

Don't Be Righteous Over Much.

Joshua 22.

Sunday evening, September 26, 2010.

“Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?” Eccl. 7:16 KJV.

I. The Eastern tribes return home. Vs. 1-4.

- A. Seven years had gone by since Israel had crossed the Jordan and entered the land of Canaan.
- B. Before Israel crossed over, and before Moses had died, the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh had received their inheritance East of the Jordan River in what is today Jordan and Syria.
- C. This was done with the provision that when their brothers would cross the Jordan to dispossess the nations living in Canaan, they were to go with them and battle with, and for them, so that they also might inherit their land. Numbers 32:20-32.
- D. They had served faithfully these seven years, and with the Levites receiving their inheritance, the process of conquering and dividing the land had come to an end.
- E. As further proof of their commitment, faithfulness and blamelessness in this matter, they do not take it upon themselves to leave, but they wait for Joshua to come to them and to dismiss them.

II. Two parting exhortations. Vs. 5-9.

Joshua, in sending Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh to their homes East of the Jordan River, saw two potential dangers that ever lurk around in the human heart.

- A. Living East of the Jordan River meant that they were somewhat separate from the rest of Israel's tribes, and with that came the danger that they might feel independent from them, and with that would stop serving Israel's god as well. As such Joshua exhorts them to cling to the Lord with purpose of heart, and to serve Him with all their heart and soul.
- B. The second matter concerned the large amount of spoil they would take with them back home. They had received their share of the riches of the conquered Canaanite nations such as cattle of all different kinds, precious metals and common metals, clothing etc. Very easily these men might think that they had fought the battles, and therefore they should be entitled to the goods. Joshua says no; those who stayed behind those seven years to care for the wives and children and the cattle should share just the same in the spoils of war. David would later make this a law in Israel. 1 Samuel 30:24,25.

III. Another danger discerned.

- A. That the two and a half tribes thought about the parting words of Joshua is evident by what follows:
- B. Dwelling on the two dangers they were warned against by Joshua, they discerned a third one; what would happen if the nine and a half tribes on the West side of the Jordan did not recognize the tribes on the East side as a

legitimate part of the nation of Israel, again because of this natural boundary of the Jordan River between them? Vs. 24,25

In such an event the two and a half tribes would become estranged to the God of Israel through no fault of their own. Vs. 25.

- C. To combat this eventuality they decided to build a giant replica of the altar that stood before the tabernacle in Shiloh, on the West side of the Jordan River, in the place where they crossed over into their own territories. Vs. 28.
The purpose of this altar was not that there would ever a sacrifice of any kind brought on it, but that it should serve as a testimony and a witness that the Eastern tribes also belonged to, and served the God of Israel. Vs. 28.

IV. The danger of jumping to conclusions. Vs. 11, 12, 16.

- A. The nine and a half tribes learn what the two and a half tribes were doing in building a giant replica of the altar in Shiloh on the bank of the Jordan River.
- B. The nine and a half tribes understood this to mean that the two and a half tribes didn't want to travel all the way to Shiloh to serve the Lord, and so they took it upon themselves to build a sanctuary closer to home, and to worship the Lord separately from the rest of Israel, thus dividing the unity of Israel's worship.
- C. Immediately the nine and a half tribes were ready to go to war over this with the two and a half tribes, and they gathered their armies in Shiloh. Vs. 12.
- D. Built into their actions was a dangerous assumption: They assumed from the outset that they had the wisdom to infallibly discern the nature of what was going on. Thus they did not hesitate to ascend their judgment throne and to sit in judgment over their brethren. They readily took the role of Judge, Jury and Executioner upon themselves.

Application:

How many of your words and actions and attitudes have this same assumption for its foundation?

V. The wisdom of restraint.

- A. While gathered in Shiloh, prepared for war, some cooler heads prevailed on the nation and it was decided to send a delegation with representatives of the nine and a half tribes to their brethren to see if they could not persuade them of the error of their way, leading them to repentance, and even going so far as to invite them to live with them on the West side of the Jordan River. Vs 13, 14, 19.
- B. Never did they inquire into the motives of the two and a half tribes. All along they assumed to have a perfect understanding about that.
- C. Upon learning the true nature of the situation they peacefully part ways, rejoicing that tragedy was narrowly avoided.

Application:

Remember that "the Lord is among us" Vs. 31. Leave room for Him to do His work among us. Be slow to assume; be slow to speak; be slow especially to wrath, for wrath very easily assumes too much. Remember that your brethren have a Judge, and it is not you. Romans 14:4,10. Judge not by appearance; only by the whole truth.