

JOSHUA
"READY FOR BATTLE"
Joshua 22:1-34
"The Altar of Witness"

Introduction: Traumatic events can affect an entire people group. Shared trauma can impact how people respond to perceived conflict. Forty years of wandering in the wilderness and five years of war causes an emotional toll. How do we discern between a real intentional sin and a misunderstanding? How do we discern between liberty in expressing our devotion to Christ and non-negotiable standards? Today we will see an example of how in the aftermath of a major victory the people of God almost had a civil war!

SECTION I The Blessing of Victory and Obedience (Joshua 22:1-9).

- A. The 2 ½ tribes chose to settle on the other side of the Jordan in territory formerly occupied by King Sihon and King Og (Numbers 21; Numbers 32). Their request was honored based on the stipulation that they helped the other tribes conquer the land (Joshua 1:10-17). The 2 ½ tribes fulfilled their duty and earned the right to return to their inheritance.
- B. The victory is won by the power of God but God chose to use all 12 tribes. God gets the credit, but all the tribes had to participate. Similarly, to take all of Jesus to all the world it takes all of the body of Christ. Joshua charged the 2 ½ tribes to obey the law of Moses. Integrity is doing what is right in private.
- C. To walk in His ways is to behave in accordance with His course of conduct. To keep His commandments means to conform one's actions to His authoritative instruction. To hold fast to Him is to hold firmly or tenaciously to Him. To serve Him is to work for or be a servant to Him. Are you serving God with all your heart and soul? Love is always demonstrated through action. Did you know that the purpose of your existence is to worship and serve God?

SECTION II Meet Me at the Altar (Joshua 22:10-14)

- A. 2 ½ tribes return to their area and construct an oversized replica of the official altar located at Shiloh. The altar represented the place of authorized sacrifice. The altar was the place where offerings were placed in the fire.
- B. When word gets back to the tribes on the other side of Jordan they immediately gather for war. Why were they so ready to fight their own countrymen? Is this an overreaction? How do you respond to reports of potential idolatry in the Christian Community? It seems as if they did not seek God's counsel, but they did assemble a delegation to investigate.

SECTION III Trauma Informed Reaction (Joshua 5:15-20).

- A. The delegation arrives and lays down a serious allegation. They were accused of turning away from God. Do we accuse people of leaving Christ when they stop attending Sunday service? These are serious assumptions that were made against the 2 ½ tribes. They speculated about their motives and accused them of rebellion against the Lord.
- B. They state some of the trauma's that influenced their thinking: Iniquity of Peor (Numbers 25) and sin of Achan (Joshua 7). They fear communal suffering, the entire community suffers from sin. Examine yourself to discern if you are reacting to situations based on fear.

SECTION III Appeal to the Judge of All the Earth (Joshua 5:21-34).

- A. How do you respond to false allegations that question your integrity? The 2 ½ tribes appealed to God. God knows the true intentions and motives of our hearts.
- B. The 2 ½ tribes were motivated by fear of rejection by future generations. It can be argued that moving on the other side of the river would have eliminated this fear. Are we making decisions with future generations in mind? Are we making decisions that will preserve the unity of our community for years to come?
- C. The altar is named Witness. They wanted a monument to declare their shared confession of faith. Making images or statues of God is prohibited. Israel was unique in their culture for not using statues in worship. The altar was a symbol of the worship of the God of Israel.
- D. The Holy Spirit empowers us to be witnesses for Christ Jesus (Acts 1:8). We offer our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). We spread the aroma of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:15). We are the living witness that Jesus is Lord. We proclaim the message of the cross – the symbol of the sacrifice of Christ. The cross represents the intersection of the judgement of God and the grace of God. The cross of Christ is where the Lamb of God was slain for the sin of the world. The sin offering (lamb) was bound to the horns of the altar, Christ was bound to the cross on Calvary.

BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND RECEIVE ETERNAL LIFE!

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