**

**<sup>20</sup> Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity. <sup>21</sup> Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel, <sup>22</sup> The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day,) <sup>23</sup> That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer thereon burnt offering or meat offering, or if to offer peace offerings thereon, let the LORD himself require it;**

**22:20-22** The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, He knows: They first appeal to God, because He knows for certain their hearts, and they believe that their brothers in the western tribes have misunderstood them. When we are misunderstood, our first refuge is God. He knows our heart, and we must be satisfied with being right before God even if it means we are wrong in the eyes of some others.

**22:23** The eastern tribes do what we should all do when we are misunderstood: put ourselves in the shoes of the other person and try to see what they see. If we saw what they saw, we might respond in the same way.

### **The Eastern Tribes Explain Their True Reason For Building The Altar – Verses 24-29**

**24** And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the LORD God of Israel? **25** For the LORD hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the LORD: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the LORD. **26** Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice: **27** But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD. **28** Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you. **29** God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the LORD our God that is before his tabernacle.

**22:26-28** The tribes were concerned that, without some visible sign of unity between the people on the two sides of the Jordan, future generations might see conflict between them. The altar, patterned after the altar of the Lord, was to remind these people that they all worshiped the same God. Often we need to be reminded of the faith of our fathers. What actions demonstrate to your children your reliance on God and remind them of what he has done? Take the time to establish family traditions that will help your children remember.

### **The Explanation Of The Eastern Tribes Is Accepted By The Western Tribes – Verses 30-31**

**30** And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel which were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them. **31** And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD.

**22:30** Now when Phinehas the priest and the rulers...heard the words...it pleased them: Obviously, Phinehas is pleased by this explanation; yet he deserves credit for being willing to believe his brothers. Phinehas puts himself in the shoes of the eastern tribes now, and so the explanation makes sense.

**22:31** This day we perceive that the Lord is among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the Lord: Phinehas could see that the Lord was among us, because unity had been restored among the people of Israel. This fulfilled the passage from Psalm 133:1: Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

#### **The Matter Is Resolved – Verses 32-34**

**<sup>32</sup> And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again. <sup>33</sup> And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. <sup>34</sup> And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God.**

**22:32-34** So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God: Everyone is glad, and everyone enjoys the blessing of having peace among the people of God. The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, Witness: The altar is given the name Witness, because it was a witness to the tribes on both the eastern side and the western side of the Jordan that the Lord is God.

**22:33-34** We should respond to misunderstanding in the same manner, according to these same principles. Respond with a concern for God's holiness - Respond with the courage to confront in love - Respond with an attempt to reconcile before you fight - Determine that you are willing to sacrifice to help them; don't confront unless you are willing to help - Determine that you will see the situation from the perspective of the other person - Determine that you will believe the best of one another.