

## AVOIDING THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL

### Joshua 22

**(Josh 22)**, "Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, {2} And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you: {3} Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. {4} And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan. {5} But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. {6} So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents. {7} Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given possession in Bashan: but unto the other half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, then he blessed them, {8} And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren. {9} And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses. {10} And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to. {11} And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel. {12} And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them. {13} And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, {14} And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel. {15} And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying, {16} 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? {17} Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD, {18} But that ye must turn away this day from following the LORD? and it will be, seeing ye rebel to day against the LORD, that to morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel. {19} Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the LORD,

wherein the LORD'S tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the LORD, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the LORD our God. {20} 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 perished not alone in his iniquity. {21} Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel, {22} The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day,) {23} That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer thereon burnt offering or meat offering, or if to offer peace offerings thereon, let the LORD himself require it; {24} And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the LORD God of Israel? {25} For the LORD hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the LORD: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the LORD. {26} Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice: {27} But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD. {28} Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you. {29} God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the LORD our God that is before his tabernacle. {30} And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel which were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them. {31} And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD. {32} And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again. {33} And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. {34} And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God."



**CHARACTERS OF THE BIBLE** afford **exciting opportunities** to study the different ways people have responded to God. Their experiences can help us examine our own experiences. From their lives we **GLEAN VALUABLE**

LESSONS FOR OUR LIVES. 1 Cor 10:11 reads:

(1 Cor 10:11 NIV), "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, . . . "

IN JOSHUA 22 we study **the ways** the children of Israel related to God after they had conquered the land of Canaan. AFTER THEIR CONQUEST, Joshua **addressed** the eastern tribes and then **dismissed** them to return to their homes on the east side of the Jordan. The things they did during that time frame established **the context for this message**.

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A KEY VERSE IN OUR TEXT IS JOSHUA 22:5:

(V. 5), "BUT TAKE DILIGENT HEED to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, . . . "

S THE KJV — "BUT TAKE DILIGENT HEED."  
THE NASB — "ONLY BE VERY CAREFUL TO OBSERVE."

S SEVERAL TIMES THE BIBLE ADMONISHES US TO "BE CAREFUL." The Book of **Deuteronomy** could almost be called the "BE CAREFUL BOOK." **Fourteen times** the Book of Deuteronomy uses the phrase "BE CAREFUL" when reading the **New King James Version** of the Bible. A few examples are:

C (Deu 11:32), "And you shall **BE CAREFUL** to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today." (NKJV)

C (Deu 12:32), "Whatever I command you, **BE CAREFUL** to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." (NKJV)

C (Deu 32:46), ". . . Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to **BE CAREFUL** to observe; all the words of this law." (NKJV)

N.T. -----

C (Titus 3:8), "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might **BE CAREFUL** to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

S **GOD WARNS** His children to "BE CAREFUL!" Like any good parent, **GOD** tells His children to **BE CAREFUL** because He loves them.

**PARENTS** understand the importance of the words "be careful." Time and again parents tell their little children to *be careful* of **snakes, fire, water** and **speeding cars**. When they grow older, they tell them to *be careful* of **life** itself.

S BASED ON JOSHUA 22, CONSIDER **FOUR THINGS** ABOUT WHICH WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL:

- I. BE CAREFUL TO **KEEP YOUR COMMITMENTS**
- II. BE CAREFUL TO **KEEP GOD AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE**
- III. BE CAREFUL TO **AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL**
- IV. BE CAREFUL TO **RESPOND IN A GODLY MANNER WHEN CONFRONTED WITH A NEGATIVE SITUATION**

### I. BE CAREFUL TO KEEP YOUR COMMITMENTS

THEN JOSHUA CALLED THE REUBENITES, AND THE GADITES, AND THE HALF TRIBE OF MANASSEH, AND SAID UNTO THEM:

(V. 2-3), ". . . **YE HAVE KEPT ALL** that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and **HAVE OBEYED** my voice IN ALL that I commanded you: {3} Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but **HAVE KEPT THE CHARGE** of the commandment of the LORD your God."

S **WHAT CHARGE** HAD THEY KEPT?

