

# Joshua 22:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the LORD?

## Analysis

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**What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel**—The Hebrew word for trespass (מַעַל, ma'al) denotes covenant unfaithfulness or treachery, the same term used for Achan's sin (Joshua 7:1). The accusation is grave: not merely a mistake, but covenant breaking.

**To turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar**—Deuteronomy 12:13-14 explicitly forbade multiple altars for sacrifice: "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place... But in the place which the LORD shall choose." The delegation reasonably assumed this altar violated the centralized worship commanded by Moses, potentially establishing a rival worship center that would split the nation.

## Historical Context

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The Mosaic law mandated one legitimate altar at the tabernacle (later the temple) to prevent the syncretism that plagued the Canaanites. Multiple altars historically led to idolatry (1 Kings 12:28-33, where Jeroboam's rival altars destroyed the northern kingdom).

## Related Passages

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**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How does concern for theological purity sometimes lead to misunderstanding brothers who share the same faith?
2. What distinguishes righteous zeal for God's worship from destructive suspicion of fellow believers?
3. How should we balance guarding orthodoxy with assuming the best about brothers' motives?

## Interlinear Text

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כָּה	אָמַר ו	כָּל	עַד ת	בִּיהוָה:	מָה
H3541	Thus saith	H3605	the whole congregation	against the LORD	H4100
	H559		H5712	H3068	
הֵם עָל	הַזֶּה	אֲשֶׁר	מַעֲלַתֶּם	בְּאֵלֵי י	
What trespass	H2088	H834	is this that ye have committed	against the God	
H4604			H4603	H430	
יִשְׂרָאֵל ל	לָשׁוּב	הַיּוֹם	מֵאַחֲרַי	בִּיהוָה:	
of Israel	to turn away	this day	from following	against the LORD	
H3478	H7725	H3117	H310	H3068	
בְּבִנוֹתֶיךָ	לָכֶם	מִזְבֵּחַ	לְמַכְדֹּךָ	הַיּוֹם	
in that ye have builded	H0	you an altar	that ye might rebel	this day	
H1129		H4196	H4775	H3117	
בִּיהוָה:					
against the LORD					
H3068					

