



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

KEEP CALM AND MARCH ON!

Marching through the Book of Joshua: Lesson 19

Now the settlement of Israel is completed and all of God's promises have "come to pass." In chapter 22, Joshua now presents a challenge to the eastern tribes who had chosen to settle on the other side of the Jordan. These tribes haven't been home for seven years and I'm sure they were pretty excited to get back to their families and friends. Joshua knows it's now time to officially "discharge" them, but not without a few words of encouragement and exhortation first.

First Day

1. Read Joshua chapter 22:1-34. Write a one-sentence summary explaining the main thought or point of each section. Give each section a title.
 - a. Section 1: verses 1-9
 - b. Section 2: verse 10
 - c. Section 3: verses 11-20
 - d. Section 4: verses 21-29
 - e. Section 5: verses 30-34

2. What would you say is the key verse in this whole chapter?
3. Read Joshua 22:1-9 again.
4. Do you remember why the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had settled on the other side of the Jordan? If you need to refresh your memory read Numbers 32:16-28 and Joshua 1:12-15.
5. What "charge" was Joshua referring to in verse 2? Read Numbers 32:20-25.

Joshua commends these tribes for obeying the command of the Lord. They had shared in the work of the conquest and had received their share of the inheritance, including the land, booty, and the cities of refuge. Even though the Jordan River would stand as a physical barrier between their land and the rest of Canaan, they were full members of the covenant nation.

General Joshua now gives them the freedom to leave. But before they part ways, he has one more challenge for them to take home.

6. What challenge do you find in verse 5?
7. What action words or phrases do you find in this challenge?
(You should have seven.)

The phrase "**hold fast**" means to "**cleave**." The Hebrew word describes the deep personal attachment that creates a new unity, as when a man leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife to become "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

"In Hebrew thought, the word '**heart**' is used to refer to the power of planning, understanding, memory, judgment, and will. The word '**soul**' emphasizes the longing, desiring, striving, thirsting, vulnerable, incomplete aspects of personality. In other words, the Israelites must love and serve God with all their rational and emotional being. Love and service are acts of the mind, the will, and the emotions." (Joshua: Inheriting the Land, by E. John Hamlin)

Joshua knew how important it was to keep God first in the center of their lives. He knew how vital it was that they continued loving and serving Him with all of their hearts. I picture him feeling like the mother hen, getting her babies ready to leave the nest and beginning to fly! I'm sure he loved these men and wanted them to continue to walk with God. He wanted them to stay true to the Great Shepherd of their souls.

Have you ever wondered what would be your last words to your kids before they left the nest? I pray that each of us would remember to challenge them as Joshua does. Walking with God is the most important thing in their lives. If they are walking with Him and seeking His will, we certainly can rest.

8. Find another Scripture that commands us to:
 - a. Take heed to His Word
 - b. Obey God's commandments
 - c. Love God
 - d. Walk in His ways
 - e. Keep His commandments
 - f. Hold fast to Him
 - g. Serve Him with all you got!

9. Now it's time to ask yourself the most important question ...
 - a. Are you being careful to read His Word?
 - b. Are you obeying all of His commandments?
 - c. Do you love God with your whole heart?
 - d. Are you walking in His ways?
 - e. Are you keeping His commandments?
 - f. Are you holding fast to Him?
 - g. Are you diligently serving Him?

10. In what areas can you be more diligent? For example; are you walking in all of His ways, or only some? Are you obeying Him, or only at times? Are you reading the Word daily, or only when you have time? Ask the Lord to reveal any changes that need to be made, and ask the Lord to give you the will, and the power, to make those changes.

As you know, there is only one more study in our Joshua series. I also am beginning to get the "mother hen" feelings that Joshua had. Ladies ... take the challenge in verse 5. These words are from God's heart to yours. Put this challenge on your fridge, night-stand, or somewhere that you can see it every day. These are important words for us to live by, as well as share with others.

