

Joshua (9)

Conquering Your Enemies



Joshua sends the Eastern Tribes

Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh and said to them, “You have done all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. For a long time now, you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the LORD your God gave you.

Now...return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their homes (Joshua 22:1-6)

Words of Encouragement for a New Beginning

- Joshua imparts to the Reubenites, Gadites and half tribe of Manasseh
 - It had been over 7 years since they had left their homes to fulfill their promise to fight the Canaanites.
 - Remember these tribes did not take their inheritance with other tribes, but instead asked to remain east of Jordan.
- Joshua's words of encouragement
 - He commends them for keeping their promise (22:1-3).
 - He discharged them from their service (22: 4).
 - He admonishes them to be diligent in worship and obedience to God (22:5).
 - He blessed them. reminding to share their spoils with those who had remained behind protecting their families while they were gone (22:7-8).

Final Encouragements

- What Joshua has commanded
 - But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul (Joshua 22:5).
- Five commands encapsulate the passionate pursuit of faithfulness of God
 - **Love the Lord your God**: This should be the first and greatest priority.
 - **Walk in obedience to him**: We need to live a life of obedience to God's will.
 - **Keep his commandments**: We must live in accordance with God's Word.
 - **Hold fast to him**: In difficult times we must cling to His promises.
 - **Serve him with all your heart/soul**: Our devotion to God should be wholehearted.

They Built an Altar

- The returning tribes build altar
 - When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan. And when the Israelites **heard** that they had built the altar... the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them. (Joshua 22:10-12).
 - Location: by the Jordan, on the border of Canaan.
 - Appearance: An imposing (mareh=sight, phenomenon, spectacle, appearance, vision).
- What Israel did?
 - **They hear** -> They are upset -> They arm for battle.
 - Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings...If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it (Exodus 20:24-25).
 - Look at the replica of the LORD's altar, which our ancestors built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you (Joshua 22:28).
 - Exodus 20 forbids shaped altars. A formed altar was permitted only at the tabernacle.

How Conflict Arises?

- Israelites were offended by what they hear
 - Many people easily judged others by what they hear, because they assume the worst.
 - Think about how your actions could be perceived by others.
 - You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires (James 1:19-20).
 - To answer before listening, that is folly and shame (Proverbs 18:13).
- Israelites were ready to go war because what they assumed to be true
 - The whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them (Joshua 22:12).
 - It looked like eastern tribes were putting up an altar in competition with the memorial the Lord had erected there to commemorate the crossing of Jordan.

They Send an Envoy

- Send representatives
 - So the Israelites sent Phinehas, the priest, to the land of Gilead. With him they sent ten of the chief men, one from each of the tribes of Israel, each the head of a family division among the Israelite clans (Joshua 22:13-14).
- They confronted them
 - How could you break faith with God...build yourselves an altar in rebellion? (Joshua 22:16).
 - If the land you possess is defiled, come over to the LORD's land...share the land with us (Joshua 22:19).
- How they explain the altar
 - They deny all accusations of rebellion, using the altar for sacrifice, but merely as a symbol of their devotion to the one central altar before his tabernacle in Shiloh.
 - It is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the LORD at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, 'You have no share in the LORD' (Joshua 22:27).
- Israel's verdict
 - When they heard...they were pleased. Phinehas said, "today we know that the LORD is with us...Now you have rescued the Israelites from the LORD's hand "(Joshua 22:30-31).

The Resolution of the Conflict

- It began with taking the time to find the facts
 - A little investigation will put an end to much misunderstanding.
 - It was true then for Israel, and it is still true today for us!
 - We make too many assumptions based on what we have heard and not what we actually know.
 - If someone doesn't care enough about the truth to seek it out, then they ought to keep quiet!
 - If they hadn't taken the time to investigate the actions of the Eastern Tribes, there would have been a bloody civil war!
 - It seems they, like us, were more eager to fight among themselves, than to do battle against the real enemy
- I will protect the unity of Shalom Grove.
 - By acting in love toward other members
 - By refusing to gossip
 - By following the leaders

Spiritual Lessons

- Sin was not going to be tolerated.
 - We cannot tolerate sin under the guise of love or mercy.
- Seek the truth
 - When we have a misunderstanding with another person or if we are hearing rumors about them, then we need to go and check it out.
 - The best way to do this is to invite the one who is telling the rumor to go with you to talk with the person.
- Offer solutions and help
 - We need to be a part of the solution and not a part of the problem.
 - We need to make sure we have our facts right before take any kind of action.
 - We need to be able to have an open and honest discussion, in the spirit of gentleness and not arrogance.