

## **Day 237 - FRIDAY: August 25th**

Joshua 22

Joshua 22:1–34 NKJV

Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, 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. 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. 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. 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." So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents. 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, 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." 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. 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. 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." 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. 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, 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 of Israel. 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, "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? 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, 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. 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. 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.'

" Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel: "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. 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. 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? 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.' Therefore we said, 'Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, 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." ' 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.' 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." Now when Phinehas the priest and the rulers of the congregation, the heads of the divisions 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. 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." 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. 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. The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, Witness, "For it is a witness between us that the LORD is God."

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

The UCG reading program for this chapter states: "The land has been apportioned, and the eastern tribes have fulfilled their responsibilities. Joshua now dismisses them to return home. The time and sacrifice has not been without its rewards, as they return with much wealth from the spoils of Canaan, which Joshua urges them to share with those who remained to take care of their land and families (verse 8). Before they go, Joshua exhorts them to follow God's law wholeheartedly (verse 5). So it comes as a great shock when word comes back that they have built a large altar beside the Jordan River apparently contrary to God's explicit

commands (compare Deuteronomy 12). In their zeal, a war party forms at Shiloh to deal with this brazen transgression. Before heading off to battle, a delegation of tribal leaders, headed by Phinehas, the son of the high priest, is sent to find out just why they have done this. The delegation reminds them of some of Israel's past transgressions, and suggests that perhaps it would be better if they came over to the western lands after all.

The tribes explain, however, that things are not how they look to the western delegation. They say they built it as a "*replica* of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made" (Joshua 22:28), i.e., apparently a copy of the stone one that had been set up at Mount Ebal (compare Joshua 8:30–31). And, most importantly, this altar, they maintain, was not to be used for sacrifices as the original was, but rather to serve as a witness and reminder in years to come to Israelites on both sides of the Jordan that they too are a part of Israel, who also worship the true God (Joshua 22:27–28). The explanation is quite acceptable to Phinehas and the tribal leaders. They return to Shiloh, and a civil war is averted (verses 30–34)." [END]

Verse 17 – This is a reference back to Number 25 where Balaam told King Balak how to get the children of Israel to stumble and sin (which they did greatly).

Verse 34 – This chapter serves as a strong example of how to do things. First, there was an appearance of evil and the people responded to this appropriately. They prepared to deal with the evil, but they sought more information to make sure they did understand. After gathering the additional information, they realized their assumption wasn't correct. Could we assume evil intent but never take the additional step of going to our brother/sister to find out if, in fact, our assumption is correct? How many issues would have been avoided in the past if we all talked to each other more openly? This serves as a wonderful example that we should follow.