

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Twenty-Two – Joshua 22:1-34

The outline we’re following is in four parts:

- I. The Invasion of the Land—chapters 1-5
- II. Subjection of the Land—chapters 6-12
- III. The Division of the Land—chapters 13-22
- IV. The Conclusion—chapters 23 and 24

In chapters 23 and 24 we have two addresses by Joshua and we’re going to focus on the final address in our last session together in study #24.

Now when we come to chapter 22, we have titled this chapter:

“The Dangerous Situation.”

When we get to Joshua 22, we’re coming to the end of this major division. Everything’s done. All of the inheritances are in place, the tribes have their home. The cities of refuge have been designated. Levitical cities are in place and basically this is about it for Joshua.

If we look at Joshua's life it's a 4 ACT PLAY:

1. He was to take over for Moses and to go into the land.
2. He was to get involved in the military operation to possess that land.
3. Once it was possessed then he was to divide it among the twelve tribes.
4. Having done that, basically wraps it up.

And these are just some of the final details that need to be taken care of as he finishes his race.

There are two verses in 2 Chronicles 31 that describe Hezekiah, but oh boy do they illustrate and describe Joshua for us.

2 Chronicles 31:20, 21

This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so, he prospered.

What a great tribute to a man who actually became king and served. And the tribute to him is that he is a man who worked

wholeheartedly and he prospered. Joshua is that kind of person.

Now before we dig into the chapter, let's outline it. We have five points in the outline to follow. They are all just one word so it'll be easy to get the progression.

- I. The Admonition—verses 1-8
- II. The Provocation—verses 9 and 10
- III. The Mobilization—verses 11-20
- IV. The Explanation—verses 21-29
- V. The Satisfaction—verses 30-34

It is our purpose now to jump right into the text and get on with it.

- I. The Admonition—verses 1-8

v. 1 Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh

“Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh”

Now after all of this work, why does he suddenly call attention to these two and a half tribes that are over on the east side?

There's a little story way back in Joshua chapter 1 we need to cover so we can understand why Joshua now concludes his work with the nation by coming back to these two and a half tribes.

Listen to Joshua back in chapter 1 just after he's taken over for Moses. This is what he does:

Joshua 1:12-18

But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, "Remember the command that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: 'The Lord your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.' Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers. You are to help your brothers until the Lord gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

Then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever you may command them, will be put to

death. Only be strong and courageous!”

Basically, what we have is a flying wedge of about forty thousand men from the two and a half tribes that go across the river first into the land. These are all military men that are being called together here at Shiloh now. They have been functioning in the military operation for seven years. They’ve been faithful. They’ve left their families and the rest of the people on the east side and they have come over and fulfilled their function.

This is a military farewell. This is a very emotional time. These men have suffered and fought together. Some of them have saved one another’s lives in critical situations. And they’ve just become real blood brothers and so it’s a tearful parting that’s taking place here. And Joshua realizes it’s time to send them back. Look at the tribute that’s given to them.

Look at verse 2. Don’t we wish that we could hear something like this when we step into the presence of the Lord?

v. 2 and said to them, “You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded.

“and said to them, ‘You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded.’”

“You have really been men who are men of your word. You

said it back in chapter 1 and you all have really kept your word.”

v. 3 For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your brothers but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you.

“For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your brothers but you have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you.”

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

They’ve “DONE,”

they’ve “OBEYED,”

they’ve “NOT DESERTED,” and

they’ve “CARRIED OUT.”

None of them have gone AWOL. They have stayed in there and been faithful all the way through the whole thing.

v. 4 Now that the Lord your God has given your brothers rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

“Now that the Lord your God has given your brothers rest as

he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan.”

Why are these fellas so loyal? Joshua's the leader and he is the incredible example as they have seen their leader so careful about being obedient to what God has asked of him.

His example was so powerful that these 40,000 men fall right into line and follow in his steps. They are following a man who is walking with God. And when we do that, we're going to get this kind of loyal dedication and commitment.

These 40,000 men deserve the distinguished medal of honor before they go back home and Joshua's really proud of them.

There's a story about how at the end of the Civil War, Robert E. Lee said farewell to the troops. Old General Joshua's doing something very similar. Listen to Robert E. Lee:

“After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources. You will take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed. With an increasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration of myself, I bid you an affectionate farewell.”
(source unknown)

And Joshua is there at this time. A part of him is leaving right

now.

Now some people are troubled by verse 5. It starts out after his commendation with a WARNING—“But be careful.”

Why is it that Joshua has to turn around to these fellas now who've been so loyal and so committed and tell them “Watch it buddy. When you leave, be careful”?

The reason he has to do this is the same reason that every time we go somewhere spiritually, we have to make a decision about that.

These guys are getting ready to go over on the east side of a river and they have a real big reason for not coming back west again. And he knows that.

They're settling out of the will of God. And there's a river that they've got to ford. And if they're going to keep the Law, they have to come over there at least three times a year. They have to come over there for the Passover, for the Pentecost and for the Feast of the Tabernacles.

He is justifiably concerned about what they're getting ready to do. And the slightest excuse of a flooding river, had some folks packing up and getting ready to leave. They were saying, “Oh well. The river's at flood stage. We're going to have to forget it and stay at the house.” He has to make an issue out of this. He's a good leader. He understands human nature really well.

