

LESSONS FROM “ED”

Introduction

- 1) **Joshua 22:10** – some of the children of Israel built a *great, impressive altar*
 - a) Wouldn't seem to be a big deal, but it is the start of a dramatic and informative story
- 2) This story provides lessons about **misunderstandings** and how to handle them properly
 - a) Misunderstandings will always happen – some may be humorous, but others serious
 - b) They can be disruptive and cause division – what should be united becomes divided
 - c) There are proper ways to handle misunderstandings and improper ways that lead to strife
 - d) Misunderstanding is not an excuse for evil thoughts and misbehavior!
- 3) Will also be a reminder of the importance of faithfully **worshipping God** according to His will

I) **Back Story (Joshua 6:1–22:10)**

- A) The tribes of Israel have been given the land of promise and the Levites their cities (Josh. 6-21; 21:43-45)
- B) The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh return to their land having kept their word to Moses (Josh. 22:1-9; cf. Num. 32; Deut. 3:12-22)
- C) These Transjordan tribes build an altar by the Jordan (Josh. 22:10)

II) **The Accusation (Joshua 22:11-20)**

- A) The accusation is that they had built their own altar as a substitute for the true altar (v. 19)
 - 1) Based on *gossip/hearsay* (v.11 “heard someone say”); ready to go to war (v. 12)
 - 2) Based on an *assumption* that this was a substitute altar built for worship (v. 19)
- B) The rest of Israel was right to be concerned for keeping God's law and offering true worship (Deut. 12:1-8, 13-14, 32; Josh. 24:14)
 - 1) We are still to be careful to worship God according to His will (Jn. 4:24; Matt. 15:9)
- C) The problem was the accusation was made before all the facts were known – we can be zealous for the truth, but we also need to study carefully and fairly all the evidence (Prov. 18:13; Deut. 13:12-15)

III) **The Response (Joshua 22:21-34)**

- A) The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh didn't respond in anger or in kind (vv. 21-29)
 - 1) Took the time to carefully explain their reasons instead of getting angry
- B) The altar was built as a “witness” (Heb. *ed*) to later generations and the rest of Israel of their unity as God's people and the worship they shared together at the true altar (vv. 26-28)
 - 1) It was not built as a substitute altar for unauthorized worship (vv. 22-23, 26, 29)
- C) The “pattern” of the altar becomes the witness – “Behold the pattern!” (v. 28)
 - 1) We are to follow the pattern of truth today in pleasing God (2 Tim. 1:13)
- D) It pleased those who heard it (vv. 30-34); Same faith following same pattern = Unity

IV) **Lessons to be Learned**

- A) Must always be concerned for God's holiness and true worship (Psa. 96:8-9)
- B) Need the courage to confront, but do so in love and humility (Gal. 6:1)
- C) Don't confront a problem unless you are willing to help (Josh. 22:19)
- D) Love always strives to reconcile, is patient, does not return evil for evil (Rom. 12:16-18)
- E) Determine to seek the facts and reject hearsay, to believe the best unless proven otherwise, to seek the good of all involved to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31-33; 13:4-7)

Conclusion

These lessons from the *Ed* (“witness”) altar involve principles that are still true under the covenant of Jesus Christ. We must be careful to worship God according to His will and handle any misunderstanding with love and patience. Will you obey God today and be saved from your sins?