S **JOSHUA 1** helps answer that question. In Joshua 1 the children of Israel had **not yet crossed over** the Jordan river into the land of Canaan. They were still camping east of the Jordan when Joshua gave **special instructions** to the **EASTERN TRIBES** regarding **POSSESSION OF THEIR LAND EAST OF THE JORDAN**.

(Josh 1:13-15), "**REMEMBER THE WORD WHICH MOSES** the servant of the LORD **COMMANDED YOU** [Moses' words are found in Deut 3:18-20], saying, . . . "

THE DETAILS OF MOSES' COMMAND:

- 1) **THE ABLE-BODIED MEN** from the two and one half tribes were to be **armed for war** and were to be **FIRST TO CROSS OVER** in conquest of the land of Canaan. (According to **Numbers 26**, those three tribes had the ability to muster **136,930 men** for war. But according to Joshua 4:13, **only 40,000** soldiers were required. The other men stayed east of the Jordan to protect the families and livestock.)

- 2) The soldiers from the two and one half tribes had to agree to **LEAVE THEIR WIVES, CHILDREN and CATTLE** on the eastern side of the river and fight on the western side in the land of Canaan.
- 3) **ONLY AFTER THE CONQUEST WAS COMPLETE could the soldiers RETURN** to their families east of the Jordan River. We know they were unable to return for **seven years**.

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**THE REASON** the two and one half tribes were **singled out to go FIRST INTO BATTLE IS REVEALED IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.**

THE EASTERN TRIBES ASKED MOSES:

**(NUM 32:4-5)**, “. . . THE COUNTRY [east of the Jordan] . . . is A LAND FOR CATTLE, AND THY SERVANTS HAVE CATTLE: {5} Wherefore, said they, IF WE HAVE FOUND GRACE IN THY SIGHT, **LET THIS LAND BE GIVEN UNTO THY SERVANTS FOR A POSSESSION, AND BRING US NOT OVER JORDAN.**”

**MOSES WAS NOT HAPPY WITH THEIR REQUEST:**

**(V. 6-15 NIV)**, “Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites, **"SHALL YOUR COUNTRYMEN GO TO WAR WHILE YOU SIT HERE?** {7} Why do **YOU DISCOURAGE THE ISRAELITES** from going over into the land the LORD has given them? {8} This is what **YOUR FATHERS DID** when I sent them from **KADESH BARNEA** to look over the land. {9} After they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and viewed the land, **THEY DISCOURAGED** the Israelites from entering the land the LORD had given them. {10} **THE LORD'S ANGER WAS AROUSED** that day and he swore this oath: {11} **'BECAUSE THEY** have NOT FOLLOWED ME WHOLEHEARTEDLY, **NOT ONE OF THE MEN** TWENTY YEARS OLD OR MORE WHO CAME UP OUT OF EGYPT WILL SEE THE LAND I PROMISED on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob-- {12} not one **EXCEPT CALEB** son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and **JOSHUA** son of Nun, for they followed the LORD wholeheartedly.' {13} The Lord's anger burned against Israel and **HE MADE THEM WANDER** in the **DESERT FORTY YEARS**, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone. {14} **"AND HERE YOU ARE, a brood of sinners, standing in the place of your fathers and making the LORD even more angry with Israel.** {15} **IF YOU** turn away from following him, **HE WILL AGAIN LEAVE ALL THIS PEOPLE IN THE DESERT,** and **YOU WILL BE THE CAUSE OF THEIR DESTRUCTION"** (NIV).

THEY REPLIED TO MOSES:

**(V. 16-17 NIV)**, “We would like to **BUILD PENS** here FOR OUR LIVESTOCK and **CITIES** for our women and children. {17} **BUT WE ARE READY TO ARM OURSELVES** and **GO AHEAD OF THE ISRAELITES** until we have brought them to their place. {18} **WE WILL NOT RETURN** to our homes **UNTIL** every Israelite has received his inheritance.”

