

Joshua 22

Good evening and welcome to Calvary Chapel. Would you please turn in your bibles to Joshua 22? Last week we saw the cities of refuge, and the cities of the Levites

Tonight, we see the final words and instructions from Joshua as we finish this incredible book. Just a reminder that next Wednesday we'll begin our study in the book of judges.

The title of tonight's message is Victorious Living

Let's pray

In chapter 22 the 2½ tribes who chose to settle east of the Jordan return home. But a misunderstanding follows that almost erupts into an Israeli civil war.

Let's read verses 1-12

1 Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, 2 and said to them: "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. 3 You have not left your brethren these many days, up to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. 4 And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brethren, as He promised them; now therefore, return and go to your tents and to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. 5 But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, 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." 6 So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

7 Now to half the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the other half of it Joshua gave a possession among their brethren on this side of the Jordan, westward. And indeed, when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them, 8 and spoke to them, saying, “Return with much riches to your tents, with very much livestock, with silver, with gold, with bronze, with iron, and with very much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.”

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, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, which they had obtained according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

10 And when they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan—a great, impressive altar. 11 Now the children of Israel heard someone say, “Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan—on the children of Israel’s side.” 12 And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war against them. Deuteronomy 12 made it clear that Israel was to worship God in a designated place. Sacrifices could only be offered in a centralized location – and the new central location was at the Tabernacle in Shiloh.

It seems the 2 ½ tribes are building some kind of alternate altar. And the nation is ready to declare war on their brothers, but look what happens in verses 13-17..

13-17

13 Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, 14 and with him ten rulers, one ruler each from the chief house of every tribe of Israel; and each one was the head of the house of his father among the divisions^[fn] of Israel. 15 Then they came to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them, saying, 16 “Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD: ‘What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the LORD? Before declaring all out war, Israel acts in wisdom and they decide to go right to the source

17-25

17 Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed till this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD, 18 but that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? |And it shall be, if you rebel today against the LORD, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. 19 Nevertheless, if the land of your possession is unclean, then cross over to the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD’s tabernacle stands, and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the LORD our God. 20 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 did not perish alone in his iniquity.’” The eastern tribes are explaining that the sin of idolatry that the western tribes are doing could bring judgment on all of Israel.

21 Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions[fn] of Israel: 22 “The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knows, and let Israel itself know—if it is in rebellion, or if in treachery against the LORD, do not save us this day. 23 If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer on it burnt offerings or grain offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the LORD Himself require an account. 24 But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, ‘In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, “What have you to do with the LORD God of Israel? 25 For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between you and us, you children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no part in the LORD.” So your descendants would make our descendants cease fearing the LORD.’ Phinehas, and the western tribes, were afraid the eastern tribes had forsaken God – but just the opposite had happened. The 2½ tribes east of the Jordan worried that one day the West Bank tribes might use the river as a boundary to block them from coming to the Tabernacle and worshipping God. Their altar wasn’t to make a sacrifice – but rather serve as a memorial and a reminder of their allegiance to the one true God.

26-34

26 Therefore we said, ‘Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, 27 but that it may be a witness between you and us and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, “You have no part in the LORD.”’ 28 Therefore we said that it will be, when they say this to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, ‘Here is the replica of the altar of

the LORD which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between you and us.’ 29 Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn from following the LORD this day, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for grain offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle.”

30 Now when Phinehas the priest and the rulers of the congregation, the heads of the divisions^[fn] of Israel who were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them. 31 Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, “This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD. Now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD.”

32 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the rulers, returned from the children of Reuben and the children of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought back word to them. 33 So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God; they spoke no more of going against them in battle, to destroy the land where the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.

34 The children of Reuben and the children of Gad^[fn] called the altar, Witness, “For it is a witness between us that the LORD is God.” Remember though how this whole story started... Back in verse 11, “Now the children of Israel heard someone say...” They got all heated up over hearsay!

Here’s the reminder for us tonight. The nation nearly goes to blows – a bloody war almost erupts – over a rumor.

This is how civil war starts among friends - and families, and in churches... someone hears someone else say... They take it to heart without checking it out. Relationships blow up over hearsay, and miscommunication.

May we remember Jesus' words **Matthew 7:2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.**

In chapters 23 and 24, Joshua's life is almost over. He calls the nation together to speak to them a final time.

