

Joshua 22: An Unexpected Controversy

Getting started: Name a time when your initial read on a situation turned out to be a complete misread. How easy is to misread motives and situations?

Read 22:1-10**Releasing the 2 ½ Tribes**

1. Which 2.5 tribes had possessions on the east side of the Jordan River? (v. 1) What commendation did Joshua give these tribes before their return? (vv. 2-3) What is the status of the conquest of Canaan at this point? (v. 4; 21:43-44).
2. How does Joshua caution these tribes before their return to their possessions? (vv. 5) What were these tribes carrying home with them following the conquest? (v. 8)
3. What shocking and unexpected action did these tribes take before crossing the river and returning to their lands? (v.10)

Read 22:11-20**Unexpected altar by the river**

4. How did the other tribes respond when word reached them that their comrades built an altar? (vv. 11-12) What action preempted an immediate military strike? (vv. 13-15)
5. What question did Phinehas' delegation have for these tribes? (v. 16) What does this question tell us the rest of Israel was thinking about what had been done? (vv. 16-17)

6. What danger did they feel these tribes had put Israel in? (v. 18) Did they have reason to be concerned? (v. 20) What did Israel urge these 'straying' tribes to do? (v. 19)

Read 22:21-29**A Reasonable explanation**

7. Whose authority did these 2.5 tribes put themselves under? (vv. 21-23) What does their willingness to be under this authority suggest about their guilt or innocence?
8. What reason did these tribes give for building the altar? (vv. 24-25) Do you think their argument had merit? Why or why not?
9. What would the altar look like? What function would it serve to future generations? What did the tribes flatly deny would be done with this altar? (vv. 26-29)
10. What was the response of Phinehas and the leaders when they heard the explanation? (v. 30) How did Israel respond when they heard the report? (v. 33). What had been averted by this delegation?

Going Deeper

As men, we tend to form opinions rather quickly and plow forward. What can we learn from the approach Phinehas takes? Following his example, list some wisdom steps you could take to avoid controversies in your marriage, in your parenting, in your relationships with other people? (Proverbs 18:13; 24:6; 29:22)