After Joshua challenges them, he blesses them and sends them on their way (vs 6). In verse 8, Joshua reminds the people to divide the goods that had been plundered with the brethren who had stayed at home.

11. Why did some of the brethren stay at home, and why should they share with them? Read Numbers 31:25-27 and 1 Samuel 30:23-25.

12. How does this principle relate to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31?

The eastern tribes were going home with many material blessings (vs 8). But more importantly than that, they had received tremendous spiritual blessings that made them much richer. We can rejoice in the inheritance that we also have in Christ. We are rich! And that's a "**Reason to Rejoice**"!

Memory Verse of the Week: "But take diligent 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." **Joshua 22:5**

Second Day

Practice your memory verse. It's a long one, but, oh, so rich.

We now move into an interesting section of the chapter. Here is a classic example of a misunderstanding. As you read these next verses, be asking yourself questions such as: Did Israel handle these accusations correctly? Is there anything that they could have done differently? What were their motives? Did they use the truth in love?

1. Read Joshua 22:10-20.

2. What did the eastern tribes build?

The exact location of this altar is not known for sure. Some believe that it was built on the western bank of the Jordan, while others believe it was on the eastern. Either way, the point is that the altar was built, and not just a little altar, but a **“great, impressive one.”**

3. Why did the western tribes think that the eastern tribes had built the altar?
(Sounds confusing!)

4. Why did it make them so angry? What's the big deal about building another altar, anyway? Read Deuteronomy 12:5, 13-14.

The Israelites were supposed to sacrifice and worship together in one place. This was for the purpose of preserving the purity of worship. Basically, it represented one altar, one faith, one people. If the Jews were allowed just to “pick a place” to build an altar and “experience God,” they would be in danger of becoming like the Canaanites, who worshipped many gods, many places, many ways. It would ruin the unity of Israel, as well as open the door for them to follow after other gods.

When the western tribes heard about the altar, they believed it symbolized a man-chosen worship site, which meant the first step towards apostasy.

5. What action did Israel decide to take?

6. Who did they decide to send as leader of the investigation team? Who is he?
Read Exodus 6:25.

7. When the investigators confronted the eastern tribes, what did they accuse them of? What two “situations” does Phinehas use to support their concerns?

8. Read about the “iniquity of Peor” in Numbers 25:1-18 and answer the following questions:

a. What sin did Israel commit?

- b. What did God do about it?
- c. How was the plague stopped?
- d. How many people were affected by their sin?
- e. What was Phinehas commended for?
- f. Why do you think Phinehas was chosen to represent Israel again here in Joshua 22?

The western tribes believed that the sin of the eastern tribes would affect the whole nation of Israel. If they turned away from God to serve other gods, God would judge the entire nation. They remembered the "iniquity of Peor" which resulted in the death of 24,000 people. They remembered the sin of Achan which led to the defeat of Israel at Ai, the death of 36 Jewish soldiers, as well as the death of Achan and his entire family.

9. What challenge and solution does Phinehas offer them? What were the western tribes willing to give up for the sake of unity?

Interpreting this section is a little difficult. Many different opinions are held by scholars concerning whether Israel reacted the correct way. Some believe that Israel responded too quickly to "hearsay" (vs 11) and shouldn't have immediately believed the worst about their brethren. They offer that they should have attempted to find the truth before they rushed to make war. Others commend Israel for sending out the team to investigate, believing that they were adhering to the command in Deuteronomy 13:12-14, which tells them to "go check it out!" Still others praise Israel for their apparent zeal, saying that it was a "healthy sign that Israel was stirred by even the appearance of unfaithfulness." I quote, "Their holy jealousy, therefore, in these circumstances was no more than a proper expression of their intense concern for the glory of God and the honor of His institutions."

10. What do you think? Did Israel respond correctly? Should, or could they have, done anything differently? Was it appropriate, godly, and loving, or not? Discuss your opinions in your group. Keep in mind the principles of Colossians 3:12-14 and Hebrews 12:14-17.