Now look at what he says to them—and he has a real challenge for them.

v. 5 But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul.”

“But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul.”

Now if we take the verbs there it’ll make that verse come alive:

“keep,”

“love,”

“walk,”

“obey,”

“hold fast,” and

“serve.”

Now let's just take it and put the verb with the phrase:

“keep the commandment,”

“love the Lord,”

“walk in his ways,”

“obey his commands,”

“hold fast to him,” and

“serve him.”

It's not going to be something that's just going to happen in a haphazard way. He has some definite things he wants for them to do when they go back across the river.

v. 6 Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their homes.

“Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their homes.”

He “blessed,” he “sent,” and “they went.” And what a tearful, emotional parting this had to be.

Now in verse 7 we have parenthesis. The writer feels it's necessary to mention that all the people from the tribe of Manasseh are not going to be on the east side. Actually, it's

just the clan of Makir that's over there.

v. 7 (To the half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given land in Bashan, and to the other half of the tribe Joshua gave land on the west side of the Jordan with their brothers.) When Joshua sent them home, he blessed them,

“(To the half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given land in Bashan,”—these are the east-side residents—“and to the other half of the tribe Joshua gave land on the west side”— we saw that back in chapter 17—“of the Jordan with their brothers.) When Joshua sent them home, he blessed them,”

This is what he says—look at the stash he sends with them in verse 8:

v. 8 saying, “Return to your homes with your great wealth—with large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze and iron, and a great quantity of clothing—and divide with your brothers the plunder from your enemies.”

“saying, ‘Return to your homes with your great wealth—with large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze and iron, and a great quantity of clothing—and divide with your brothers the plunder from your enemies.’”

We have a list of seven tremendous things they're taking with them. How'd they get across the river with all that? They

didn't have all the fancy things we have. They had to do something to work that out to get across there with all the livestock, silver, gold, bronze, iron and all those clothes back over on the other side.

Francis Schaeffer does a great job in his Joshua commentary in describing a little bit of what took place:

(Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History by Francis Schaeffer)

If we use a little imagination, we can feel the tremendous emotion involved in the parting of these comrades-at-arms. We can picture the men going through the camp, finding the friends with whom they had fought side by side and saying good-bye to some who had even saved their lives. They shook hands and they parted, as worshipers of God, as friends and fellow companions in war. There is a comradeship among men in titanic moments that is one of the great "mystiques" of life. It is the explanation of the mystique of the rope—two men on a mountain battling nature together, depending for their very lives on a common rope

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That's the picture. Weary soldiers having served for a long time and been away from their families, now sharing the spoils and going back home again on the east side.

Well here comes:

II. The Provocation

v. 9 So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land, which they had acquired in accordance with the command of the Lord through Moses.

“So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land, which they had acquired in accordance with the command of the Lord through Moses.”

They’re getting ready to go back across. Now get Shiloh located on our map—which is the last page—right there in the heart of the land, then start down south and east. Okay? Kind of draw a little line there. And the dot that we’re looking for is right in the middle of the border of Benjamin and the Jordan. It’s a little town called Geliloth and it’s not on our map. But if we put a dot right in that little narrow neck of land that touches the Jordan in the tribe of Benjamin—that’s where it’s located.

Now remember, we studied the inheritance of Benjamin and Geliloth was part of it. We know just exactly where it is. It’s twenty miles south and east of Shiloh. They’ve made this trip and this is where this altar’s going to be built that we’re getting ready to look at.

v. 10 When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the

half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan.

“When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan.”

“Geliloth” means “region” or “circuit.” There really is no meaning or purpose to that as far as what we’re concerned about here. But they’re building this gigantic altar.

Now why did they build that altar? Well, when these boys got to the river they immediately thought, “Hey, as soon as we cross the river, they’re going to forget that we were ever part of them. And our descendants following us are going to have a rough time getting an opportunity to come and worship because the river separates us. Hey, do you know what we better do? We better build us a barn-burner of an altar—a big one you know. So it’ll mark this place and then everybody will know that we’ve got a part in this land too. And before we cross this river let’s build this.”

Now there’s several things wrong here:

1. God never gave any directions for any altar like this.
2. They didn’t inquire of God at all before they did this. This is was just their own finagling, an idea of how they were going to keep everybody together.

Many of the issues in our lives would not be issues if we were walking in the will of God. This altar would never have been an issue if they would have been content to reside on the west side along with all of their brothers, as God had intended it, in the land.

Stop and think about it. So many of the awkward situations that we face are awkward simply because we at times have walked out of the will of God. And those awkward situations are created simply because we've been disobedient or we've walked out of the will of God or we've done something contrary to His purpose. And we've made an awkward situation for ourselves because such is the case.

And this is becoming a very difficult situation simply because when these people got to the river they said, "Wait a minute! I see some problems here. Suppose after we go back in the future, they'll say they can't really be God's people. They're on the wrong side of the river." So they built this big altar.

Now what kind of a response are we going to get from the folks on the west side? Well, we already have it figured out in the word:

III. MOBILIZATION—verses 11-20

Now the scene changes.

v. 11 And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near

the Jordan on the Israelite side,

“And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side,”

And we know that city is in Benjamin. That’s why we put the dot there.

v. 12 the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.

