

Living in the Land: Accusations (Monday's Lesson)

1. Introduction to the Story

- Title: *Accusations* (Monday's lesson).
- A significant issue arose involving the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh.
- The story connects to a scandal referred to as *Altergate*.

2. Background: The Tribes' Request (Numbers 32)

- **Tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh** had large cattle herds.
- They found a fertile area on the near side of the Jordan River, which was ideal for cattle.
- These tribes requested to settle in this land instead of going to fight in Jericho.

3. Moses' Initial Response

- Moses questions the tribes: How can they settle here and leave their brothers to fight alone?
- The tribes assure Moses they will send their soldiers to fight and return after the battle.
- Moses agrees, and the soldiers go to fight while the families stay behind.

4. Return and the Construction of the Altar

- After the battle, when the soldiers return, they discover that the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh built a large altar near the Jordan River.
- The word *great* is used to describe the altar, which can have both positive and negative connotations in the Bible.

5. The Israelites' Reaction

- The rest of Israel was angered by the altar, fearing it was a violation of God's command not to build altars in unauthorized places (Deuteronomy 12:13-14).

- There were concerns that this could bring calamity to all of Israel, based on past experiences where disobedience led to punishment.

6. The Importance of Gathering Facts Before Acting

- Rumors spread quickly, and there was a desire for immediate retaliation.
- The leaders decided to send a delegation to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh to understand their actions.

7. Phinehas' Role in the Delegation

- **Phinehas** was included in the delegation.
 - Phinehas had a significant history, including his actions in **Exodus 6:25** where he zealously killed Zimri and Cosby for openly defying God.
- He had gained respect as a warrior and leader, having led armies against the Midianites.

8. Phinehas' Discovery and the True Intentions

- Upon speaking with the tribes, Phinehas discovers that the altar was not for sacrifices but was intended as a symbolic gesture to show they were part of Israel.
- The tribes on the other side of the Jordan wanted to demonstrate their connection to the Israelites.

9. Lessons from the Story

- **Wisdom in Getting Facts Straight:** It's important to understand the truth before acting in anger.
- **Phinehas' Growth:** Phinehas had matured from impulsively taking action in the past to handling the situation with calm and understanding.
- **God Uses Us at All Stages:** God is able to use us for His work regardless of our development stage.