

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

This morning, we continue our study through the book of Joshua.

We started Joshua back at the end of April – and by God’s grace we will be done in four months.

As I mentioned last week, we will begin the book of Galatians next.

So please read ahead.

So we’ve read the account of the land being conquered, and last week, we finished the account of how the land is distributed among the Children of Israel.

Each tribe has their inheritance that was promised to them by God.

So for these next two weeks, our studies should be how the tribes of Israel lived happily ever after in harmony right???

Unfortunately church, that is not the case as we have chapter 22.

And chapter 22 is an example of how the enemy is relentless in sabotaging the will of God.

Because in chapter 22, the Children of Israel will come to the brink of civil war.

And the reason that they will come close to annihilating each other is a simple misunderstanding.

And one of the lessons that we will learn this morning is the importance of not jumping to conclusions based upon our initial observations.

Let's pray...

As the children of Israel were finishing up wandering the wilderness for forty years, Moses leads them to victory over two Amorite kings –

And because they conquered the land that belonged to these Amorite Kings, two and half of the tribes take a look at the land and decide – “Hey, we want this land!!!”

“This land is perfect for our cattle”

It is flat –

It has abundant grass –

We will surely be prosperous living in this land.

However, the problem was that this land wasn't the land that God had promised them.

So these two and a half tribes go before Moses and they wound up coming to an agreement.

Turn with me to the Book of Numbers 32

[Num 32:16-23 NKJV] 16 Then they came near to him and said: "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones, 17 "but we ourselves will be armed, ready [to go] before the children of Israel until we have brought them to their place; and our little ones will dwell in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land. 18 "We will not return to our homes until every one of the children of

Israel has received his inheritance. 19 "For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this eastern side of the Jordan." 20 Then Moses said to them: "If you do this thing, if you arm yourselves before the LORD for the war, 21 "and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven out His enemies from before Him, 22 "and the land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the LORD and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. 23 "But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.

So the agreement that they came up with was that these two and half tribes – agreed to help conquer the Promised Land for the other 9.5 tribes.

And when those nine and a half tribes had finally inherited their land, they would then be allowed to return back to their land that was on the east side of the Jordan.

And that is where we pick up the events of chapter 22, mission accomplished – these two and a half tribes can now go home.

[Jos 22:1-34 NKJV] 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.

The chapter begins with Joshua's commendation.

These two and a half tribes had done everything that had been asked from them from both Joshua and Moses.

They have fought on behalf of their brethren, even though they already had their inheritance.

Not only had they been faithful to Joshua and Moses, they had remained faithful to the Lord's command regarding the conquering of the Promise Land.

It's been about seven years since they crossed over the Jordan River to fight with the remaining tribes.

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.

These two and a half tribes have now been released from any further obligation. They are free to return to the East 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.

Before Joshua sends these two and a half tribes back home, he sends them with one final charge.

And when you look at all the items I asked you to underline – what Joshua is charging them with is the same thing that Jesus answered the scribes in Matthew 22 when He was asked what the greatest commandment was.

[Mat 22:37-38 NKJV] 37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 "This is [the] first and great commandment.

Church, the obedience, the clinging, the loving – all of these give us a comprehensive picture of what a true relationship with God is all about.

And that is what Joshua is commanding these two and half tribes – don't neglect your relationship with God. Don't allow obstacles to impeded between you and God.

You see, Joshua knew that they were going to face obstacles when they returned home.

The Jordan River was going to isolate them away from the other nine and a half tribes.

And because there were no bridges over the Jordan River – many of them would eventually neglect their relationship with God by not partaking of the feasts that were prescribed in the law.

The same can be said about our own walk – we cannot allow obstacles to come between our relationship with the Lord.

Or be prevented from serving the Lord because of the obstacles in our lives.

Nothing should come between our love for the Lord.

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.

These two and a half tribes were not going to return to their land empty handed.

As the land west of the Jordan was conquered, they got a share of all the plunder.

Even though they went in with the right intentions, it turns out that it was a profitable thing for these tribes to have helped out the other tribes.

It turned out to be a great benefit for them.

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.

So on their way home, the two and a half tribes take it upon themselves to build an altar.