“the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.”

“Shiloh” means “rest.”

And they’re gathering at the place of rest “to go to war.”

Now the interesting thing about this is that these people have already figured out that those two and a half tribes are forming a rival religion and they’re going to wipe them out before they get a chance to do it.

Ever been in a situation where we have misjudged somebody and their motive?

Why are we getting ready to see these fellas convinced that they’re guilty until they’re proven innocent. And we know love always believes we’re innocent until proven guilty. And this is

just the reverse in the way they treat each other here in these circumstances.

Dr. Donald Campbell in his commentary tells a beautiful story:

(No Time for Neutrality by Donald K. Campbell)

In the beautiful lake country of England, the haunt of many English poets, there is a peak of land over a lakeshore called Point Rash Judgment. On one occasion Wordsworth, his sister, and Coleridge were walking along the shore when they saw a man fishing in a distant boat. Since it was the harvest season when all able bodied men were working in the fields, the poets were harshly critical of the fisherman until on closer sight they saw he was aged and weak. Struck with the falsity and unkindness of their criticism, they named the place “Point Rash Judgment.”

Israel made a similar mistake.

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In *The Expositor's Bible* William Blaikie says it this way:

(The Expositor's Bible: The Book of Joshua by William Garden Blaikie)

But who can estimate all the misery that has come in almost every age, in circles both public and private, from hasty suspicions of evil, which a little patience, a little inquiry, a little opportunity of explanation, might have at once averted?

History, tradition, fiction, alike furnish us with instances. We recall the story of Llewellyn and his dog Gelert, stabbed by his master, who thought the stains upon his mouth were the blood of his beloved child; while, on raising the cradle which had been turned over, he found his child asleep and well, and a huge wolf dead, from whose fangs the dog had delivered him. We remember the tragedy of Othello and Desdemona; we see how the fondest love may be poisoned by hasty suspicion, and the dearest of wives murdered, when a little patience would have shown her innocent—shown her all too pure to come in contact with even a vestige of the evil thing.

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It was Dr. Robert Anthony who said:

(Think Again by Dr. Robert Anthony)

Anger is one letter short of danger.
(source unknown)

And yes, it is. And all they do on the west side is get mad. And they are ready now to head out and go to war in their anger. Let's watch and see what happens—verse 13.

v. 13 So the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

“So the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of

Manasseh.”

Well, they get a delegation. First of all, “Phinehas” is going to lead this. He’s the priest.

v. 14 With him they sent ten of the chief men, one for each of the tribes of Israel, each the head of a family division among the Israelite clans.

“With him they sent ten of the chief men, one for each of the tribes of Israel, each the head of a family division among the Israelite clans.”

So, there are eleven in the delegation.

Now we don’t know who all ten of them are. We do know that Judah and Ephraim and Simeon and Dan and Benjamin and Issachar and Zebulun and Asher and Naphtali—those 9—all had representatives. But we don’t know whether that other half-tribe of Manasseh had a representative because those are the brothers that are on the other side, or whether the Levites were the tenth. But at least we have eleven guys who are heading over as a delegation—as a prelude to war really.

v. 15 When they went to Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh—they said to them:

“When they went to Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh—they said to them:”

They've already gotten the altar built and they've gone home. They've had to go over to the east side to meet with them.

Now notice something. There are FIVE QUESTIONS here of these fellas. And when we see these questions, we get the emotion of the moment. And the questions just tell us where they're coming from. They've already figured out they're guilty. And the questions will help. We'll point them out as we go through.

v. 16 “The whole assembly of the Lord says: ‘How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the Lord and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now?’

“The whole assembly of the Lord says:”—here we go, verse 16—“How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the Lord and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now?”

First two questions—“How could you?” and “How could you?”—then verse 17.

v. 17 Was not the sin of Peor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a plague fell on the community of the Lord!

“Was not the sin of Peor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a

plague fell on the community of the Lord!”

Now when we see that little word “Peor” we need a little bit of Bible history to understand what they’re making reference to.

In Numbers 23 Balak, the king of the Moabites, tried to get Balaam to curse the children of Israel. Remember that story? In Numbers 23 we read this:

Numbers 23:27-30

Then Balak said to Balaam, “Come, let me take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them for me from there.” And Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, overlooking the wasteland. [Now listen to what he says:] Balaam said, “Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me.” Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

The fact that there is one gigantic altar down here, immediately the delegation is thinking if there was another day when there were seven altars built by the Moabites and Balaam. They went up there and offered sacrifices on it and something tragic happened.

In Numbers 25 several of the Israelite men got involved with the Moabite women and their religious activity and God got so angry that at the end of chapter 25 we read this:

Numbers 25:8, 9

...that when the plague against the Israelites was stopped, those who had died in the plague numbered 24,000.

So 24,000 fellas lost their lives in that thing. When they're coming across there, they're saying "Don't you all remember Peor when we lost 24,000 of our men because of this?"

We can just feel it—verse 18. Here comes question #4.

v. 18 And are you now turning away from the Lord? “If you rebel against the Lord today, tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel.

“And are you now turning away from the Lord? “If you rebel against the Lord today, tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel.”

Now what are they thinking about? They realize they're all in this together. And when one sins, everybody's affected.