MOSES MADE **CONCESSION:**

C **(V. 20-22)**, **"IF YOU WILL DO THIS - - IF** you will **ARM** yourselves before the LORD for battle, {21} and **IF** all of you **WILL GO** armed over the Jordan before the LORD **UNTIL** he has driven his enemies out before him-- {22} **THEN WHEN** the land is **SUBDUED** before the LORD, **YOU MAY RETURN** and be **free from your obligation** to the LORD and to Israel. And **THIS LAND WILL BE YOUR POSSESSION** before the LORD” (NIV).

(MOSES GRANTED THEIR REQUEST on the basis of their willingness to comply.)

C **(V. 23)**, **"BUT IF YOU FAIL TO DO THIS,** you will be **SINNING AGAINST THE LORD;** and you may **BE SURE THAT YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT"** (NIV).

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 THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN MOSES and the TRIBES seems to indicate **THEIR REQUEST DID NOT MATCH GOD'S ORIGINAL INTENT FOR THEM? THEIR REQUEST SEEMED TO HAVE THE SAME NEGATIVE RING ABOUT IT AS DID ISRAEL'S REQUEST FOR A KING IN 1 SAMUEL 8.**

C **ISRAEL SAID TO SAMUEL:**

**(1 Sam 8:5-9)**, “. . . Behold, **THOU ART OLD,** and **YOUR SONS WALK NOT** in thy ways: now **MAKE US A KING** to judge us like all the nations. {6} But **THE THING DISPLEASED SAMUEL,** when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And **SAMUEL PRAYED** unto the LORD. {7} And **THE LORD SAID** unto Samuel, **HEARKEN** unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for **they have not rejected THEE, but they have rejected ME, that I should not reign over them.**

C **GOD'S ORIGINAL PLAN** for Israel **did not include a king**. God's plan was that *judges* lead Israel and God would be their king. God's plan was **NOT** for a **MONARCHY**, or a **DEMOCRACY**, but a **THEOCRACY**. In spite of the fact that God knew a king would make life harder and more difficult for Israel, He granted their request anyway.

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WITH THE REQUEST OF THE EASTERN TRIBES IN MIND, THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE **GOD'S ORIGINAL INTENT** WAS THAT **ALL TWELVE** tribes **LIVE WEST** of the Jordan. When they initially brought it up the idea of living east of the Jordan, it was strongly resisted. Because of their **UNRELENTING PERSISTENCE**, **GOD ALLOWED THEM TO PURSUE THEIR OWN PLANS, EVEN THOUGH THEIR PLANS APPEARED TO BE LESS THAN GOD'S PERFECT PLAN**. (Their decision to live east of the Jordan was not outside the original borders God had established with Abraham, **BUT IT DOES APPEAR** their request WAS OUTSIDE GOD'S IMMEDIATE WILL for them.)

C **MOSES AGREED** TO ALLOW THEM TO OCCUPY THE LAND EAST OF THE JORDAN, **ONLY AFTER THEY AGREED TO GO FIRST INTO BATTLE WEST OF THE JORDAN**.

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IN **JOSHUA 22**, THE LAND of Canaan **had been CONQUERED**. **SEVEN YEARS** had passed and **the obligations** of the two and one half tribes east of the Jordan had been met. The eastern tribes **HAD BEEN FAITHFUL!**

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S THEIR FAITHFULNESS **SPEAKS TO US**. **AS** it was important for them to keep their commitments, **SO IT IS** important that we keep our commitments. About that fact **THE BIBLE** is abundantly clear and has much to say:

- (1) **(Ecc1 5:4-6)**, "When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed; {5} Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. {6} Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?"

(2) IN **JOSHUA 9**, **JOSHUA ENTERED INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE GIBEONITES**. Later Joshua discovered the Gibeonites had deceived him and they were not who they had pretended to be. **ISRAEL DID NOT ATTACK** the Gibeonites because the Israelite leaders had sworn an oath to Gibeon (Joshua 9:18). They **WERE MEN OF THEIR WORD**. Even when the people **grumbled** against the leaders, they stood true to their promise. Their integrity stands as **an example** that oaths and contracts are binding. They are binding because **GOD IS A GOD OF TRUTH** and He expects His children to be examples of His truth. When we begin to break our commitments, we **ARE LIKE SATAN**, the great liar. Our agreements are sacred because they involve God.

