



Joshua 20-22

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Tape #7068
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Book of Joshua chapter twenty. In more primitive cultures, revenge killing is a common practice. Should you kill someone in my family, then we would be honor-bound towards our dead relative to kill someone in your family to avenge their death at your hand. And in primitive cultures, this is a practice that is carried on even to the present day. Only in the last few years in area of Irian Jaya where the Gospel has come has this revenge killing ceased. But this is a part of the whole scene in Lebanon today. These various families, and the civil war in Lebanon is carried on much because of avenge in the death of their relatives. Revenge killing. That is why you find even various Christian groups warring against each other—that is, so-called Christian groups—killing each other. They are revenge killings. And of course in Ireland, even to the present. I guess it happens in cultures that aren't so primitive also.

It is a practice that was a part of the culture and it was carried on oftentimes indiscriminately. That is, you may accidentally kill a friend of yours if say, you were driving your car and they should say, Oh look at that, and you turn to look and when you do, you run into an abutment and they are killed. They were a good friend. You didn't have any malice against them, there was no anger. It was just an accident. Even under those circumstances, often in the grief over the loss of the loved one, a member of the family would take it upon himself to kill you, to avenge the death of the family member.

This was a practice that, of course, was not right and so God provided for the innocent a place of refuge. It should be noted that the place of refuge was not for the guilty. If you were guilty of killing someone in anger, malice, by premeditation, even the city of refuge was no refuge for you. Those elders of the city of refuge were to turn you over to the avenger of blood if your crime was a deliberate, premeditated crime. But if you were a victim, it was an accident, you didn't intend to kill them but by accident you happened to kill someone, then these cities of refuge were to be set up in order that you might flee to the city of refuge. In order that you might be protected in the city of refuge that you might have a fair hearing and that you might be freed from that avenger of blood.

The Lord commanded Moses on three different occasions to set up these cities of refuge when you come into the land. Where a person who was guilty of manslaughter might flee in order to be protected against the avenger of blood. Now that they've come into the land and now that they've inhabited the land, the time has come to set up these cities of refuge. And in chapter twenty of the book of Joshua, we have Joshua establishing the cities of refuge, six of them altogether.

The LORD spoke unto Joshua, and said, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Appoint the cities of refuge, that I spoke to you of by the hand of Moses (20:1,2):

This indicates, of course, that already the first five books had been written and were accepted as the Word of God. These things that God had spoken to Moses about had become already codified and accepted as scripture.

That the slayer that kills any person by accident or unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he who flees unto one of these cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, he shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them (20:3,4).

If you accidentally killed someone, what you'd have to do is just run as fast as you can to the closest city of refuge. As you arrive at that city of refuge, the elders who were always in the gate of the city, that's where they carried on their judgments and their business transactions, you would meet with the elders and you'd say, I was out chopping wood with a friend of mine and the ax flew off and hit him in the head and the last time I saw him he was in a pool of blood. Oh, I didn't mean to do it, it was a total accident. They would say, Come on in, and they would give you a place to live within the city of refuge.

And if the avenger of blood pursues you, then they were not to deliver you into their hands; because you smote your neighbour unwittingly, and you did not hate him before. And they shall dwell in that city, until you're able to stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest (20:5,6).

You were to stay in that city of refuge, you would get a fair trial. If indeed you were innocent; that is, of premeditation, then you would be allowed to stay and you would be safe as long as you abided in that city. If you would leave that city of refuge and the avenger of blood could catch you outside of the city, then he would take your life. But you were safe as long as you remained in the city of refuge. And you stayed there until the death of the high priest.

That usually ensured a cooling off period. So that by the time the high priest died and you came back, cooler heads prevailed. They realize it was an accident and things were forgiven. But you had to stay there until the death of the high priest. There are those that see the city of refuge as a type of Jesus Christ, our refuge to whom we have fled. As long as you abide in Christ, you are safe. "Jesus said, Abide in Me, let my words abide in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me. And then He said, If any man abides not in Me, he is cut off, the branches withered. Men gather them and cast them into the fire" (John 15:4,6). So the importance of abiding in Jesus Christ. He is our refuge. And surely there are interesting analogies that can be drawn between the city of refuge and Jesus Christ, our refuge. There are problems with the analogy also but no analogy is absolutely perfect. But there are fascinating analogies that can be drawn.

