

THE DANGER OF MISUNDERSTANDING
JOSHUA 22:1-34

Introduction

In our passage this evening, we will see that even after all their great **VICTORIES** they found themselves in a situation that almost led to a civil war among themselves because of a **MISUNDERSTANDING**.

We can avoid most **MISUNDERSTANDINGS** if we simply take the time to **HONESTLY SEEK THE TRUTH!**

I. WE SEE AN IMPORTANT CHANGE THAT TOOK PLACE!

A. We See Some Words Of Encouragement For A New Beginning. (vs. 1-8)

After the major **BATTLES** had been won and the **LAND** had been divided, **JOSHUA** had some **WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT** that he wanted to impart to the **REUBENITES**, the **GADITES**, and the half-tribe of **MANASSEH** before they returned home.

It had been over 7 years since they had left their homes and loves ones to fulfill their **PROMISE TO FIGHT** the **CANAANITES**.

Remember these 2 ½ tribes did not take their inheritance in the **PROMISED LAND** with the other tribes, but instead they had asked for their inheritance east of the **JORDAN RIVER**.

Note **JOSHUA'S WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT:**

1. **JOSHUA COMMENDED THEM FOR KEEPING THEIR PROMISE! (vs 1-3)**
2. **JOSHUA DISCHARGED THEM FROM THEIR SERVICE! (vs. 4)**
3. **JOSHUA ADMONISHED THEM TO BE DILIGENT IN WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD! (vs. 5)**

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4. **JOSHUA BLESSED THEM AND REMINDED THEM TO SHARE THEIR SPOILS WITH THOSE WHO HAD REMAINED BEHIND PROTECTING THEIR FAMILIES WHILE THEY WERE GONE. (vv.6-8)**

B. What Lessons Can We Learn Here?

1. **There Is The Lesson Of Being True To Our Word And Being Totally Obedient To GOD!**
2. **There's A Lesson About Being Committed To That Which God Has Called Us To Do!**
Sadly, **COMMITMENT** is a dirty word to some folks. Too many want to enjoy the many **BENEFITS** from **GOD** without making a **COMMITMENT to GOD**.

Some may make a **COMMITMENT but quit along the way. They give up before they finish the task.**

These tribes had spent over 7 years of their lives at **the task that they had promised to do, and they didn't stop until that task was finished.**

3. **There's A Lesson About Sharing In The Blessings Of Service!**
While not everyone got to go and fight, they all were to share in the spoils of the war.

In **CHURCH** life, not everyone can be involved in every aspect of every ministry, but we all can rejoice in sharing the blessings that come from laboring together!

GOD gives each of us varying **GIFTS** so that we may **CONTRIBUTE** something that is necessary to the whole. Each one who is a part of this **LOCAL CHURCH** has something to **CONTRIBUTE**, and then we all share in the **BLESSINGS of GOD** together!

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WE SEE AN IMPORTANT CHANGE THAT TOOK PLACE...

II. WE SEE AN INNOCENT ACTION THAT TOOK PLACE...

(Vs 9-10)

So, What Happened To Cause A Misunderstanding?

Leaving **SHILOH**, these armies of the Eastern tribes headed excitedly for home.

As they approached the **JORDAN RIVER** their minds were probably flooded with memories of the miraculous things that **GOD** had done for them.

1. The miraculous crossing of the **JORDAN RIVER** seven years before.
2. The remarkable **VICTORY** over nearby **JERICHO**, and of the other **TRIUMPHS** shared with their brothers from whom they had just left behind.
3. They also took to heart the charge that **JOSHUA** had given them in *vs. 5*.

So, they decided to build a huge **ALTAR**, one that could be seen from a great distance, that would bare witness to the generations to come.

They knew that the true basis of their unity was their common **WORSHIP** centered in the **SACRIFICES** at the **ALTAR**.

But often what we intend as good, somehow gets viewed as something else.

III. WE SEE A MISUNDERSTANDING THAT TOOK PLACE.

(Vs. 11-20)

A. We See Two Deadly Words—"Heard Say." (vs. 11)

The other tribes became greatly offended at the actions of the 2 ½ tribes from what they perceived was taking place.

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Many folks get offended by things they hear before they get the facts because they are prone to assume the worst!

Sadly, that seems to be our nature...we naturally assume that what we hear and our perceptions or assumptions about it are true.

