

# Joshua's Farewell to the Trans-Jordanian Tribes

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[ 0 : 00 ] Take your Bibles, then let's open to the book of Joshua.

I have two more, I think, two more messages that I'm going to be bringing from this book. We're nearing the end of it, though we have had to skip a good deal of it because of the nature of it. The distribution of the land, of course, and all of the specifics, particulars about that. And we really didn't look through all of those things and all those details.

But I've tried, even throughout that section, to kind of capture some spiritual truths, some things that kind of come to the surface as you read through those passages.

I just tried to do that. And last time we looked at the cities of refuge in chapter 20. And I'm going to skip chapter 21.

[ 1 : 06 ] Chapter 21 deals primarily with the, and not just 21, but the allotment of cities to the tribe of Levi.

Now, the tribe of Levi was not allotted a particular area of land in the promised land. They were given cities that were spread throughout the land of Israel.

I think 48, maybe it's 49. I can't remember the number now. Quite a few cities spread throughout. And I think if we were to draw any kind of spiritual application there, I think it would be that, in a sense, the Levites were kind of the salt and light spread throughout the land of Israel.

They were in all the key, some of the key cities. And they were ministers of the Lord. Their inheritance was the Lord. And they were ministers of the word and worship and interpreters of scripture as well.

And so, kind of in that sense, they were not given one particular location, but they were spread throughout the land. And I think symbolic of God's presence throughout the land.

[ 2 : 22 ] But we're not going to dwell on the distribution of those cities, the names of those cities, the cities being divided up among the, I think, three sons of Levi.

And we'll skip on from that and look at chapter 22. Actually, this last section, two sermons, I'm thinking, hoping, tonight and next time.

And we'll deal with these three final chapters, 22, 23, and 24. And I've named these last two messages under this one title, Joshua's Farewells.

Because that's really what we have. We have Joshua's Farewells. In fact, there are two farewells. If you don't count, the second farewell is divided into two farewells.

But there are two primary farewells here at the close of the book of Joshua, both given by Joshua himself. The first one, which we will be focusing on tonight, is Joshua's farewell to the tribes that settled on the eastern side of the Jordan River, outside of Canaan, outside of the promised land proper.

[ 3 : 44 ] Scholars typically call this group the Transjordan tribes. Trans means across Jordan, of course, the name of the river.

Transjordan, even to this name, today we have that region that is known as Transjordan. That's on the eastern side, across the Jordan from the promised land.

And you remember, we've mentioned these a few times. And we have the tribe of Reuben, the Reubenites. We have the tribe of Gad, the Gadites.

And then half of the tribe of Manasseh. So we have half of the tribe of Manasseh allotted a portion of land trans-Jordan or across Jordan. And the other half, of course, in the promised land.

And so these are the three, two tribes and a half of a tribe. And Joshua is giving a farewell to them. That will be our focus here tonight.

[ 4 : 45 ] The second farewell is Joshua's own farewell, his farewell to Israel, because he's up in years and very close to the time of his death.

And he does die, of course. And it will bring us to the end of the book. And so the book concludes with the account, a very brief account, of Joshua's burial.

And not only Joshua's, but also Joseph's burial. You say, was Joseph still alive? Indeed he didn't know. But they brought his bones out of Egypt, as per his instructions, God's instructions.

So they carried the bones of Joshua with them out of Egypt so that he would not be buried in Egypt, so that he would be buried in the promised land. And so they indeed buried his bones. And to this point, they've been carrying them around.

You know, I don't know what they carry them in. What do you put a bunch of bones in? Probably some special kind of sarcophagus or something. But also we have an account, a very brief account, of Eleazar's burial as well.

[ 5 : 48 ] Who was he? One of the sons of Aaron. And he also, his account, the account of his burial, will come at the close of the book. And we'll get to that part next time.

And so tonight we're going to look at the first farewell, the first of these farewells, Joshua's farewell to the Transjordan tribes. Reubenites, Gadites, half a tribe of Manasseh.

So let me just go ahead and read the chapter, chapter 22. That's where we find this. And even though we're going to be reading large portions of it, or I'm going to be reading large portions of it as we kind of walk our way through it.

But let me read the chapter to begin with. Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, and said to them, Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan, Transjordan.

But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to keep his commandments, to hold fast to him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

[ 7 : 34 ] So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents. Now to half the tribe of Manasseh, Moses had given a possession in Bashan.