So on the West Bank of Jordan,
there were three cities that were appointed as cities of refuge. First of all, the city of Kedesh that was in Galilee in the mountains of Naphtali (20:7),

This is that mountainous range that is on the west side towards Lebanon, the mountains of Naphtali. And the first city of refuge was up in the northern part of Israel, Kedesh, which interestingly means holy. And the city of refuge is a type of Christ, the Holy One.

The second city of refuge was the city of Shechem which was in the midst of the land just about the heart of the land of Israel is the city of Shechem. It is there near mount Ebal and Gerizim, the city of Shechem. Shechem means shoulder. And of course, concerning Jesus it said, "The government shall be upon His shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6).

Then in the south part, the third city of refuge was Hebron and this is in the heart of the southern part of Israel, about twenty-five, thirty miles south from Jerusalem and another twenty-five miles from Beersheba in the other direction. You see how strategically these cities were appointed. One in the middle of the country, one in the northern part, one in the southern part. That was intended so that a person could get there in a hurry. And so you would pick out the city that was closest to you. And it is interesting that the priest were to keep the roads to that city free from encumbrances so that a person could get there in a hurry. The priest would have to go out and clear the roads, make sure that it was easy access to the people in order that they might be able to get there when they were being pursued by the avenger of blood. So the three cities on the West Bank.

They also then appointed three cities on the East Bank.

And on the other side of Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben (20:8),

So on the southern part, Bezer which means fortification. Christ our fortification and defense. Then in the middle of the land in the area of Gilead, they appointed Ramoth, which means exultation. And finally up on the Golan Heights, they named the city of Golan from which the Golan Heights got its name, which means exultation. And so again, critically apportioned on the other side. One in the middle, one in the north and one in the south. The six cities of refuge. Did I say Hebron in the south? That means fellowship. I don't think I told you that, did I? Our fellowship with Christ.

At this point then, the leaders of the tribe of Levi who did not get a portion of the land. They cast lots for what portion of the land each tribe should get but it was appointed by God that the tribe of Levi should not get any inheritance in the land. But instead there was to be given to the tribe of Levi forty-eight cities that were spread throughout all the land, throughout all the tribes. So that that spiritual influence of the tribe of

Levi, the priestly tribe, should be throughout the entire land. And so there were forty-eight cities of which six were the cities of refuge. So these six cities were occupied by the Levites. The cities of refuge. But there were given also another forty-two cities so that the tribe of Levi was divided throughout the entire land and that spiritual influence then having its effect throughout the whole land.

The heads of the fathers of the Levites came unto Eleazar the priest (21:1),

Who was the son of Aaron.

and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel; And they spoke unto them at Shiloh (21:1,2).

Shiloh became really sort of the first capital city in the new land. Later the capital was moved to Jerusalem but in the beginning, Shiloh was the place where the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle were established.

and so they said, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs for our cattle. And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs. The first lot (21:2-4).

They drew lots. There were three basic families of the tribe of Levi: the Kohathites, the Merarites and Gershon, tribe of Gershon. They cast lots as to what area these various families would inhabit.

There's an interesting thing here, before we go any further, that should be pointed out. And that is that Moses did not seek to create some kind of a kingly inheritance for his family. There's no mention of the family of Moses. He belongs to the family of the Kohathites. But rather than using his position to establish his family, like so many people do—the Rockefeller family, the DuPont family, you get power and position and then you sort of set up your family—Moses wasn't guilty of that. He didn't take advantage of his position to set up a special inheritance for his family.