Back in Joshua chapter 7—they're going to even make specific reference to it in a minute—when Achan took those things from Jericho and he put them in the floor of his tent, as a result of doing that, remember what happened? They got whipped at Ai and thirty-six of their men died as casualties when they were whipped in that battle. And then on top of that, all of Achan's family died and everything that belonged to him was destroyed before the nation could experience God's blessing again.

So, they're saying, "Look, what you have done affects us. I mean 24,000 died of Peor. Can you imagine what's going to happen because of this gigantic altar you all have built right now after you've left us in our presence?"

v. 19 If the land you possess is defiled, come over to the Lord's land, where the Lord's tabernacle stands, and share the land with us. But do not rebel against the Lord or against us by building an altar for yourselves, other than the altar of the Lord our God.

"If the land you possess is defiled, come over to the Lord's land,"— they've got feelings about that.

"If the land where y'all are living over there on the east side is defiled, you know, come on over to our land." Kind of self-righteous isn't it?

Luis Palau puts it this way:

"If y'all are having a tough time over there on the east side, come over to our side. We've got a seminary graduate over here."

(source unknown)

We get the picture. It's really self-righteous as can be right away.

“where the Lord’s tabernacle stands,”—see it?—“and share the land with us. But do not rebel against the Lord or against us by building an altar for yourselves, other than the altar of the Lord our God.”

v. 20 When Achan son of Zerah acted unfaithfully regarding the devoted things, did not wrath come upon the whole community of Israel? He was not the only one who died for his sin.”

“When Achan son of Zerah acted unfaithfully regarding the devoted things, did not wrath come upon the whole community of Israel? He was not the only one who died for his sin.””

There’s question #5.

Now let’s stop for a minute and take all the words off of the questions and give the five questions. We’ll see how loaded emotionally they are, charged and ready to go to war.

1. “How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this?”
2. “How could you turn away from the Lord and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against Him now?”
3. “Was not the sin of Peor enough for us?”
4. “Are you now turning away from the Lord?”

5. “When Achan son of Zerah acted unfaithfully regarding the devoted things, did not wrath come upon the whole community of Israel?”

What do we learn from that?

We are quick to criticize and to condemn.

We often convict without evidence and we jump to wrong conclusions.

Ever had a person that we don't really like? And yet we have to be around them all the time? Ever noticed that when that person does something, because we really don't like them all that much, we misinterpret what they do to our own personal advantage? Ever done that?

Here's a person who innocently calls on the phone and just says something—wants to be of help. And because we really don't like that person we're thinking, “There he is horning in on my deal again!”

Underneath we're criticizing and we condemn. And the devil wreaks havoc on that among believers just because we get suspicious of somebody and we don't really gravitate in their circles because they have interests totally different from ours. We do that.

And the poor person never really has a chance with us because

we have them condemned before they ever get a chance to really tell us how they felt and what they're doing. Believers are tough, tough, tough on that. When we get to glory we're going to find that most of the major problems in the church—the body of Christ—are going to be right down this very alley. We're going to be just like the Israelites, condemning these two and a half tribes before they ever hear them speak.

David had that feeling! Listen to it:

Psalm 119:69, 70

Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies,
I keep your precepts with all my heart.
Their hearts are callous and unfeeling,
but I delight in your law.

That's what they're doing.

It is Alan Redpath who put it this way:

(Victorious Christian Living by Alan Redpath)

What lessons we have just here! What peril lies in the incompatibility of Christian with Christian! How easily misunderstandings occur, and with what damaging results! How rapidly they spread, and the farther they go the worse they get, until often an evangelical church is completely ruined by this very sin. Why is it we are all so ready to listen to gossip? Why is it that we are so quick to impute the worst

motives to other people? Why do we believe so quickly a rumor concerning another person's character, and then repeat it with hundredfold exaggeration?

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Aw to dwell above with saints we love,
we'll be grand and glorious.
But to dwell below with saints we know,
that's a different story.
(source unknown)

That's the picture here of this whole thing.

Listen to these two verses in Hosea:

Hosea 2:14, 15

“Therefore I am now going to allure her;
I will lead her into the desert
and speak tenderly to her.
There I will give her back her vineyards,
and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope...

Isn't that good? The Valley of Achor is actually where the judgment took place. That's where our poor friend Achan died—in the Valley of Achor.

And God's saying that isn't the end. “I can take the Valley of Achor and I can make it a door of hope.” What a blessing that can become to us.

Now that brings us then to:

IV. The Explanation—verses 21-29

They're really condemned. We've had:

- I. The Admonition,
- II. The Provocation, and now
- III. The Mobilization has passed.

And here we come with our wrong interpretations and believing the worst and we're seething in our anger.

v. 21 Then Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the clans of Israel:

“Then Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the clans of Israel:”

v. 22 “The Mighty One, God, the Lord! The Mighty One, God, the Lord! He knows! And let Israel know! If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the Lord, do not spare us this day.

“The Mighty One, God, the Lord! The Mighty One, God, the Lord! He knows!”

They're calling God to witness right away.

“And let Israel know! If this has been”—and here are our two key words—“in rebellion or disobedience to the Lord, do not spare us this day.”

They can call God the witness in their character in this. They've been misjudged. And as they call God to witness, they use two words:

1. “rebellion” and
2. “disobedience.”