That's the other half of the tribe. But to the other half of it, Joshua gave a possession among their brethren on this side of the Jordan, westward.

Remember, so we have them in two places. And indeed when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them, and spoke to them, saying, Return with much riches in your tents, to your tents, with very much livestock, with silver and gold, with bronze, with iron, and with much, very much clothing.

Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren. So the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, which they had obtained, according to the word of the Lord, by the hand of Moses.

And when they came to the region of the Jordan, which is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, built an altar there by the Jordan.

[ 8 : 55 ] A great, impressive altar. Now the children of Israel heard someone say, Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, on the children of Israel's side.

And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war against them. Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the priest, to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead.

And with him ten rulers, one ruler each from the chief house of every tribe of Israel, and each one was the head of the house of his father among the divisions of Israel.

Then they came to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, a lot of redundancy in the word of God sometimes, and to the land of Gilead.

And they spoke with them, saying, Thus says the whole congregation of the Lord, What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel to turn away this day from following the Lord, in that you have built for yourselves an altar that you might rebel this day against the Lord?

[ 10 : 19 ] Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed till this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord?

But that you must turn away this day from following the Lord. And it shall be, if you rebel today against the Lord, that tomorrow he will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel.

That is, he'll be angry with us too. Nevertheless, if the land of your possession is unclean, then cross over to the land of possession of the Lord, where the Lord's tabernacle stands, and take possession among us.

But do not rebel against the Lord, nor rebel against us, by building yourself an altar besides the altar of the Lord our God. Did not Achan, the son of Zerah, commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel?

And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity. Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered, and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel, The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knows, and let Israel itself know.

[ 11 : 30 ] If it is in rebellion, or if in treachery against the Lord, do not save us this day. If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the Lord, or if to offer on it burnt offerings, or grain offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the Lord himself require an account.

But in fact, we have done it for fear, for reason, saying, In time to come, your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel?

Are you part of us? For the Lord has made the Jordan a border between us, you and us, you children of Reuben, and children of Gad. You have no part in the Lord.

So your descendants would make our descendants cease fearing the Lord. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice, but that it may be a witness between you and us, and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the Lord before him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, with our peace offerings, that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, You have no part in the Lord.

Therefore we said that it will be, when they say this to us, or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, Here is the replica of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices, but it is a witness between you and us.

[ 13 : 06 ] Far be it from us that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn from the following of the Lord this day to build an altar for burnt offerings, for grain offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the Lord our God, which is before his tabernacle.

Now when Phinehas, the priest and the rulers of the congregation, the heads of the divisions of Israel, who were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, spoke, it pleased them.

Then Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the priest, said to the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, this day we perceive that the Lord is among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the Lord.

Now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord. And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the priest and the rulers, returned from the children of Reuben and the children of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought back word to them.

So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel, blessed God. They spoke no more of going against them in battle to destroy the land where the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.

[ 14 : 19 ] The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar witness, for it is a witness between us that the Lord is God. Now that's a long chapter, and there's a lot in it, though really it's pretty easy to pick out, you know, the movement of the story.

What is going on here? I know we read through it and we have maybe some questions about it, and hopefully we can answer all of those questions here tonight. But I think we can divide this chapter into four movements, kind of movements in the story.

First you have Joshua's exhortation. Joshua first is exhorting the Transjordanians, and you already have memorized what tribes those are, right?

Because I have read it over and over. Reubenites, Gadites, half the tribe of Manasseh. You've got that down, don't you? That's why there's repetition in the Word of God. Help us to remember it.

All right, so first you have Joshua's exhortation. And then we have the, now get this word, Cisjordanians.

[ 15 : 33 ] I'm teaching you a new word here tonight. Cis, C-I-S, Jordanians. Cis means this side, Jordan, as opposed to Transjordanians.

Cisjordanians. We have their accusation. Accusation because of the altar that was built. The Cisjordanians. You got that down?

Then we have the Transjordanians' explanation. It's very simple. This is the way the story moves. Joshua's exhortation. The Cisjordanians' accusation.

The Transjordanians' explanation. And then finally we have unity. We have Israel's reconciliation. Because this schism arose, this division arose, and it needed to be reconciled.

And that's how the chapter ends. So those are the four movements of the story. And so let's look at each of these very, very quickly. And we're going to get from these, I think, several practical applications for our own lives.

