

Joshua

The LORD is Salvation

Chapter 22 *The Men of the Eastern Tribes have a Controversial Trip Home*

22:1-4 Calling together the armed men of the two and a half tribes with lands east of the Jordan (the Reubenites, Gadites and half-tribe of Manasseh) ^{Joshua 1:14-15, 4:12}, Joshua said they had been obedient to the commands of both Moses ^{Numbers 32:16-32, Deuteronomy 3:18-20, Joshua 4:12-13} and him ^{Joshua 6-13} in fighting alongside the other Israelite soldiers to complete the LORD's mission. Having finished their obligations, they were told by Joshua to return to their homes in the land Moses conquered ^{Deuteronomy 2:24-3:11} and then gave them ^{Deuteronomy 3:12-17} east of the Jordan.

22:5 Joshua encouraged the men to be careful in their obedience to God's laws. He explained that to be obedient (described as walking "in all his ways" and obeying "his commands") they would need to love ^{Psalms 31:23} and serve ^{2 Chronicles 19:9} the LORD from their heart and soul ^{Deuteronomy 6:5}.

22:6-9 Joshua sent the men off from Shiloh with a blessing ^{Exodus 39:43} that reminded them of the great wealth they were taking with them, which came from the victories God gave them ^{Joshua 8:1} over the many kings and cities in the Promised Land after the battle of Jericho ^{Joshua 8:2}. Also, Joshua further commanded that they share the plunder with the men in their own tribes that had stayed in their inherited land to protect the families and take care of their possessions.

22:10 As the men were on their way home, they stopped at Geliloth to build "an imposing" altar.

The Septuagint translates *Geliloth* as *Gilgal*, which is near Jericho, west of the Jordan River. Some scholars have placed *Geliloth* east of the Jordan, assuming the men would want the altar to be in their own land; however, the text says *Geliloth* is in "Canaan" (the name of the PL west of the Jordan prior to the takeover ^{Joshua 14:1}). It seems logical that the men would cross the Jordan River at *Gilgal*, since that is where they crossed the first time ^{Joshua 4:19} and set up a pile of twelve stones ^{Joshua 4:20} as a tribute to the LORD's power ^{Joshua 4:21-24}.

22:11-14 When the rest of the nation of Israel heard about the altar, they immediately interpreted it as an act of apostasy (because the only true altar was in Shiloh) and determined to go to war

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against the eastern tribes. However, first, they sent a royal contingent headed by the priest Phinehas (son of Eleazar, grandson of Aaron), with a representative from each of the PL tribes.

22:15-20 The delegation questioned those responsible for building the altar, which appeared like an act of rebellion against the LORD. They emphasized to the men that sin affects more than just those who actually carry out the sin ^{Exodus 34:6-7}, and they gave two examples in Israelite history.

The first example: some Israelite men sinned by being immoral with Moabite women and then worshipping the pagan god Baal ^{Numbers 25:1-5} of Peor (perhaps northeast of the Dead Sea), resulting in 24,000 people dying of a plague from God ^{Numbers 25:9}. The second: Achan's sin of taking God's plunder from Jericho ^{Joshua 7:1} resulted in the Israelite army being defeated at Ai ^{Joshua 7:2-5} and all of Achan's family and belongings being destroyed with him ^{Joshua 7:24-25}.

22:21-29 In their response to the charges, the two and a half tribes initially denied wrong doing by admitting they deserved God's judgement if they had done what their accusers had assumed. However, then they defended what they did, based on their fear that in the future the tribes west of the Jordan would deny their connection with God, using the Jordan River between them as an excuse for rejecting their claim to the God of Israel. Furthermore, they admitted their altar was not designed for sacrifices that were rightfully performed before the tabernacle in Shiloh, but as another physical memorial (a "witness") to remind future generations of the permanent bond between the nine and a half tribes west and the two and a half tribes east of the Jordan River.

22:30-33 When Phinehas and the community leaders heard (and firmly believed) the explanation, they rejoiced, because as a result, none of them would be receiving the judgment of the LORD. The delegation then traveled back home, and everyone praised God for the good news.

22:34 The tribes east of the Jordan gave the altar a long and specific name for the memorial (a custom in the Near East at the time):

A Witness Between Us that the LORD is God.

Unfortunately, however, the tribes east of the Jordan were much more exposed to the pagan nations on three sides, and succumbed to idolatry faster than the other areas of Israel, resulting in their being the first to be conquered (by the Assyrians ^{1 Chronicles 5:25-26}).