

Because of the misunderstanding, Israel readied her tired soldiers for a new kind of battle. They prepared to fight against those with whom they had fought alongside of against a common enemy. Their reaction was absolutely correct! It was the interpretation of the message that was incorrect.

In this case, the leaders of the two and one-half tribes were also negligent. They should not have depended on non-verbal communication to convey their message. John Calvin described their fault in his comment on Josh. 22:10:

Nothing was farther from their intentions than to innovate in any respect in the worship of God. But they sinned not lightly in attempting a novelty, without paying any regard to the high priest, or consulting their brethren, and in a form which was very likely to be misconstrued.²⁶

And so a brief description of their intentions to build the memorial before they left would have cleared the air. Perhaps such a discussion would have included some sound advice from Phinehas such as, "Make sure you don't make that thing look too much like an altar!"

Many conflicts among those working closely together can be traced to a similar set of circumstances. With good intentions, a team member may launch out on a new project or attempt to work something out without consulting his brethren, especially the team leader. The action is misunderstood and evil intent is attributed to the well-meaning team member. The situation becomes more serious if the

²⁶John Calvin, Commentaries on the Book of Joshua, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 253.