[ 16 : 39 ] Because there are some important lessons taught in what was taking place here between the two sides of the Jordan. All right, so first of all, Joshua's exhortation.

We have Joshua's exhortation. And it includes a number of things. And so we'll just kind of walk through this. Verse 1, how does it begin? And then Joshua, he called together these three tribes, or two and a half tribes.

Called them together. That's the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh. And what did he say to them? He said, you have, you have done a good job.

You've done everything that was expected of you. That's what he says in verse 1. That is, you have kept all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you.

That's what he says in verse 1. Just exactly what Moses commanded, you have done. And we know what Moses commanded, by the way, because we can go back and read it in Numbers chapter 32, and verse 20, Numbers 32 and verse 20.

[ 17 : 47 ] Then Moses said to them, the two and a half tribes, said to them, if you do this thing, that is you living on the other side of the Jordan, if you arm yourselves before the Lord for the war, and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord until he has driven out his enemies from before him, and the land is subdued before the Lord, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the Lord and before Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the Lord.

But if you do not do so, then take note. You have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out. That's a very familiar portion of Scripture.

All right, so you know what the arrangement was. The Gadite, Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Anassa wanted to settle on the eastern side of the Jordan.

And Moses gave them permission with a very huge stipulation. All of your warring men, your men who can fight in battle, and it will be nearly all of them, must cross over the Jordan with the other tribes and must help them to conquer, to subdue the land.

And when all that is done, then you'll be free to go home. So that was the deal. And that's what God, rather, Moses had commanded. And so now here in the passage, Joshua is saying, you have kept what Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you.

[ 19 : 23 ] Then he goes a step further. He says, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded. And we know what Joshua commanded.

All we have to do is go back to Joshua chapter 1 and verse 12. And really all he did was repeat what Moses had commanded. In verse 12 it says, and to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, Joshua spoke, saying, remember the word which Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you, saying, the Lord your God has given you rest and is giving you this land.

Your wives, your little ones, your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side. This is before they crossed over into Jordan, into the promised land. On this side, the eastern side, he's given this all to you, but you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them until the Lord has given your brethren rest, and so on and so forth.

So it's just repeating what Moses had commanded. And so here's Joshua again. He's brought the three, or the two and a half tribes before him. You have kept all that Moses commanded you.

You have kept all that I've commanded you. And then verse 3, And you have not left your brethren these many days up to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord your God.

[ 20 : 43 ] So they obeyed Moses' command, Joshua's command, the Lord's command. Of course, the Lord's command takes precedence because what Moses commanded, and then later what Joshua commanded, was exactly what God had commanded.

And they did it. They obeyed. They obeyed. Even though, it's clear from, well, not real clear from the text, but it's, it's, the implication is very clear.

They did all of that, even though the time away from their own inheritance had been, quote, these many days. That's how it's translated in the New King James. These many days, or for a long time. I think the NIV translates it that way. And that's the idea. You have been over here battling side by side with your brethren for a long, long time.

In fact, best estimate would be seven years. Can you imagine? Left their wives and family miles away on the other side of the Jordan. And they went to war.

[ 21 : 48 ] And for seven years, they were parted from their families, parted, separated from their inheritance and all of their possessions and livestock and everything that needed to be taken care of.

Seven years. And so their commitment was quite strong. Then verse four. And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brethren as he promised them.

So God kept his promise. to Israel. And God kept his promise to the Reubenites and Gadites and Manasseh, the half-tribe of Manasseh.

Because, you know, they had kept their promise. And their promise was articulated in Joshua 1.16. They said, All that you command us, we will do.

And wherever you send us, we will go. That's a statement of commitment. So they kept their promise and God kept his promise to them.

[ 22 : 52 ] And now they would be free to go home. So this is Joshua's exhortation to them. Joshua commends them. He commends the Transjordan tribes for their commitment and service.

Joshua discharged them. He released them so that they could return to their homes and on the eastern side of the Jordan River. But also, Joshua does something else.

Joshua gives them an exhortation. And it's really packed full, really, in verse five. And this is a tremendous passage of scripture that ought to be applied to our own lives.

He says, But take careful heed. Are you free to go? You've kept your commitment. God has kept his promise. You're free to go home, but take careful heed or diligent heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you.

All right, you better walk right. In fact, he kind of separates this out or lists several things. To love the Lord your God.