S **SAD TO SAY**, but we live in **THE DAY OF THE BROKEN and UNFULFILLED COMMITMENT**. People sign **contracts** and break them at their convenience. It is important to understand when we break our vows, it reflects upon God. Keeping an agreement may appear to be totally unrelated to our relationship to God, but it is not. Keeping our commitments is a reflection of our God who keeps His commitments.

(1) **SPORTS STARS** sometimes finagle out of their contracts because they want more money.

(2) **MARRIAGE IS A COMMITMENT GOD EXPECTS US TO KEEP (Mal 2:16)**, "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

(3) OUR **FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS ARE COMMITMENTS** GOD EXPECTS US TO KEEP.

(4) **ANY COMMITMENT IS A COMMITMENT GOD EXPECTS US TO KEEP**.

I. BE CAREFUL TO **KEEP YOUR COMMITMENTS**

## II. BE CAREFUL TO KEEP GOD AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE

**(V. 1-2)**, “Then Joshua **CALLED** the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, {2} And **SAID** UNTO THEM, . . . ”

**(V. 4)**, “And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan.”

- S JOSHUA not only commended the eastern tribes for their faithfulness, HE **ADMONISHED** THEM TO REMAIN FAITHFUL to God from that day on.
- S JOSHUA USED **SIX INFINITIVES** to encourage them to remain faithful in God’s service. (An infinitive begins with the word “to” and is followed by a verb.) THE WORDS PRECEDING THE SIX INFINITIVES ARE IMPORTANT:
  - C **KJV** — **“BUT TAKE DILIGENT HEED.”**
  - C **NASB** — **“ONLY BE VERY CAREFUL TO OBSERVE.”**

ALL SIX EXHORTATIONS ARE FOUND IN **VERSE 5**:

BE VERY CAREFUL

### #1. (V. 5), “TO DO THE COMMANDMENT AND THE LAW”

- S Back in Joshua 8 Joshua had Israel to divide between Mount **Ebal** and Mount **Gerizim**. From one mountain they shouted blessings and from the other they shouted cursings. In no uncertain terms God spelled out to Israel the consequences of *doing* and *not doing* the will of God.

BE VERY CAREFUL

### #3. (V. 5), “TO WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS”

- S The Scripture often tells us **“TO WALK”** in such a manner that reflects a living relationship to God.
  - C **(Eph 4:1)**, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye **WALK WORTHY** OF THE VOCATION wherewith ye are called,”

C **(Col 1:10)**, “That ye might **WALK WORTHY** of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;”

- S WE ARE TO WALK **“IN ALL GOD’S WAYS.”** God’s *ways* refer to God’s *purposes* for saying and doing what He has.

**MOSES** PRAYED

**(Exo 33:13)**, “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, **SHOW ME NOW THY WAY**, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.”

Moses already knew what God could do. He had seen ten plagues in Egypt and watched the Red Sea divide. What Moses wanted to know was **why God did what He did in the manner in which He did it**. It is one level of knowledge to know **WHAT GOD DOES**, it is a deeper level to know **WHY** God does what he does.

BE VERY CAREFUL

### #4. (V. 5), “TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS” (NIV “TO OBEY”)

- S Jesus said, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments”** (Jn 14:15). **A PROOF** of love for God is obedience to God’s Word. A proof of lack of love for God is disobedience of His Word. As a Christian we are not obligated to believe someone who claims to love the Lord Jesus if they don’t manifest a willingness to obey God’s commands.

BE VERY CAREFUL

### #5. (V. 5), “TO CLEAVE UNTO HIM” (NIV “TO HOLD FAST”)

- S The word *cleave* means to **“STICK LIKE GLUE.”** It is the idea described in John 15 where the **vine** has to cling to the **branch** in order to produce fruit.
  - S **(John 15:5)**, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

BE VERY CAREFUL

**#6. (V. 5), "TO SERVE HIM WITH ALL YOUR HEART  
and WITH ALL YOUR SOUL"**

- S** A **LAWYER** once asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment in the Bible. Jesus said, ". . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. {38} This is the first and great commandment. {39} And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mat 22:37-39).