Not only do they build an altar – the scriptures tell us that they built an impressive altar. Meaning that it was going to be visible from miles away.

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.

So, one minute Joshua is commending the two and a half tribes for their tremendous loyalty and then a few verses later, the Children of Israel are ready to go to war against the two and a half tribes based upon hearsay.

Based upon the words that someone spoke – based on gossip.

Notice that it doesn't say that Joshua gathered the people – the people gathered themselves. That is how fast gossip stirred the people.

Church, nothing brings greater division and opposition to families and the church as much as gossip and hearsay does.

The children of Israel are ready for civil war and they don't even know the true intentions of the two and a half tribes.

They don't know why the altar has been built.

The Children of Israel are ready to go to war against the 2.5 tribes because the Word of God commands it.

Because the worship of other gods was punishable by death.

(Deut 13)

The problem lies in their overreaction. The problem lies in that they don't know if the 2.5 tribes were worshipping other gods.

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 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?

The nine and a half tribes thought that the altar at the Jordan represented a rival place of sacrifice and worship – when God had clearly commanded in His word that all sacrifices and burnt offerings be made at the tabernacle in Shilo. (Lev 17:8-9)

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.

In the book of Numbers 25, make a note of it.

There is an incident in which the Children of Israel allow themselves to be seduced by Moabite prostitutes, and as they are being seduced – the Moabite prostitutes are turning the men toward their own pagan gods.

They start to worship Baal.

So the Lord's anger is aroused against the Children of Israel because of the idolatry and the Lord sends a plague against the Children of Israel.

24,000 people die in the plague. And it was not until Phineas – this same Phineas that is mentioned here, as he sees one of the men being seduced that he thrust his javelin through the man and the Moabite harlot – that the plague stops.

So in the same way that 24,000 people died because of the sin of a few at Peor – Phineas wants to make sure that the 2.5 tribes are not rebelling against the Lord because he knows that judgment will come upon all the tribes.

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.

Phineas is still trying to figure out why they would build the altar.

And what he is doing here in verse 19 is giving them an alternative to rebellion.

“Hey guys, if you guys are doing this because you are not happy with your land – come live with us”

“We will give you a portion of our inheritance – just don’t rebel against God”

This was an invitation made at great cost.

It would have meant a much smaller area of land for the western tribes.

But it didn’t matter, because they were willing to sacrifice to see their brothers free from this sin.

Church, how many of us are willing to make these types of sacrifices for our brothers and sisters.

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.' "

Phineas provides the 2.5 tribes another example of someone who sinned against God and the consequences of his sin.

Remember, Achan decides to take a few souvenirs in Jericho and then when they go fight against Ai, 36 Israelites lose their life because of Achan.

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 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].

The two and a half tribes finally get to speak – They understand the seriousness of rebelling against God.

After being accused of idol worship and rebellion, notice that they respond with calmness.

They don't respond the same way that the 9.5 tribes responded toward them.

And sometimes, when we are falsely accused, we feel the need to respond with the same ugliness that was brought against us.

And instead of trying to clear the matter – like the 2.5 tribes are doing here, we make things worse.

[Pro 15:28 NKJV] 28 The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.

And we see in the next few verse their explanation for building the altar.

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.' 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."

The two and a half tribes reveal that the reason for them building the altar was not to worship other gods or to offer burnt offerings there.

It was not a substitute for the altar at the tabernacle.

The reason that they built the altar was so that they wouldn't lose their identity by living on the eastern side of the Jordan.

You see, they were thinking that the future generations of the 9.5 tribes would refuse to even acknowledge that the 2.5 tribes were indeed part of the tribe of Israel and they were

concerned that they wouldn't allow them to even worship at the tabernacle.

In other words -

This altar by the Jordan was simply a memorial.

Like the ones that had already been built so that they themselves and subsequent generations would never forget.

30 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. 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 called the altar, [Witness], "For [it is] a witness between us that the LORD [is] God."

Phineas and the Children of Israel are pleased with the explanation by the 2.5 tribes and civil war is averted.

Church, what if the 2.5 tribes had responded differently???

All out civil war – all over a misunderstanding.

How many of us are currently facing the consequences of our responses.

May we learn from these two examples on how to respond to misunderstanding in our walk. Amen.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.