[ 24 : 02 ] What an exhortation. To love the Lord your God. To walk in all His ways. To keep His commandments.

Obedience. To hold fast to Him. I like that phrase. Or literally, cling to Him. Cling to Him.

And this was important instruction for these two and a half tribes because they would be away from the people, away from the center of worship. And they must cling to the Lord.

There would be a tendency, of course, to drift away. There's a natural division. The Jordan River. A geographical division and other kinds of divisions.

And so hold fast. Cling to Him and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul. That is an exhortation that is packed full and one that we should apply to our own lives.

[ 25 : 03 ] And then Joshua gives them a blessing. A blessing in verse 6. So Joshua blessed them and sent them away and they went to their tents.

Verse 7 says, When Joshua sent them away to their tents, He blessed them and in effect said, all of the plunder that God allowed you to take because sometimes it would not and other times it would allow them to take plunder that would involve possessions of every kind.

And he said, when you get home, share this with your people. The people who remained on the other side of the Jordan to take care of business there, to take care of families there, to live there. Share this plunder with them. This is a blessing for me. You're able to take all of this with you and when you get there, share it with them.

All right, now, very quickly at this point, I hope we can get through all of this tonight. There's several practical applications. I mean, just in considering the exhortation that comes from Joshua.

[ 26 : 17 ] Several practical applications, lessons to learn. First one is this. There is a lesson of being true to your word, the word you give, a promise made.

Clearly, they were rewarded for that. They were blessed for that. And so the lesson is that we should always keep to our word, keep our word.

And with that, kind of a two-fold lesson, to be true to your word and also be totally obedient to the Lord, obedient to Him.

God had commanded them through Moses. God had commanded them through Joshua. This was the command of the Lord. This is what you must do. And they did that.

And so the lesson is to keep our word and to obey the Lord, to obey Him. The second lesson is really very clear as well. There is a lesson of being committed to that which God has called you to. [ 27 : 21 ] What has God called you to? Right now. Are you committed to that? That's the lesson here. You know, some, with some, commitment, it's not a four-letter word, but it's nearly that with a lot of people.

Especially in our generation, or rather our culture. Commitment is just something totally, not just forgotten, it's just what people are totally against. Commitment.

We might say that there are others who want to enjoy the benefits of life or relationship with God, but they don't want to make any commitments. And then also, there are still others, and all of us kind of fall into this category from time to time, and that is those who make a commitment, but then quit along the way.

You know, just don't follow through with it. They give up, you know, before the task is finished. And the Reubenites and Gadites and half the tribe of Manasseh stand as an example of a kind of commitment that sees it all the way through.

1 Corinthians 9, 24. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, that if they all run, but one receives the prize. So run that you may obtain.

[ 28 : 39 ] You may obtain the prize. So that means finish the race. All right, the third lesson, there's a lesson of sharing the blessings of service.

Sharing the blessings of service. See, while not everyone can go and fight, some had to stay home. But when the fighters came home, the ones on the front lines came home, they shared the blessing of the Lord with those that had a different task.

And that's a lesson for us. Not all were able to go to fight, but all were able to enjoy the spoils of war or victory. And apply that to the church.

In the church, not everyone can be involved in every ministry. Not everyone can go and do and be involved in every ministry.

There are others that must be involved in other kinds of ministry. Others that must stay here while others go to Ukraine or China. Just as an example. And yet, all can rejoice in the blessing.

[ 29 : 47 ] The blessing of that. Now, that's not an excuse for you to opt out from going. That's between you and the Lord. But the point is, we can't all go.

And we can't all do everything. But we can all receive the blessing and those who do go should not be stingy with the blessing.

They should come and share that with the people of God. So those are just some lessons from Joshua's exhortation and we're going to have to move along. Second, the Cisjordanians accusation.

Their accusation. I read this the other day and it was about a certain lady who worked in an office building and she was going to go to lunch and so she decided that she would go to the coffee shop just across the way and so on the way she walked by a vending machine, bought a package of cookies and also picked up a newspaper and walked across the street, found a booth there, a table there in the restaurant and ordered a cup of coffee.

And so she's sitting there, sipping on her coffee and reading the newspaper when suddenly she hears kind of the crackle of cellophane. And she looks up to see that a man had sat down across the table from her and he had opened up her package of cookies and ate one of them, smiled at her and ate one of the cookies just right in front of her.