The same is true of Joshua. He did not try to establish a special place for the family of Joshua and their descendants. But being of the tribe of Levi, they did not take an inheritance in the land. But with the others, they just lived within the cities that were apportioned for the tribe of Levi but did not take inheritance themselves. I think that this is quite commendable, as far as Moses and Joshua are both concerned, not trying to set up their families but just living within the boundaries of the cities that were appointed to the tribe of Levi.

So they cast lots, "the first lot"

came to the family of Kohath: and the children of Aaron the priest, which were of the Levites, they have by lot out of the tribe of Judah, out of the tribe of Simeon, and the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities (21:4).

This shows how that God's hand was guiding in all the things, even in the casting of lots. The family of Kohath was the family from which the high priest should come. In the ministering priest. So when they drew lots, the lot of Kohath first, their cities, thirteen of them were given to them within the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin. At this point, Shiloh was the place where the ark of the covenant was which was in the area of Benjamin. But at this point little did they know that God would ultimately choose the city of Jerusalem to place His name. And Jerusalem happens to be right in the heart of Judah. Simeon on the south and Benjamin to the north. But right in the heart of Judah is the city of Jerusalem and by giving them the thirteen cities to Kohath, it kept them near the place where the temple was ultimately to be built and the place where God was to be worshipped. And so God shows His precognition, you might say, and His advance work by having the lot for Kohath to come in this area.

The rest of the children of Kohath had then ten other cities from the tribe of Ephraim, and Dan, and half the tribe of Manasseh (21:5).

So this Ephraim and half the tribe of Manasseh are just north of Benjamin and the tribe of Dan was just west of the Jerusalem range of mountains towards the area of the modern city of Tel Aviv, the Ben Gurion airport out that direction.

And the children of Gershon had their lot and their cities were from the tribes of Issachar (21:6),

Which was up in the area of mount Gilboa.

and out of the tribe of Asher (21:6),

which is over towards the modern area of Haifa in that coastal region,

*and from the tribe of Naphtali (21:6),
which is in the upper Galilee,*

and out of the half tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, they had thirteen cities. The children of Merari [the third family] by their families had out of the tribe of Reuben, and Gad, the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses. And they gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are here mentioned by name (21:6-9),

He then names the cities that were given to the Kohathites and then the cities that were given to the Gershonites and then the cities that were given to the Merarites and there are forty-eight names and you think I'm going to read them, you're mistaken. But out of these forty-eight cities, six of them were cities of refuge.

For you that have been to Israel with us, I will just point out in verse sixteen, the city of Bethshemesh with her suburbs. Bethshemesh is that tell that we stand on when we overlook the area of Zorah and Eshtaol where Samson had his experiences. And that's where we tell you the story of Samson there at Bethshemesh. So if you can remember that tell where all the beautiful red poppy and the yellow daisies were, that was one of the priestly cities that was given unto the tribe of Levi. All in all forty-eight cities scattered both sides of the Jordan throughout all of the tribes according to the lot. And thus we get to verse forty-three,

And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt in it (21:43).

God had promised four hundred and seventy-five years earlier to Abraham as he stood at Bethel and he looked to the north, southeast and west: God had said, As far as your eye can see, I have given this land to you and to your descendants (Genesis 13:14,15). It is now four hundred and seventy-five years later and God has now kept His word. And standing again at Bethel at this point, every direction as far as you could see were inhabited by the tribes of Israel.

Looking to the north from Bethel, the areas of Ephraim, half the tribe of Manasseh, Issachar, Naphtali. As you look down up towards Hermon, just below Hermon, the tribe of Naphtali. Looking towards the Mediterranean, the tribe of Asher, tribe of Dan. Looking south to the Jerusalem mountains, the tribe of Judah. You are in actually the area of the tribe of Benjamin at Bethel and then on beyond the Jerusalem mountains down into the plains, the tribe of Simeon. Looking over to what is today Jordan, the mountains of Moab and Gilead there the tribes of Reuben and Gad and on up towards the Golan Heights, the tribe of Manasseh. They were dwelling as far as you could see from that point, it all belong now to the tribes of Israel and as it says, they possessed it and they were dwelling in it. God had kept the promise that He made to Abraham. It was now fulfilled. The promise has come to pass. God always keeps His word.