And if we are, “Don't spare us today. Let us die. We don't want to contribute to the danger of the rest of our brothers in this.”

Now we're going to get the full truth. Here comes the real story.

v. 23 If we have built our own altar to turn away from the Lord and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it, may the Lord himself call us to account.

“If we have built our own altar to turn away from the Lord and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it, may the Lord himself call us to account.”

Now here comes verse 24 and there's a keyword in this one.

v. 24 “No! We did it for fear that some day your descendants might say to ours, ‘What do you have to do with the Lord, the God of Israel?’

“No! We did it”—WHY?—“for fear that some day your descendants might say to ours, “What do you have to do with the Lord, the God of Israel?”

See that word “fear”?

We always find when we walk out of the will of God we get scared and there are “fears.” These are fears again that God did not intend for them.

If they were on the west bank where they should be, they wouldn't have to have fears when they cross the river and leave it as a barrier between them and the people on the west side.

Want a statement?

FEARS and TEARS are the result of being out of the will of God.

Fears and tears are the result of being out of the will of God. We can plan on being scared a lot and we can plan on crying a lot when we settle short of the will of God for our life.

And here again we have an illustration of it. They came up there and they got scared because they were getting ready to cross the boundary line.

Verse 25.

v. 25 The Lord has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you—you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in the Lord.’ So your descendants might cause ours to stop fearing the Lord.

“The Lord has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you—you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in the Lord.” So your descendants might cause ours to stop fearing the Lord.”

v. 26 “That is why we said, ‘Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.’”

“That is why we said, “Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.””

What do we get when we build an altar that we don’t use? It ends up being an idol. Talk to Gideon about that and the Ephod that he made. He led them into idolatry. And that’s the very thing that happens to the Gaddites. The whole country actually is overrun with idolatry and wickedness by the time we get to the book of Judges.

v. 27 On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the Lord at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, ‘You have no share in the Lord.’

“On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the Lord at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, “You have no share in the Lord.””

v. 28 “And we said, ‘If they ever say this to us, or to our descendants, we will answer: Look at the replica of the Lord’s altar, which our fathers built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.’

“And we said, “If they ever say this to us, or to our descendants, we will answer: Look at the replica of the Lord’s altar, which our fathers built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.””

v. 29 “Far be it from us to rebel against the Lord and turn away from him today by building an altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings and sacrifices, other than the altar of the Lord our God that stands before his tabernacle.”

“Far be it from us to rebel against the Lord and turn away from him today by building an altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings and sacrifices, other than the altar of the Lord our God that stands before his tabernacle.”

Well, here we are. Now the truth comes out. This is why they built it. It's going to be a witness between them that they are just as much a part of the land as the rest of them.

Now we come to:

V. The Satisfaction—verses 30-34.

v. 30 When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community—the heads of the clans of the Israelites—heard what Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had to say, they were pleased.

“When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community—the heads of the clans of the Israelites—heard what Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had to say, they were pleased.”

v. 31 And Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, said to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, “Today we know that the Lord is with us, because you have not acted unfaithfully toward the Lord in this matter. Now you have rescued the Israelites from the Lord’s hand.”

“And Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, said to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, “Today we know that the Lord is with us, because you have not acted unfaithfully toward the Lord in this matter. Now you have rescued the Israelites from the Lord’s hand.””

Well finally Phinehas speaks and they are words of great gratitude.

v. 32 Then Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, and the leaders returned to Canaan from their meeting with the Reubenites and Gadites in Gilead and reported to the Israelites.

“Then Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, and the leaders returned to Canaan from their meeting with the Reubenites and Gadites in Gilead and reported to the Israelites.”

v. 33 They were glad to hear the report and praised God. And they talked no more about going to war against them to devastate the country where the Reubenites and the Gadites lived.

“They were glad to hear the report and praised God. And they talked no more about going to war against them to devastate the country where the Reubenites and the Gadites lived.”

v. 34 And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name: A WITNESS BETWEEN US THAT THE LORD IS GOD.

“And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name: A WITNESS BETWEEN US THAT THE LORD IS GOD.”

Now that Hebrew word is the word “*Ed*”—E-D—so it’s called the “altar of *Ed*.” It’s the altar of witness that is down here in Geliloth right on the banks of the Jordan. The only problem with it is neither one inquired of the Lord.

The two and a half tribes did not inquire of the Lord before they built this monstrosity. And the other tribes did not inquire of the Lord before they went over there all angry and ready to declare war. The Lord is not brought into it in any way.

Now here are a couple of quotes from commentators to give us a little bit of the feeling about what we have just read before we get the lessons.

(Explore the Book: Volume 1 by J. Sidlow Baxter)

No doubt [this is J. Sidlow Baxter] this altar “Ed” was well meant; but was it not *needless* if the Divine command were obeyed that three times each year all the males of Israel should appear before the Lord, in Shiloh?

Was it not also *presumptuous*? No pattern for its shape had been given of God, and no direction for its construction. Nor, apparently, had the counsel of the Lord been as much as thought of!

Now here is a noteworthy lesson concerning *the unity of faith*. Had Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh settled west of the Jordan with the other tribes, in the promised place of blessing, no such artificial monument of their oneness with Israel would have been required. True unity is not outward but inward. It is not achieved, nor even preserved, by external memorials. It consists in a oneness of inward and spiritual experience.
pp. 269-70

That is strong.