11. What can you learn from this part of the story that is relevant to us as believers?

I thought it was interesting that the western tribes suggested they come back and live where they were really supposed to, on the other side of the Jordan. "Come home!" was basically their counsel. But they would have had to offer them some of their land for them to do this. They would have to sacrifice something very precious to them in order for the desired unity to take place. They came with not only an accusation, but also a solution. And that solution put them in the place of having to be the ones to make the sacrifice. How often we counsel others out of their sin, but are unwilling to sacrifice something to help give them a way out.

12. When you come alongside someone to help them turn from their sin, how often are you willing to sacrifice to help them? Will you sacrifice your time? Your money? A room in your home? Are you "quick with counsel" but "slow in solutions"?

Let's end here for today. We've learned all through the book of Joshua how important it was for Israel to be unified. As Christians, it is just as important for us to be in unity with our brothers and sisters. This unity cannot take place if there is sin in the camp. Make sure the sin in "your camp" is continually dealt with because your sin not only affects you, but the whole body of Christ.

Third Day

Are you memorizing your verse? How is it affecting your life this week?

Today we will read the response of the eastern tribes to the accusations of their brethren. Again, as you read, be asking yourself questions, such as: Were their motives right, and, if they were, does that excuse their actions? Should they have listened to the counsel? What mistakes do they continue to make, even in their response?

1. Read Joshua 22:21-29. Do you remember what you titled this section?
2. How did the eastern tribes react to these serious charges against them?
3. What explanation did they give? Why did they feel like they needed an altar? List all the reasons they offered.
4. What is your opinion of their explanation? Do you find any inconsistencies in their reasoning?

It's important that you know that scholars differ in their opinions on the issue of whether or not the eastern tribes were wrong in settling on the other side of the Jordan. Many believe that they may have been trying to escape the hardships that they would encounter if they crossed the Jordan, as well as having a greedy desire for land and cattle. They made their choice because of good grazing land, not for any spiritual reasons. They were allowed to do this, but Scripture never says that it was in God's will.

Others feel that because Moses and Joshua both allowed the eastern tribes to do what they wished, it must have been approved by God. They were faithful and fulfilled their part of their agreement.

After my own personal study, I personally believe that the eastern tribes settled for second best. The rest of the questions in our lesson are written from

this perspective. Although you may hold a different opinion than I (which is fine with me!), I pray that you would still do your best to answer the questions.

In verse 25, they actually say that "your sons might make our sons stop fearing God" by accusing them of not being part of God's people. This logic is also very interesting.

5. If the children of the eastern tribes stopped fearing God, what do you think would be the real cause of their rebellion?

If the eastern tribes were worshipping where they should, attending the feasts in Jerusalem, honoring God and His Word, and teaching the children about God in their homes (Deuteronomy 6:6-9), their children would grow up fearing God. Instead, they were choosing to live out of God's will, separating themselves from their brethren, putting their children's faith at stake. They decided it was better for their children to have a good home and a good income, rather than spiritual blessings. Not only that, they try to blame the children of the western tribes for the rebellion, if it takes place.

6. Have you been blaming others for what's happening in your life? Often we blame the world, or our neighbors, or the schools, or our friends, and even our husbands, for the consequences of our own actions. Ask God to search your heart on this issue.
7. What choices today are you making for your children's future? Are you more concerned for their life here on earth or their eternal life? Compare the time you spend preparing them for this life, with the time you spend preparing them for eternity. Which way does the scale tilt?
8. Let's go back to the altar. What purpose was it supposed to serve?

This altar was to be a perpetual reminder, or witness, that God belonged to the residents of the east, which was considered Gilead, as much as He was to the

west. They wanted everyone to know that they were as much a part of God's people as the tribes on the west. They seemed to be as concerned with unity as were the western tribes. Unfortunately, it seemed like they wanted the best of both worlds. They wanted to "have their cake and eat it, too." They desired to be a part of the nation and receive God's blessings, yet wanted Him to bless them when they were doing what THEY wanted to do, and living where THEY wanted to live.