And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that He swore to their fathers: and there stood not a man of their enemies before them; and the LORD delivered all of their enemies into their hand (21:44).

God had promised to Moses that He would go before him and He would drive out the inhabitants of the land. He would send hornets before them. He would not drive out the enemies all at once but little by little. And now the enemies have all been driven out. The inhabitants of the land have been dispersed and they are dwelling now in peace in the land. "The Lord gave them peace, according to all that He swore to their fathers: and there was not a man that could stand before them." Though the king of Hebron had gathered together several other kings and their armies so that they were up in the area of the upper Galilee above the sea of Galilee, in the area of Merom which was once a body of water up there, now has been drained by the Israelis for the farming purposes, but Joshua came upon them and it said that there were so many that they were like the sands of the sea innumerable. In fact, they said so many people you couldn't count them. And yet Joshua came upon them and destroyed them.

The king of Jerusalem had gathered together a confederacy of five kings and Joshua destroyed them. Not a king was able to stand against them and they had conquered now the land. They were resting in the land. Again God kept His promise unto Moses and unto Joshua His servant. And so it is declared, verse forty-five:

There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came

to pass (21:45).

God didn't fail in one single thing. Everything that God had said He would do, He did. Not one promise of God failed. You can count upon the word of God. You can count upon the word of God coming to pass. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth may pass away but My word shall never pass away" (Matthew 24:35). You can be sure that His word will be kept. God will be faithful to keep His word.

The Bible tells us that God honors His word even above His name. And the name of God, of course, as we know from our study of the Bible is just one of the most awesome things in the universe. It is to be honored and hallowed and as we read in Psalm one eleven, "Holy and reverend is His name" (Psalm 111:9). "The name Jehovah is a high tower: the righteous run into it and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10). So much in the Bible about the name of the Lord. And yet that psalm declares God honors His word even above His name. God will keep His word. Not one good thing failed of all that God had promised to do.

Thus can be said in every generation and in every age. God has been faithful and God has kept His word. Not one word of God has failed. That's a pretty good record. Over the six thousand years of human history, to look at the word of God and to realize that God has been faithful to keep His word. And as we look around the world today, we find the same is true. God continues to keep His word. The very fact that Israel exists as a nation today is a testimony to the faithfulness of God in keeping His word. Read Ezekiel thirty-five, thirty-six, thirty-seven, where God promises that in the last day, He will gather again His people who have been scattered all over the world. And I will bring them back into the land and they will be established there. And the nations of the world will see a miracle for they will see a nation born in a day.

And when I gather them again, there'll no longer be two nations when they fell, they were divided. You had the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom. And the northern kingdom fell first to Assyria. Later the southern kingdom fell to Babylon. But they had had civil wars and there was a division. There were two kings, two thrones, two capitals. But God said, When I bring them back, they'll not be a divided nation. They'll be a unified nation again, one nation. The two sticks will be brought together and there will be one nation. And so we see Israel existing today, a unified nation dwelling in the land. God has kept His word.

Through Zechariah, the prophet said, And when I have gathered them together and they are dwelling in the land, then I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone to all of her neighbors roundabout. And whosoever shall come against Jerusalem shall be soundly thrashed (Zechariah 12:3). Thus far we have seen that God has kept His word. Everytime Israel has been attacked by her enemies their enemies have always come out the worst for the battle. In fact, so much so that it almost seems like the figures are being inflated. It doesn't seem reality. After the last war of '73 when they had the exchange of prisoners after the war, Israel had to give back several thousand prisoners and they got their hundred back that were captured. A burdensome stone to her neighbors.