And J. Vernon McGee really waxes eloquent on this:

(Joshua-Judges by J. Vernon McGee)

As the two and one-half tribes built a bloodless altar which had divided Israel, today those who are liberal in their theology have divided the church. They have accused fundamentalists of being schismatic, but it is liberalism that has departed from the cross and the deity of Christ. They do not like an altar with blood. They have put up an “Ed,” if you please. They worship at an altar where no sacrifice is to be offered. They have a “bloodless” Christ. Like the two and one-half tribes, their conduct reveals that they have departed from the truth. Our Lord said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” Several hundred years later the Lord Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee and came to the country of the Gadarenes. The people living there were from the tribe of Gad, and they were still living on the wrong side of the Jordan River. Our Lord came

upon a demon-possessed man dwelling in the tombs and He cast the demons out of the man [and what did He do with him? He] and gave them permission to enter a herd of pigs nearby.

p. 99

Two thousand pigs to be exact. One Dallas Seminary guy getting ready to preach on this passage working homiletically on it as long as he could to get everybody's attention called the title of his sermon "Two Thousand Pigs Under the Sea." And that's what we have here—2,000 of them.

Now what happens as a result of that?

(Joshua-Judges by J. Vernon McGee)

The Gadarenes were in the pig business! Can you imagine an Orthodox Jew in the pig business? They had failed to follow the commandments of God. They were on the wrong side of [the] Jordan.

Liberalism has indeed divided the church. It has erected a beautiful altar, a "bloodless" Christ, one who never actually lived, one without deity, one without ability to save humanity.

My friend, have *you* crossed over Jordan? Have you entered into the rest of redemption which Christ offers [us]?

p. 99

It is kind of a sad story. But out of the sad story comes some great lessons for us.

Lesson #1: Will you hear a commendation at the judgment seat of Christ?

We just took that commendation of Joshua and what a commendation to hear: “that you have done, that you have obeyed, that you have not deserted, you have carried out what the Lord intended for you to do?”

Will you hear a commendation at the judgment seat of Christ that you have done, you have obeyed, you have not deserted, you have carried out what the Lord intended for you to do?

Lesson #2: Will you accept the challenge to these verbs that he gives to them? Will you accept the challenge to keep, to love, to walk, to obey, to hold fast, and to serve?

Lesson #3: The children of Israel did not inquire of the Lord before they faced the possibility of war with the two and a half tribes.

Lesson #4: We must be careful not to CRITICIZE and CONDEMN prematurely.

Lesson #5: Love says a man is innocent until he is proven guilty.

Lesson #6: How great to be able to call God to witness when you have been misjudged.

Lesson #7: What one person does affects the whole body.

Lesson #8: When we act unfaithfully, God will take us to the woodshed.

He will deal with us. His chastening hand will be upon us.

Lesson #9: You will find tears and fears outside the will of God.

William P. Barker wrote *A Savior for All Seasons* and in it he makes a confession of a struggle that he had too.

(A Savior for All Seasons by William P. Barker)

It happened in the Pittsburgh airport. I was waiting at the ticket counter to check in. The agent was obviously inexperienced and was preoccupied on the telephone. I was first in line, standing patiently while the ticket agent continued his exasperatingly long telephone conversation.

Finally the agent hung up the telephone. I picked up my briefcase, starting to move toward the counter. Suddenly a burly middle-aged figure in a dark suit and hat stepped up to the counter in front of me and handed the agent his ticket. His action was rude and aggressive. The agent, obviously not wanting to be caught in the middle of an unpleasant situation, pretended not to notice. A couple of passengers behind me grumbled menacingly. The man, who had cut into line without any apology to us or thank you to the agent, took his boarding card and turned around. It was then that I noticed his clerical collar.

I seethed with anger. It was bad enough he pushed into my place, but it made me more hostile when I realized he was a clergyman. Shoving me around like that! Who did he think he was, especially as he represented an ethic of love? Somebody ought to report that guy to his superiors!

Suddenly the conviction hit me. Here I was, also a clergyman, seething with hurt, annoyance and irritation over this individual who had violated my rights. Two clergymen—both guilty of lack of love! One a shover; [and] the other a seether. Each of us represented the love ethic, each ostensibly was dedicated to serving and caring, each preached about love for years, each celebrated the sacrament of sacrificial mercy—and there we were, shoving and seething.

Shovers and seethers—that’s who we are, priests and ministers included. Sometimes one, sometimes the other. No one here lives by love, in spite of the way we nod approvingly [when we read] 1 Corinthians 13.

pp. 142-143

And then this little thought from a dad who had failed his son

(KIXL “*Think-It-Overs*”)

“Listen, Son”

I am saying this to you as you lie asleep. I have stolen into your room alone. Just a few minutes ago, as I sat reading my paper in the library, a hot stifling wave of remorse swept over me. I could not resist it. Guiltily I came to your bedside.

These are the things I was thinking, son: I had been cross

to you. I scolded you as you were dressing for school because you gave your face merely a dab with a towel. I took you to task for not cleaning your shoes. I called out angrily when I found you had thrown some of your things on the floor. At breakfast I found fault, too. You spilled things. You gulped down your food. You put your elbows on the table. You spread butter too thick on your bread. And as you started off to play and I made for the train, you turned and waved a little hand and called, “Good-bye, Daddy,” and I frowned, and said in reply, “Hold your shoulders back.”