CHAPTER 23 1-5

1 Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age. 2 And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them:

"I am old, advanced in age. 3 You have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God is He who has fought for you. 4 See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward. 5 And the LORD your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight. So you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you. God is faithful to do His part - but in every work of God there are two parts... There's God's part and our part.

The question isn't if God will be faithful, the question is if we'll be obedient.

6 Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, 7 and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, 8 but you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. Joshua is concerned about the Canaanites who've been allowed to remain in the land. Tragically we'll see not long after Joshua's death this is exactly what happens to the Israelites—they forsake Jehovah for other Gods.

9-13

9 For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; but as for you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day. 10 One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you. 11 Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God. 12 Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations—these that remain among you—and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, 13 know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you. Notice the key in verse 11—take careful heed to the love the Lord. When loving our God is our priority, sin becomes less attractive...

14 “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. (about to die) And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not

one word of them has failed. 15 Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the LORD your God promised you, so the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things, until He has destroyed you from this good land which the LORD your God has given you. 16 When (interesting word-not if, but when) you have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you.”

CHAPTER 24

After Joshua’s farewell speech to the whole nation, he now calls all the leaders of Israel together at Shechem - a few miles north of his home in the mountains of Ephraim. And as his last words ring out, Joshua spends his final moments reminding them of God’s faithfulness.

1 Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River^[fn] in old times; and they served other gods. Abrahams own father was an idol worshipper!

3-8

3 Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. 4 To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. 5 Also I sent Moses

and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out.

6 'Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. 7 So they cried out to the LORD; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. 8 And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. This a reference to their victories over King Sihon and Og – the nations east of the Jordan River.

9-13

9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. 10 But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand. 11 Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you—also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. 12 I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow. 13 I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.' Notice what is missing from God's review of Israel's history: Their failures are strangely forgotten.

You know 1 word that describes this-grace! This is God's grace – its love and blessing we didn't manufacture or earn. It was paid

for on the cross. We receive it by faith – not effort or elbow grease.

And because God has been so merciful to the Israelites, what are they to do?

14 “Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! Notice a detail. The Hebrew slaves in Egypt had sunk so low in their faith they worshipped the gods of the Egyptians before they were set free.

God wants our service to Him in sincerity and in truth. It must come from the heart

15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Joshua commands the nation to choose whom they will serve, not if you will serve.

We all serve someone - either the devil (intentionally or not), or the LORD. There is no option of not serving anyone.

I love Joshua’s attitude. His decision has already been made. He doesn’t care what everybody else happens to do. He’s determined. His mind is made up. He says to the Hebrews, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD

Jesus said in **Matthew 7 13** “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

16 So the people answered and said: “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17 for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. 18 And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.” The people affirm-we’re going to follow the Lord too!

And now Joshua cautions them against making a commitment to God half-heartily. Look what he says...

19 But Joshua said to the people, “You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. 20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good.” Joshua is not trying to discourage their faith, but trying to discourage a light commitment to following the LORD. They need to be reminded that they are serving God under a covenant that promised they would be cursed for disobedience.

21 And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD!”

22 So Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him.”

And they said, “We are witnesses!” the people have reaffirmed they’re side of the covenant

23 “Now therefore,” he said, “put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel.”

This is why it seemed like Joshua was trying to discourage them. He knew that idols had already crept into the camp.

24 And the people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!”

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26 Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. 27 And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God.” 28 So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance. How could a stone be a witness? Jesus said **Luke 19:40 But He answered and said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.”**

The ultimate witness was the stone that was rolled away from the tomb when Jesus conquered death and rose on resurrection morning.

29 Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old. 30 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

32 The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground

which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph. He lived to the grand old age of 110, and was buried at home – at home in the Promised Land – in the land it had taken him 40 years to enter. He was buried in the mountains of Ephraim – in the inheritance he had received from God.

This may seem like an inconsequential point, but it fulfills **Genesis 50:24** 24 And Joseph said to his brethren, “I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” 25 Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.”

God likes to tie up loose ends-no detail goes unfulfilled.

33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill belonging to Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim. Joshua kept going strong until the day he went home. How did he do it? **Isaiah 40:31** But those who wait on the LORD

Shall renew their strength;

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint

It seems the older I get the more tired I get-do you notice this? And although my flesh doesn't want to, when we're tired is the time to wait on the Lord, to learn more from Him, to spend time with Him. And as we do, we'll mount up with wings as eagles. We'll walk and not faint.