God keeps His word. You can be sure of that. Not a word of God, not a good thing that God had promised had failed. "All," it says, "came to pass." I like that. All of what God had declared now had been fulfilled. God kept His word. So at this point,

Joshua called the men, the armies from the tribe of Reuben, and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh (22:1),

These men had come to Joshua earlier before they crossed the Jordan and they said, Look, we're cattlemen. This area over here is great cattle country. We really would be very satisfied to just keep this territory over here. They were occupying much of what is Jordan today, the East Bank. They were occupying the area of Moab, Mount Gilead and on up into the Golan Heights. They said this is great cattle country and we're cattlemen. We would just as soon have our inheritance over here. Joshua made a covenant with them and said, Alright, if you will send your fighting men, your armies with it, and if they will fight with us until we've taken all of the territory on the West Bank, when the land has been conquered and the people have their portion, then you can return to your families here and you can live here.

Seven years now has transpired. They've been conquering the land and now all of the tribes are settled as we had in the end of last chapter. And so Joshua called these armies from Reuben, Gad and Manasseh.

And he said to them, You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, you've obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you (22:2):

You've been obedient fellow.

You have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but you've kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. And now the LORD your God has given rest unto your brothers, as he promised them: therefore now return, and get to your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan (22:3,4).

So the troops are dismissed. Fellows, you can go home now. You can go back to your families and back to your land on the other side of Jordan.

But [charging them] take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to [first] love the LORD your God, [second] to walk in all his ways, [third] to cleave unto him, and [fourth] to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul (22:5).

So this is the charge. And my, what a tremendous charge it is. One that each of us should personally take to heart. Love the Lord your God. Walk in all of His ways. Keep His commandments. Cleave to Him and serve Him with all of your heart and soul. If you do that, you'll never have any problems, guaranteed. That's the good life. Loving God, serving God, cleaving to God, keeping His commandments, walking in His ways.

So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents (22:6).

Or back to their homes, villages, towns.

One half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given possession in Bashan: but unto the other half Joshua gave to their brothers on the west side of Jordan. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, he blessed them, And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren (22:7,8).

In taking the land, they also took all of the spoil of the land. And so there were tremendous herd, there was a lot of gold, and silver, brass and iron, and these men received their portion. The booty of war to take back and Joshua commanded that they share it with their brothers.

And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses. And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to. And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel. And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them. And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest (22:9-13),

He was actually the grandson of Aaron.

And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel (22:14).

They sent the representatives of the priesthood plus the major leaders of each tribe. Sort of the governor of each tribe.

And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying, Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that you have builded you an altar, that you might rebel this day against the LORD (22:15,16)?

What are you guys doing building this altar over here? There was only one altar of sacrifice and that was at the tabernacle. And so to build another altar in another place was just something that was shocking to the tribes of Israel. It is interesting how that oftentimes we make judgment on appearances not really understanding the motive of a person. And how wrong we can often be in these kinds of snap judgments. That is why it is so important that we reserve judgment until we get the facts.

Here the rumor has gone out. These guys have built a huge altar down there where you cross the Jordan. And these guys were so upset. They gathered all their armies, let's go wipe them out. And they're ready to go to war because they've heard that this great altar was built and they assumed that they were creating a schism. They were going to start worshipping gods over there. And so they said to them, Don't you remember what happened at Peor when some of the people began to worship the god of the Moabites? That was when Balaam was called, you remember? How that the plague of God killed so many. You forget so quickly what worshipping false gods or other gods will do. Have you forgotten the wrath of God? the plagues, the thousands that were killed at Peor when so many of the children of Israel went whoring after the gods of the Moabites?

But that you must turn away this day from following Jehovah? and it will be, seeing that you rebelled to day against the LORD, that to morrow he will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass over to the land of the possession of the LORD, wherein the LORD'S tabernacle dwells, and take possession among us: but don't rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar other than the altar of the LORD our God (22:18,19).

The "beside" isn't next to it but "other than" the altar of the Lord our God. So what they're saying is, Hey guys, look, if you don't like this land over here, come on over and we will give you portions on the other side. Let's not create a division. Let's not create a schism. Why in the world would you build another altar beside the one that is at. We got the one at the tabernacle for the sacrifices. You shouldn't build another one.

Don't you remember how Achan the son of Zerah committed a trespass in the accursed thing, and God's wrath came on all of Israel (22:20)?

