



Study Guide: Joshua – Chapter 22

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This study guide provides an educational overview of Joshua Chapter 22 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Joshua Chapter 22 marks a pivotal moment in the book of Joshua, highlighting the faithfulness and unity of the Israelite tribes after their conquest of Canaan. This chapter focuses on the eastern tribes' return to their allotted lands and the construction of an altar, which initially causes alarm among the western tribes. Readers should watch for themes of covenant loyalty, inter-tribal relationships, and the importance of clear communication in maintaining unity within God's people.

Context

Joshua 22 follows the successful military campaigns that secured the Promised Land for the Israelites. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh had requested and received land east of the Jordan River before the conquest began. After the land was distributed and the western tribes settled, Joshua sends these eastern tribes back to their territories with a charge to remain faithful to the covenant. The chapter is set in the immediate aftermath of the conquest, with Joshua as the leader and the tribal representatives as key speakers. The covenant context is central, emphasizing obedience to God's commands and unity among the tribes.

Outline

The chapter can be divided into three main movements. First, Joshua's commissioning of the eastern tribes to return to their land and his charge to remain faithful (verses 1–9). Second, the eastern tribes' construction of an altar by the Jordan River, which causes concern and suspicion among the western tribes (verses 10–20). Third, the peaceful resolution of the misunderstanding through dialogue, reaffirming unity and covenant faithfulness (verses 21–34).

Verse-by-Verse Study



Verses 1-3: Joshua summons the eastern tribes, reminding them of their role in supporting the other tribes in battle and now sending them back to their lands with a blessing and a charge to obey God's law.

Verses 4-6: The eastern tribes affirm their commitment to the covenant and promise to build an altar if necessary to offer sacrifices, but only if it is for the Lord and not for idolatry.

Verses 7-9: Joshua blesses the eastern tribes and sends them away in peace, emphasizing the importance of obedience and unity under God's law.

Verses 10-12: The eastern tribes build a large altar by the Jordan River, which alarms the western tribes who fear it signals rebellion or idolatry.

Verses 13-20: The western tribes confront the eastern tribes, accusing them of violating the covenant by erecting a rival altar. The eastern tribes respond by explaining their motives, clarifying that the altar is a witness to their shared faith and not for sacrifices.

Verses 21-29: Phinehas, the priest, leads a delegation to hear the eastern tribes' explanation. The eastern tribes affirm their loyalty to the Lord and explain that the altar is a symbol to prevent future generations from questioning their relationship with God.

Verses 30-34: The western tribes accept the explanation, and peace is restored. The altar is named "Ed," meaning witness, signifying the unity and covenant faithfulness of all Israel.

Key Themes

One key theme is covenant faithfulness, as the tribes demonstrate their commitment to God's law despite geographical separation. Another theme is unity within diversity, showing how the tribes maintain solidarity even when misunderstandings arise. The chapter also highlights the importance of communication and seeking understanding rather than rushing to judgment. Finally, the altar serves as a symbol of witness, reminding future generations of their shared identity and faith.

Cross-References

Numbers 32 provides background on the eastern tribes' request for land and their role in the conquest, clarifying their position in Joshua 22. Deuteronomy 27-28 outlines the



covenant blessings and curses, emphasizing the importance of obedience that Joshua reiterates. 1 Kings 18:30–39 shows the significance of altars in Israel’s worship and the dangers of idolatry, helping to understand the western tribes’ concerns. Hebrews 12:14–15 encourages peace and holiness among believers, reflecting the resolution of conflict in this chapter.

Application

Modern disciples can learn from Joshua 22 the importance of maintaining unity within the body of Christ, especially when differences or misunderstandings arise. The chapter encourages believers to seek clarification and dialogue before assuming wrongdoing. It also highlights the value of shared symbols and testimonies that affirm faith across generations. Finally, it challenges Christians to remain faithful to God’s covenant, regardless of their circumstances or location.

Summary

Joshua Chapter 22 narrates the return of the eastern tribes to their lands and the construction of an altar that nearly causes division among Israel. Through careful communication and reaffirmation of covenant loyalty, the tribes resolve their conflict peacefully. The chapter underscores themes of unity, faithfulness, and the power of witness, contributing a vital lesson on maintaining harmony within God’s people after conquest and settlement.