Sound familiar? As Christians, we often want the best of both worlds: God's and man's. We want God's blessings, His inheritance, His gifts, yet we want it when we want it, where we want it, and how we want it.

9. Examine your heart. Is this a truth in your life? Are you asking for God's blessings as you follow your own will? Do you want the best of both worlds, like these eastern tribes?

We don't know the motives and intentions of the eastern tribes. Though their motive for building the altar may have been sincere, their method was wrong. It clearly seemed to violate the Word of God given to Moses (Deut. 27:1-10). We do know that our hearts are "deceitfully wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), which is why we must never act on our "feelings" but on God's Word. Just because we "mean" to do the right thing doesn't excuse our actions if they are out of the will of God. Ignorance is one thing. Disobedience is another. We all have access to God's Word. We are also held accountable for choosing to remain ignorant, when we have God's Word available to us. Let's not settle for second best. Let's not choose the pleasures of this world over the will of God and expect Him to bless it. Let's learn from the example of the tribes to the east of the Jordan.

Fourth Day

What's your memory verse? Are you walking in all His ways? Are you serving Him with all that's in you?

1. Read Joshua 22:30-34.
2. How did Phinehas and the team respond to the explanation given by the eastern tribes?

3. Do you agree with Phinehas' statement in verse 31?

Phinehas perceived that the Lord was with them. They all went away in peace, satisfied with the explanation and the situation. It's unfortunate that peace was the main thing being sought after, rather than truth. I believe that Phinehas should have continued his attempts at bringing them back to the Promised Land, where they should have been in the first place. Matthew Henry said, "Peace is such a precious jewel that I would give anything for it but truth." They all settled for peace, but abandoned truth.

4. What was the name of the altar?

Dale Davis writes, "In Old Testament faith, there is no more crucial confession than 'Yahweh is God' (Deuteronomy 4:32-40), just as 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Corinthians 12:3) stands at the center of the New Testament faith. This altar is meant to say, Yahweh is our God as well as yours, and therefore we are one people."

5. Even though this altar was supposed to be a sign to the world that Israel was unified, we know they weren't. The choice of the eastern tribes reflected the attitudes of their hearts. What are the dangers of wearing Christian t-shirts, having Christian bumper stickers, and using Christian terminology, when the choices you make in your life are opposite to what God's Word says?

6. Read 2 Timothy 2:19. How does this relate to the above question?

Let's end here for today. The western tribes are satisfied with the explanation, the eastern tribes are satisfied with the arrangement, everyone is satisfied with the situation. Peace is found, but at what cost? Are you willing to sacrifice truth for error? True peace is only found in the person of Jesus Christ.

Fifth Day

Write your verse by memory.

1. Read Genesis 13 to refresh your memory of the story of Abraham and Lot. How is Lot like the eastern tribes of Israel? How is Abraham like the west?

2. Both Lot and the eastern tribes would be a great example of a fence-sitter or a borderline believer. They have one foot in this world and one foot in the Lord. Lot made choices according to what he saw and what he wanted. A fence-sitter is a dangerous spot to be. **Can you name any other fence-sitters in the Bible? Are you a fence-sitter?**

3. What one truth from chapter 22 would you like to take to heart?

4. What do you think is the main point of chapter 22?

5. Read over your memory verse again. Which phrase in it challenged you the most? What changes can you make to meet that challenge?

This concludes our study of Joshua chapter 22. I really enjoyed this chapter. It gave me a lot to think about. It made me examine my heart, my service, and my motives. It also gave me many **"Reasons to Rejoice."** Verse 8 reminds us that no matter what job God gives us in His kingdom, we get our share of the inheritance. He simply wants obedience, nothing less. Have you entered His rest-land or are you still sitting on the fence?