[ 31 : 17 ] And she said, you know, thought the nerve of this guy. And so she put her paper down and grabbed those cookies, took one out and ate one herself. Went back to reading her paper.

The nerve of that guy. Pretty soon she heard the crackle of cellophane again. The guy's over there, he's got another cookie in his hand and he just smiles at her and pops it right in his mouth. And she's just beside herself.

How could this guy do such a thing with her package of cookies? And so she grabbed the cookies and ate another one and she looked over and the guy got up and left.

So she got up to pay for her coffee. She reached into her purse and guess what she found? A package of cookies that she had bought. And so she actually was eating the other guy's cookies. But the whole time she was accusing him of eating her cookies when it was just simply a mistake. Now, in a very loose way, that somewhat illustrates what's happening here in this portion of the chapter with this misunderstanding and that's really what it was.

[ 32 : 31 ] And so it's interesting but it bears some explanation. And so looking at verse 10, when they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, that is they're still on the side of the promised land.

They come to the Jordan River and the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, half of the tribe of Manasseh, built an altar there. An altar there by the Jordan, right at the banks of the Jordan. And then this description, a great impressive altar. That's how it's translated in the New King James. I kind of like the ESV. An altar of imposing size.

And so we can only imagine, you know, what it might have looked like, how big it must have been. It must have been huge because the Bible goes out of its way to describe it as impressive, imposing. Not some little altar, you know, but some tall edifice of some kind.

So they built that on the side of the Jordan. All right, so now get this and we have to understand that they're near Gilgal. They're at the Jordan and they're at the very place where seven years before they were with the other tribes when they crossed over the Jordan for the first time and set foot in the promised land.

[ 33 : 48 ] So that's the very location. And so then they erect this huge altar, imposing altar. And why? Well, that's the controversy.

And we'll see that in just a minute. But one thing is for sure, we gather from the story, that initially it was completely, utterly misunderstood by the tribes west of the Jordan, the Cisjordanians. Those that are still in the promised land. Totally misunderstood because verse 11 says, Now the children of Israel heard someone say... Now that's a key phrase there. You have to watch out for things you hear someone say.

They heard someone say, Behold, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan, the Gaul of those people. That's not in there, but that's the idea. In the region of the Jordan. And watch this. On the children of Israel's side, the side belonging to the sons of Israel is what they're saying.

[ 34 : 57 ] As if the Gadites and Reubenites and those half of Manasseh were not. Of course they were. But it's clearly a statement that reveals a division that exists between them.

A separation in their minds if nothing else. And also it reveals a conclusion that of course later proved to be false about them.

And what was the big deal really about building this altar? Such a big deal apparently that they they were ready to go to war with these people.

That's what it says in verse 12. You see? You remember? Verse 12. Clearly and when the children of Israel heard of it the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to do what?

To go to war against them. Because they built this tall impressive altar. Now why? What's the big deal? Well that's revealed a little bit later in verses 16 through 20.

[ 36 : 12 ] Thus says the whole congregation I mean this is why they were angry why they were ready to go to war. What treachery? They said this is treachery.

And just to make the story short and not have to read the passage over again the point was the conclusion they had come to is that they had built an altar as a part of rebellion.

Rebellion against the Lord is what they said there in verse 16. And what they're referring to because they had the idea that this altar was built to burn sacrifices.

to offer up their own sacrifices. Which was strictly forbidden in Leviticus 17 because all sacrifices must be offered up at the tabernacle.

They couldn't just go off and offer up their own sacrifices somewhere else. And then also comes into play Deuteronomy 13 which was prohibition against the offering up of sacrifices to false gods.

[ 37 : 17 ] And so clearly they had come to the conclusion that these three or two and a half tribes have departed from the Lord and now they're going to offer up their own sacrifices in their own place and really it's not even their place and offer them up to false gods.