Do you remember later when I was reading in the library how you came in, softly, timidly, with a sort of hurt, hunted look in your eyes? When I glanced over my paper, impatient at the interruption, said nothing, but ran across, in one tempestuous plunge and threw your arms around my neck and kissed me, again, and again, and your small arms tightened with an affection that God had set blooming in your heart and which even neglect could not wither. And then you were gone, pattering up the stairs.

Suddenly I saw myself as I really was, in all my horrible selfishness, and I felt sick at heart. What has habit been doing to me? The habit of complaining, of finding fault, of reprimanding, all of these were my reward to you for being a boy. It was not that I did not love you; it was that I expected so much of youth. I was measuring you by the yardstick of my own years.

Good-night, Sonny—from this hour on we’re pals, you and [your] Dad.
(source unknown)

Our hope is that we would allow the Spirit of God to cause us with the maturity of a David to pray:

Psalm 139:23, 24

Search me O God and know my heart,
try me and know my thoughts,
and see if there be any wicked way in me...

Not these big drastic sins we're plastering all over the news, but those things which creep in that defile and destroy the ministry of God and the service that can be performed—these things which creep and hurt so badly. Misunderstanding, judging without evidence. And simply because we don't like someone we get on their case and we misinterpret even the best of their actions and poison those things and defile them when the person was filled with a heart full of love and wanting to build a relationship. And we would not allow it because we don't like them or we have these feelings.

Psalm 139:23, 24

Search me O God and know my heart,
try me and know my thoughts,
and see if there be any wicked way in me,
and then lead me in the way everlasting.

Father, we come to You. We're burdened over the body of Christ in its fragmented state. We realize we're just like a lot of Israelites on the west bank, ready to go to war before we

even have any facts in mind. Teach us Father that we as individuals have no right to an opinion until all the facts are in. Enable us to inquire of the Lord instead of lashing out at our brothers prematurely. Enable us to seek Your face and to walk in wisdom. And above all, to demonstrate the beautiful, beautiful example of peace and to be those who love and long for peace. Thank You that Isaiah the prophet says, “the work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of it, quietness and assurance forever.” Please do a good work in our lives as result of this study and may Jesus Christ be praised. For it’s in His name we pray. Amen.

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A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Twenty-Two – Joshua 22:1-34

NOTES

v. 1 Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh

v. 2 and said to them, “You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded.

v. 3 For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your brothers but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you.

v. 4 Now that the Lord your God has given your brothers rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

v. 5 But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul.”

v. 6 Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their homes.

v. 7 (To the half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given land in Bashan, and to the other half of the tribe Joshua gave land on the west side of the Jordan with their brothers.) When Joshua sent them home, he blessed them,

v. 8 saying, “Return to your homes with your great wealth—with large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze and iron, and a great quantity of clothing—and divide with your brothers the plunder from your enemies.”

v. 9 So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land, which they had acquired in accordance with the command of the Lord through Moses.

v. 10 When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan.

NOTES

v. 11 And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Gelimoth near the Jordan on the Israelite side,

v. 12 the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.

v. 13 So the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

v. 14 With him they sent ten of the chief men, one for each of the tribes of Israel, each the head of a family division among the Israelite clans.

v. 15 When they went to Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh—they said to them:

v. 16 “The whole assembly of the Lord says: ‘How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the Lord and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now?’

v. 17 Was not the sin of Peor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a plague fell on the community of the Lord!

v. 18 And are you now turning away from the Lord? “If you rebel against the Lord today, tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel.

v. 19 If the land you possess is defiled, come over to the Lord’s land, where the Lord’s tabernacle stands, and share the land with us. But do not rebel against the Lord or against us by building an altar for yourselves, other than the altar of the Lord our God.

v. 20 When Achan son of Zerah acted unfaithfully regarding the devoted things, did not wrath come upon the whole community of Israel? He was not the only one who died for his sin.”

v. 21 Then Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the clans of Israel:

v. 22 “The Mighty One, God, the Lord! The Mighty One, God, the Lord! He knows! And let Israel know! If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the Lord, do not spare us this day.

v. 23 If we have built our own altar to turn away from the Lord and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it, may the Lord himself call us to account.

v. 24 “No! We did it for fear that some day your descendants might say to ours, ‘What do you have to do with the Lord, the God of Israel?’

NOTES

v. 25 The Lord has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you—you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in the Lord.’ So your descendants might cause ours to stop fearing the Lord.

v. 26 “That is why we said, ‘Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.’

v. 27 On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the Lord at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, ‘You have no share in the Lord.’

v. 28 “And we said, ‘If they ever say this to us, or to our descendants, we will answer: Look at the replica of the Lord’s altar, which our fathers built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.’

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v. 30 When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community—the heads of the clans of the Israelites—heard what Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had to say, they were pleased.

v. 31 And Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, said to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, “Today we know that the Lord is with us, because you have not acted unfaithfully toward the Lord in this matter. Now you have rescued the Israelites from the Lord’s hand.”

v. 32 Then Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, and the leaders returned to Canaan from their meeting with the Reubenites and Gadites in Gilead and reported to the Israelites.

v. 33 They were glad to hear the report and praised God. And they talked no more about going to war against them to devastate the country where the Reubenites and the Gadites lived.

v. 34 And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name: A Witness Between Us that the Lord is God.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Joshua 22:1-34 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. How does Joshua characterize the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh in verses 2-4?

