


Joshua 22:1-6

The Offensive Altar

Background ...

- Israel has conquered and inhabited the Promised Land. Joshua 21:43-45 (23:14-15).
- In assigning the Promised Land to the 12 tribes, not all would receive their inheritance on the western side of the Jordan River.
- Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh.



Background ...

- Before they crossed the Jordan River to dispossess the land, Moses instructed the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the ½ tribe of Manasseh to help fight for their brothers and then they'd be able to return to their home on the other side of the Jordan.
- Numbers 32:16-23; Joshua 1:12-18; Deuteronomy 3:18-20
- This they faithfully did. Joshua 22:1-10

Background ...

- Note their command: verses 4-5

1. **Return to your possession** (implied – and be content).
2. **Be very careful to observe the law of God**. – “take diligent heed” – to hedge about, guard or protect with diligence, vehemence, or intensiveness.
3. **Love the Lord your God**.
4. **Cling to Him** – cleave, glue, stick with ... after pursuit ... used of marriage in Genesis 2:24 and of Ruth in Ruth 1:14
5. **Serve Him with all your heart and soul**. Work unto Him. Serve by labor. Used in Genesis 2:15 to “work it and keep it” (ESV)

Each one personally responsible!

Background ...

Not just to serve, love and obey God themselves, but to watch for each other.

Deuteronomy 13:12-15
If they heard of their brethren being unfaithful to the Lord, then they were to:

- “Investigate”
- “Search out”
- “Inquire thoroughly” Matthew 18:15ff

The Problem

- **Joshua 22:10-12** –
- The sons of Israel hear of a large altar being built by the 2 ½ tribes (Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh) on the western side of the Jordan River and they are concerned about what they're doing and they're ready to apply Deuteronomy 13:12-15

The perspective of the 9 ½ Tribes

Joshua 22:13-20

They viewed it as idolatry. They understood it to be unfaithfulness and rebellion (verse 16) against God and a turning away from Him and believed God would punish the whole nation for it.

They hadn't forgotten:

- "The iniquity of Peor" (verse 17)
- The unfaithfulness of Achan (verse 20)

They learned their lesson and understood the need to purge sin from their midst. **1 Corinthians 5:6-7; cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**

The perspective of the 9 ½ Tribes

They cared enough to act. They did not leave their brethren alone in the perceived sin. (Galatians 2:11ff)

They were willing to sacrifice – to give of their inheritance to prevent this sin from happening. In essence they said, 'We'll share our land with you – just please don't do this'. (verse 19; 2 Corinthians 12:15; 1 Corinthians 6:7)

They were willing to fight – to prevent God's wrath and the spread of leaven. (verse 12; 1 Timothy 6:12; Jude 3)

"If you see something, say something!"

Will we care enough to act? Matthew 18:15ff

The perspective of the 2 ½ Tribes

Joshua 22:21-29

How would they react to their brethren who came to plead with them, sacrifice for them, and fight with them if necessary? How would we react?

Become defensive, combative, or accusatory?

Rather, they first gave glory and honor to God – referring to Him as "**The Mighty One, God, the Lord.**" Psalms 50:1.

- A solemn appeal that expresses their unyielding faith in God, their deep honor and their continued allegiance.
- Shows great humility for what was perceived as rebellion against God. They took this seriously!

The perspective of the 2 ½ Tribes

They recognized that **God knows the truth!** (verse 22)

- They knew they couldn't establish a sinful idol in their land and it escape God's notice. **Psalms 139**

• Psalms 44:20-21, "*If we had forgotten the name of our God, Or extended our hands to a strange god; 21. **Would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.***"

- They did NOT ask to be saved if indeed they had committed the sin of rebellion against God. (verse 23; Acts 25:11)

- Again, how would we react?

The explanation of the 2 ½ Tribes

The real issue was their "concern" (anxious care, heaviness) for future generations. (verses 24-27; Joshua 4:1-7; 19-24)

Are we as concerned about future generations? (Exodus 12:24-28; Deuteronomy 4:9-11; Psalms 78:1-8; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15; Ephesians 6:4)

It was not to be a place of sacrifice and worship (verses 28-29). They respected the will of God regarding true worship.

The resolution

Joshua 22:30-34

Phinehas and the rest of the 9 ½ tribes glorified God because of the explanation and concluded that "*Today we know that the Lord is in our midst, because you have not committed this unfaithful act against the Lord*" and they returned home, reported the news, and "*blessed God.*"

A lesson in reverence for God and His will and true love for our brethren.

For us ...

- Love our brothers and sisters in Christ enough to go to them when we see them turning away from the Lord.
- Be willing to sacrifice for our brethren and the cause of Jesus Christ.
- Take a stand and fight for what is right.
- The focus is on God.
- Never forget God always knows the truth.
- Be concerned about future generations.
- Always be obedient to God.