Proverbs 18:13—"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."

James 1:19-20—"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

B. We See The Tribes Were Ready To Go To War With Their Brethren, Because Of What They Perceived And Assumed To Be True. (vs. 12)

First, the tribes of **REUBEN** and **GAD** and half-tribe of **MANASSEH** were **GUILTY** of **UNWISE ACTIONS**.

Without explanation they had erected a huge **ALTAR**, where the **ISRAELITES** had crossed over **JORDAN** on dry ground, without explanation to the other tribes.

It looked like they were putting up an **ALTAR** in competition with the **LORD'S ALTAR** that was set up at **SHILOH**.

The second mistake was on the part of the other tribes who hastily jumped to conclusions about the purpose of the **ALTAR** without first investigating.

In fact, they became very belligerent about it, and gathered their warriors back to **SHILOH** for the purpose of preparing to go to war against the two and a half tribes.

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- C. **We See The Delegation Sent from SHILOH. (vs. 13-20)**
This delegation charged them with turning away and rebelling against **GOD!** They reminded them of **GOD'S JUDGMENT** of those who previously had followed Baal.

Deuteronomy 4:3—“Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you.”

They also reminded them of the **JUDGMENT** against **ACHAN**.

IV. **WE SEE THE RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT. (Vs 21-34)**
And hopefully we can see how to **RESOLVE CONFLICT**.

- A. **To Resolve Conflict, Take The Time To Get The Facts!**
A little investigation will put an end to many misunderstandings. 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 really ought to keep quiet!

If they had not taken the time to investigate the actions of these 2 ½ tribes, there would have been a bloody civil war!

Let's not be more eager to fight among ourselves, than to do battle against the real enemy!

- B. **To Resolve Conflict, Listen To The Other Side Of The Story! (Vs 21-29)**

The accused tribes made it clear that they weren't setting up a rival religion (which is what they were accused of doing).

This **ALTAR** they built wasn't for **SACRIFICES**, but rather, it was for a **WITNESS!**

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It was to remind the tribes west of the **JORDAN** that **REUBEN, GAD**, and the half-tribe of **MANASSEH** were still the **LORD'S** people as part of the nation of **ISRAEL!**

The **ALTAR** was a "*replica*" of the **LORD'S ALTAR** at **SHILOH**, but this **ALTAR** wasn't for **SACRIFICE**, it was intended to be a **MEMORIAL** that would testify to the future generations that the Eastern Tribes were indeed a part of the nation of **ISRAEL!**

Note that the response of the 2 ½ tribes to the charges wasn't given in **anger** but instead their answer was given in **sincerity**.

Proverbs 15:1—“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”

The Eastern Tribes weren't trying to hide anything, nor were they trying to lie to cover up what they had done.

They were open and honest about what they had done and their intentions behind it.

While building an **ALTAR** probably wasn't the smartest thing that they could have done, their intentions in doing so were honorable.

- C. **To Resolve Conflict, Settle The Issue And Put It To Rest! (vs 30-34)**

The answer that the Eastern Tribes gave to the leaders of **ISRAEL** was acceptable, and they were reassured that there was no evil intentions in the Western Tribes action.

So, the leaders returned to the other side of **JORDAN** and informed the Western Tribes that the rumors were false and thus they put an end to any further misunderstandings regarding that issue. In response to the news the 9 ½ tribes on the west of the **JORDAN** were glad and **PRAISED GOD!**

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The Eastern Tribes called the altar "*Ed*" meaning that it was a witness between the tribes on both sides of the **JORDAN** that the **LORD** is the true **GOD!**

V. So What Is The Application For Us Today?

When we have a **misunderstanding** with another person or if we are hearing rumors about them, then we need find out the **TRUTH!**

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.

If we care about the person, we will want to **put an end to rumors** and **clear up any misunderstandings.**

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 we 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.

If we find that there is a **misunderstanding**, then we need to **put all rumors to rest** and **make sure that the issue is settled.**

What's in a person's heart will ultimately be revealed in how they **respond to the truth.**

If someone is **truly seeking what is right** and **what is best for the body of believers** then **they will rejoice when a problem has been resolved.**

But **if their intentions are not right** to begin with, then **they will never be happy with the answers they receive** and **will look for other reasons to bring discord among the brethren.**