

- ***Read Joshua 22:10-34*** The armies of Israel have done their jobs of clearing the land of the wicked inhabitants. There were a few native people still left, but enough had been done in order for the people go be able to go the land that had been given to them as their portion. The majority of the tribes would settle west of the Jordan River, but 2 and a half tribes would take up possession of the land to the east of the great river. The peoples of Rueben, Gad, & half the people of Manasseh would live beyond the Jordan.
- As theses 2.5 tribes makes their way to their land of possession, they stop just before crossing over and build a great alter. The rest of the sons of Israel hear about this, and they are alarmed by what they have heard. From their perspective, the other tribes had rebelled against God. If this is the case then civil war is about to erupt within the nation of Israel. However, we just read that there was a peaceful resolution. How is this the case? How was this awful crisis averted? I think there were some good and smart steps that were taken by both sides that allowed for this great tragedy to be avoided. These are steps that we ought to keep in mind when it comes to conflict because they can help us reach a peaceful resolution in much the same way as Israel did in this text. This evening, let's learn some good quality steps to peaceful resolution of conflict.

I. The Western Tribes confronted supposed sin.

- Aside from civil war, there was another crisis that could have been present in this situation...the Eastern Tribes might have actually sinned against God by going after other gods. The alter might have been established to serve the gods of the people of the land.
- This was the whole reason the Western Tribes took the time and put forth the effort to go and confront the Eastern Tribes. Israel knew exactly what happened when sin was introduced into the people. They brought up the past episodes of Peor and of Achan's sin and how it greatly troubled Israel. **(22:17,20)** The people were not going to allow that to happen again. They seemed to have learned their lesson for the time being. They were going to address sin before it became a nation wide crisis. They were seeking to follow the commands of **Deuteronomy 13:12-16**.
- Both Paul and James recognized the necessity of seeking to turn God's people back from their sins. Paul says that we ought to do everything we can to restore them in gentleness. **(Gal. 6:1)** James seeks to get his readers to recognize just how important it is for brethren to seek to restore brethren who have been caught up in sin. **(James 5:19,20)**
- The Western Tribes wanted to avoid the crisis of sin in the camp and that is why the stepped forward to confront the Eastern Tribes in the first place.

II. The Western Tribes explained their concerns before they acted rashly.

- Once the decision was made to confront the supposed sin, the Western Tribes had to make a decision as to how they were going to proceed. Were they going to go in guns blazing and just wipe everyone out? They would have that ability because of the numbers they possessed. They could do that, or they could go to gather the facts, first.
- Fortunately, they chose the better play by sending a delegation to figure out what exactly was going on. They sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest along with 10 chiefs of the tribes of the people. They approach the people and state their concerns and issues with what they perceive to have taken place. In their eyes, it seems as if they Wester Tribes have set up an alter that was for practical use. They knew that God had forbidden the building of alters that were for sacrifices He had not commanded. It was only logical in their eyes that this was exactly what the Eastern Tribes were doing.
- Thankfully, they took the time to seek out the truth of the matter. True love dictates that we look for the best in every situation. **(I Cor. 13:7)** It is also just wise to seek to learn details before acting rashly. **He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him. (Prov. 18:13)**
- When we think there is an issue or conflict, then it is of the utmost importance that we take the time to gather all of the facts. Jesus understood this when He gave his commands to His disciples how they were to handle sin committed against them. **(Matt. 18:15)** Failure to gather the facts can lead to disaster, but thankful crisis was averted by the right decisions of the Western Tribes.

III. The Eastern Tribes didn't become offended, but they simply explained their actions.

- It can become very easy for us to quickly become offended when others accuse of of wrong doing. The Eastern tribes could have easily taken offense to these accusations. After all, they had just fought side by side with these people and now they are accuses them of sin?

- B. Few people would fault the Eastern Tribes for being offended and upset by these accusations. However, they kept their cool and simply took the time to explain their actions in hopes of finding a peaceful resolution. **A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression. (Prov. 19:11)**
- C. Again, the ability to react in this way is fueled by our love for those around us. Back in **I Corinthians 13:5,7**, Paul says that love motivates us to not take into account a wrong suffered and to endure difficulties. When a false accusation is leveled against us, it can be very hurtful and it can make us very angry. However, if we are striving for peace and love among brethren then we are willing to be patient with such things and follow the instructions of **James 1:19** and be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.
- D. In doing these things, a situation that looks extremely serious might be found out to be nothing more than just a simple misunderstanding. Failing to be patient can lead to crisis, but processing such will serve for the betterment of all involved.

IV. All of Israel accepted truth and rejoiced in it.

- A. Once both sides had the opportunity to speak their side of this issue, it was determined that this was nothing more than a misunderstanding of what had been done by the Eastern Tribes. It was understandable why the Western tribes had reacted the way they had. They had been down this road before and they were not interested in going down it once more. Thankfully they had approached it in the appropriate way.
- B. Once the Eastern Tribes were able to explain their actions, then things quickly settled down. They had not set up the altar as a means of worship or sacrifice, but instead it was simply a reminder that though they were separated by the great river Jordan, they were still very much a part of Israel and this altar would stand as a symbol of that unity. No foul play or sin involved, just a misunderstanding that was quickly fixed.
- C. There is one thing that was very much necessary on both sides in order for this to take place....**Our One Big Thing for this evening is that this peaceful resolution was able to be had because both sides acted with humility.** The Western tribes wanted to simply find out the truth and the Eastern sides were willing to explain without blowing up and making things worse than they had to be. Often in our conflicts, the situations are resolved or escalated based upon our attitudes. Having a humble attitude will normally do nothing but help us in the situations we find ourselves in.

Many times in our lessons from the Old Testament, we spend our time looking at the mistakes that are made by different individuals. How nice it is to break the trend and take some time to see how some folks did things well! This chapter of **Joshua 22** is fantastic for the fact that God's people handled themselves well. They were wary against sin and unfaithfulness. They were wise in their approaching of the situation. They didn't overreact either way and when the truth was determined, they accepted it and rejoiced that God's people remained united without violence or bloodshed. May God help us to use this example of conflict resolution when we are faced with similar circumstances. May we be a people who always seek for a peaceful resolution yet strong enough to take necessary action when it is required.