

Building Bridges, Not Barriers

As Joshua 22 unfolds, we see a powerful lesson about commitment, misunderstanding, and unity among God's people. The Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh had faithfully fulfilled their promise to fight alongside the other tribes of Israel. Now, having completed their mission, Joshua releases them to return to their families on the east side of the Jordan River, where they had chosen to settle.

Before they left, Joshua gave them an important charge:

"But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law... to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Joshua 22:5)

Joshua knew that proximity to the Promised Land wasn't enough—faithfulness to God mattered most.

Faithfulness Beyond Borders

When these tribes reached the Jordan, they built a large altar, which immediately stirred up controversy. The other Israelites heard about it and assumed the worst—that these tribes were turning to idolatry. They were ready to go to war over this perceived betrayal!

But when they confronted the eastern tribes, they discovered their true motive:

- This wasn't an altar for sacrifices or rebellion.
- It was a memorial—a symbol of their connection to the rest of Israel, so that future generations would not forget that they belonged to the same covenant people of God.

Their intent was to build a bridge, not a barrier.

Personal Application: Avoiding Misunderstandings

How often do we jump to conclusions before knowing the whole story?

- Maybe someone's actions seem wrong, but we never ask their intent.
- Maybe someone makes a decision we don't understand, and instead of listening, we assume the worst.

Like the Israelites, we can misinterpret the actions of others, causing unnecessary division. If the leaders hadn't taken the time to investigate, this misunderstanding could have led to war among God's people!

- Before assuming the worst, take time to listen.
- Instead of reacting in anger, seek to understand.
- Choose unity over division whenever possible.

Is there a situation in your life where you've judged too quickly? Maybe it's time to reach out, listen, and build a bridge instead of a barrier.

Living as a Witness to Future Generations

The eastern tribes feared that their children might one day be excluded from Israel simply because of where they lived. Their altar was a statement:

"We belong to God. We are part of His covenant people."

This is a reminder that our faith is not just about us—it's also about the next generation.

Personal Application:

- What memorials are you leaving behind for your children or those who come after you?
- Do your actions show that you belong to Christ?
- Are you living in a way that strengthens the faith of those around you?

We need to be intentional in passing down our faith, making sure that the next generation knows they are part of God's family.

Lessons from Joshua 22

1. Keep your commitments. Just like the eastern tribes fulfilled their promise to fight with their fellow Israelites, we should be people of integrity—faithful in what we say we'll do.
2. Don't jump to conclusions. Assumptions cause division, but seeking understanding brings peace. Before reacting, take time to ask, listen, and clarify.
3. Live in a way that reminds others of who God is. The altar was a memorial for future generations. Does your life point others to Christ?
4. Pursue unity among God's people. Instead of allowing minor differences to divide us, we should seek to build bridges of faith, love, and understanding.

Final Reflection

The chapter ends with peace restored. The misunderstanding is resolved, and the altar is given the name "Witness", because it stood as a testimony that God is among His people (Joshua 22:34).

What kind of witness is your life leaving behind?

Are you building bridges of unity and understanding, or are you allowing assumptions and misunderstandings to create barriers?

May we be people who listen first, seek unity, and leave a legacy of faithfulness for generations to come.

"Lord, help me to be a person of integrity, honoring my commitments and seeking peace among Your people. Keep me from jumping to conclusions, and give me a heart that listens before reacting. Let my life be a testimony to those around me, pointing them to You. In Jesus' name, Amen."