And so they and then they associated this with two notable occasions when Israelites had sinned. And so they bring up the sin at Peor which was basically Israel prostituting itself with the Moabite gods false gods and the result was a plague where God killed 24,000 of them. So they bring that up and so what is their fear? That what the Reubenites and Gadites and those of Manasseh are doing is going to bring judgment upon us too just like it did there at Peor. Then they also bring up Achan and remember the story of Achan that was fresh in their minds ought to be fresh in our minds because it occurred here in the book of Joshua and you remember the story don't have to go back over that he took the things that were banned God said strictly forbade them to take them and he hid them in his tent and a great many of God's people suffered because of that just ask Achan's family and so forth so again here's the idea that you know the treachery of these people what they're doing is going to bring judgment upon us as well and so that was their accusation and then before we make an application of all of this let's see the third thing the Transjordanians explanation so there's the accusation they're offering up burnt offerings burnt sacrifices to false gods and going to bring judgment upon themselves and upon us and so now we have their response to that their explanation and we read about that in this the portion of the text starting with verse 21 then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel the Lord God of gods the Lord God of gods he knows you've come to the wrong conclusion but God knows God knows the truth and let Israel itself know if it is in rebellion or if in treachery against the Lord do not save us this day if you're in rebellion then we shouldn't be saved but if we built ourselves an altar to turn from following the Lord and so forth and so forth then we deserve his judgment but that's not the case the short of it is they had built the altar as a sign of unity to bring about a reminder that the Israelites living on the east side of the Jordan and the Israelites living on the west side of the Jordan in the promised land in Canaan itself they're one they're together and they go on to say you know if we don't do something like this as a reminder that we are one people worshiping the one

[ 40 : 46 ] God the same God if we don't remind generations to come that they may forget and so they built this altar this impressive imposing altar so that it could be seen from all vantage points not only from those on the west side of the Jordan because it was erected there as symbolic that they're part of that group but also those on the eastern side the trans Jordan side could look across the Jordan river and see that huge altar and it would always be a reminder reminder that the people these two groups of people are one it was it was a point of unity it was a point of witness that's why they called it a witness and so that leads to the final movement of the story Israel's reconciliation and so this delegation that had been sent there to check this thing out they were satisfied they were satisfied and God's people were unified so there was reconciliation it's just a marvelous story in the word of God has some movements to us that are unexpected and so when we learn of the background and the basis for these things then we understand and but also there is a lesson a number of lessons here for us that we need to learn we just very desperately need to learn as people today because we too just like the the cis Jordanians jump to conclusions wrong conclusions make snap judgments based upon what we have heard someone say and so let me just give you very quickly as we close several lessons for us to learn from this story number one and these are all very simple you can pick these out yourself number one be careful about what you have heard said or read said

I mean today in our day whether it's email or Facebook or Twitter or other forms of communication communication in the social network and so forth be careful what you hear be careful what you have heard someone say verse 11 the children of Israel heard someone say now is that the basis upon which to go to war or well certainly not is that the basis upon which we should be at odds with another person or criticize another person or be angry with another person or seek retaliation against another person because we've heard something said about them or or something said about what they said on and on we could go with the situations because just because you heard it doesn't make it true it's very simple isn't it number two do not pass judgment on what you have heard said be careful what you have heard said and don't pass judgment on what you have heard said and then number three take time to get all the facts before passing judgment and taking action which is by the way what Israel did to their credit we read that part of it verses 13 and 14 even though

Israel initially and their leadership were very angry they had come to the wrong conclusion at least they had the forethought to put together a delegation that would represent all the people and they traveled to the leaders of these two and a half tribes because they wanted face to face to deal with this issue find out all the facts get all the facts now in Israel's case they had sort of passed judgment before they got the facts but at least they took the step number four if we really love people and we say we do and we're commanded to then we ought to be deliberate about putting an end to rumors things and I'll just let them go let them go unchallenged unverified not just for the sake of our own conclusions but for the danger of conclusions others coming to the same conclusion we hear something said and if we really love that person then we ought to go and verify the facts and get this thing settled that's not easy to do much easier to say well forget it and it's much easier sadly to say for us to pass that on pass it on it's what we've heard let me tell you what I heard that's of course gossip number five go directly to the person or persons in question and listen carefully and objectively to their side of the story it's very simple aren't they and we learn these we glean these from from this story and then six settle the issue on the spot don't don't let it go need to take care of the issue right then and right there and then finally settle for nothing short of full reconciliation and restoration in fact that's our purpose isn't it should be so that there can be reconciliation so that whatever schism existed because of rumors or because of misunderstandings or even schism separations that are caused by actual sin of a brother or sister we ought to seek to deal with that in a

Christian biblical way and seek to have ultimately end in full reconciliation those are just some lessons that we can learn from this interesting story in the life of Israel the early life of Israel in the land of promise