3. What warning does Joshua give to them as they prepare to go to their homes in verse 5?

4. What blessing did Joshua give them as they returned home in verse 8?

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5. What almost stirred up a war, according to verse 10?

6. How do Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh reply to the heads of the clans of Israel, according to verses 22-27?

7. What is the response of Phinehas and the leaders of the community, according to verse 30?

8. What is the name they gave to the altar, according to verse 34?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Will you hear a commendation at the judgment seat of Christ that you have done, you have obeyed, you have not deserted, and you have carried out what the Lord intended for you to do?

LESSON #2: Will you accept the challenge to keep, to love, to walk, to obey, to hold fast, and to serve?

LESSON #3: The children of Israel did not inquire of the Lord before they faced the possibility of war with the two and a half tribes.

LESSON #4: We must be careful not to criticize and condemn prematurely.

LESSON #5: Love says a man is innocent until he is proven guilty.

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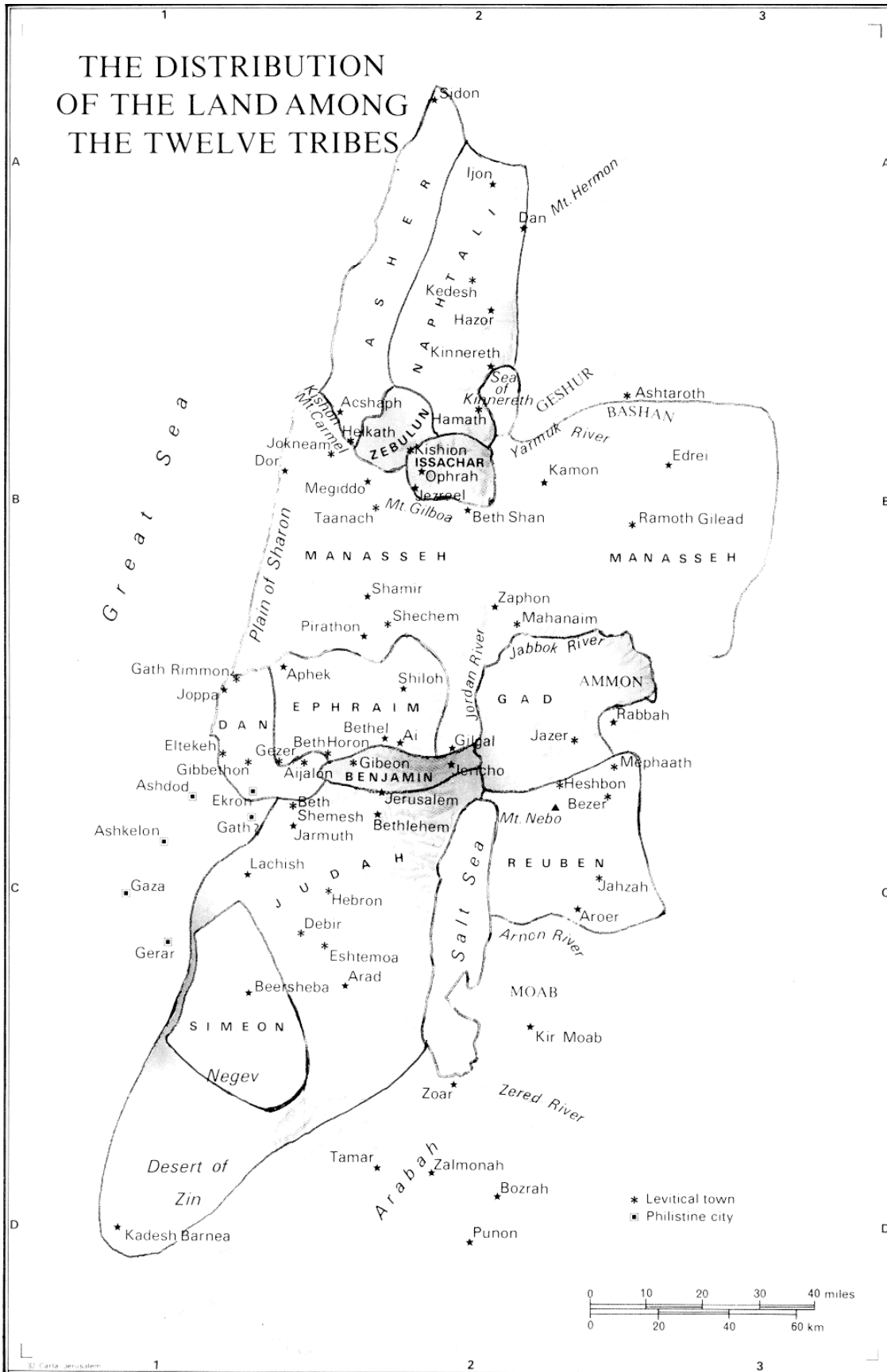
LESSON #6: How great to be able to call God to witness when you have been misjudged.

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THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND AMONG THE TWELVE TRIBES



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