In other words, we are a unit. If you guys turn away from God, then we will also be cursed of God. Israel stands as a unit before the Lord and if one man's sin could bring the wrath of God upon the whole nation, how much if you two and a half tribe pull away from God will it affect the whole nation? And they're really quite concerned and rightfully so. If their suspicions are true. But their suspicions are not true. They have been guilty of making a false judgment of the motive. That's something that's awfully hard to know. What was the motive of the heart?

I've told you before how when I was a little kid, my parents had gone to town and left my older sister to baby-sit. I found some paint in the garage and I decided that I would surprise my parents and paint the garage for them while they were gone. And so when they came home, I thought they're going to be so proud to see this garage painted this pretty red color. Man, they're going to be happy. And I was painting away the door of the garage. So proud of myself knowing that they were going to be so thrilled. When they came home and saw the garage, I got a good licking'. And I couldn't understand it. I was really. Why were they so angry? Why were they yelling at me? Can't they see that I was doing a good job? I thought I was doing something to make them very proud and happy. My motives were pure. My motives were pure. They couldn't see that. They didn't see my heart. All they saw was the red paint all over the garage door.

Years later my wife and I came home to discover that our daughter was painting the garage. And my wife started immediately to get out and I said, Wait a minute, wait a minute. No, no, no, let's treat this. Because I remembered what happened to me. And so I said, Well honey, you've been painting the garage. That's nice. What were you thinking, sweetheart, as you were painting this garage? I was thinking, when mom and daddy get home I'd get a spanking but it's sure fun.

You just don't know what's in the mind. You don't know the motive of why a person is doing what they're doing. And it is wrong for us to judge a person unless we really know the motive of their heart. We can't just judge a person always by their actions.

And here they are building an altar. This looks like a horribly, reprehensible thing. They're trying to make a division. They're going to sacrifice to other gods. And you start building up this whole case against them.

Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel, Jehovah the God of gods, Jehovah God of gods, he knows, and

Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if it is in transgression against the LORD (do not save us this day,) (22:21,22),

God knows our heart. God knows what our motive was and if we have done this in rebellion, then wipe us out.

We have built us an altar that if we have built this altar to turn from following Jehovah, or if we built it to offer burnt offerings or meal offerings, or peace offerings thereon, let the LORD himself require it (22:23);

Let God wipe us out.

And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have you to do with Jehovah the God of Israel? For Jehovah has made Jordan a border between us and you, you children of Reuben and Gad; you have no part in the LORD: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the LORD (22:24,25).

Our fear was that in years to come, further generations down, they might look at the Jordan river as a barrier, as a dividing line. And they might say to our children, Hey, you guys live over on the other side. You don't have anything to do with Jehovah our God. And they might cause our children to cease from worshipping and fearing the Lord. So we built this altar, a replica of the altar in order that they might be reminded that we also belong to Jehovah and serve Him. "For the Lord has made Jordan a border between us and you, you children of Reuben and Gad; and you have no part in the Lord: so that your children cause our children to cease from fearing."

Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offerings, or for sacrifices: But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, You have no part in the LORD. Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you (22:26-28).

We know what the altar's about. We've built this one as a model, as a witness.

For God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meal offerings, or for sacrifices, one outside of or beside the altar of the LORD our God that is before his tabernacle. And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel which were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD (22:29-31).

Thank God, we can see, we understand. And God's wrath will not come upon us.

And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again. And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God (22:32-34).

Ed is a word in Hebrew that means witness. And so it was called then witness from that time on. The altar became a witness of the unity of the people. Though divided by the Jordan river, we serve the same God and we acknowledge and recognize Jehovah as our God and this is the witness of that fact.

Next week we'll finish the book of Joshua. So chapters twenty-three and twenty-four, your assignment for next week.

May the Lord be with you and bless you and may you love the Lord and walk in His way and keep His commandment and serve the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul that you might experience the hand of God upon your life, the blessings that He has promised to those who would walk in obedience unto

His will. God bless you, give you a beautiful week. In Jesus' name.