God's Word to each one of us as N.T. BELIEVERS is like Joshua's words to his soldiers. We are spiritual soldiers in God's spiritual army.

- #1. **DO HIS COMMANDMENTS**
- #2. **LOVE THE LORD**
- #3. **WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS**
- #4. **KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS**
- #5. **CLEAVE UNTO HIM**
- #6. **SERVE HIM WITH ALL OUR HEART and SOUL**

IN OTHER WORDS, **BE CAREFUL TO KEEP GOD AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE**

VALUABLE LESSONS FOR LIFE

- I. BE CAREFUL TO **KEEP YOUR COMMITMENTS**
- II. BE CAREFUL TO **KEEP GOD AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE**

**III. BE CAREFUL TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE  
OF EVIL**

**(1 Th 5:22)**, "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

**JOSHUA 22**

**(V. 6)**, "So Joshua **BLESSED THEM**, and **SENT THEM AWAY**: and they went unto their tents."

**(V. 9)**, "And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh **RETURNED**, and **DEPARTED** from the children of Israel **OUT OF SHILOH**, which is in the land of Canaan, . . ."

- S** "**SHILOH**" had replaced Gilgal as the gathering place for Joshua and Israel. Shiloh was also the place where the tabernacle was set up in the land Canaan. It was located approximately **15 miles** from the Jordan river. The tabernacle was still located at Shiloh at the time of **Eli** the priest and **Samuel** the prophet (1 Sam 1:3; 3:21).

**(V. 10)**, "And **WHEN THEY CAME UNTO THE BORDERS OF JORDAN**, THAT ARE IN THE LAND OF CANAAN, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh **BUILT THERE AN ALTAR** by Jordan, **A GREAT ALTAR TO SEE TO.**"

- S** This was a **REPLICA** of the altar at Shiloh (Jos 22:28 NIV). **ITS SIZE** was described as "**GREAT**" (high). It was an **imposing** structure that could probably have been seen from some distance. It was built on **the west side** of the Jordan before the eastern tribes crossed over into their inherited land.
- S** Consider **THREE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS** RELATED TO THAT ALTAR:

- #1. **THE REASONS** FOR BUILDING THE ALTAR
- #2. WHAT **WAS RIGHT** WITH BUILDING THE ALTAR
- #3. WHAT **WAS WRONG** WITH BUILDING THE ALTAR

**#1. THE REASONS FOR BUILDING THE ALTAR**

- S** As the eastern tribes approached the Jordan river they must have begun to experience **a wide range of emotions**. **THEY MUST HAVE BEEN OVERCOME BY TWO OVERPOWERING EMOTIONS** BOTH RELATED TO THE FUTURE:

**[#1]. GRIEF**

**(V. 25)**, "For the LORD hath **MADE JORDAN A BORDER BETWEEN US AND YOU**, . . ."

- S** *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* states:  
"The mountains on each side of the river rise to heights above 2,000 feet and form a great valley **5 TO 13 MILES WIDE**. During the summer months the **HEAT** would be so intense that travelers would be discouraged from traveling across that valley."

## #1. THE REASONS FOR BUILDING THE ALTAR

- S** **FOR FORTY YEARS** prior to entering the land of Canaan, those men had suffered together in the wilderness. For the past **seven years** those soldiers had fought together. They could not have helped from growing close together. **IT MUST HAVE BEEN AN EMOTIONAL TIME** as they said goodbye to one another.
- S** THEIR EMOTIONS MIGHT HAVE PARALLELED **A PARENT** saying goodbye to their children as they leave home to head out into the world. Those times are accompanied by **tears** and **exhortation**. It is common to hear the equivalent of *be careful*. For the first time in their lives, they were **about to be separated** from one other, not only by miles, but by the great Jordan rift valley.
- S** **SEPARATION OFTEN LEADS TO A SENSE OF GRIEF**. Jesus experienced grief at Gethsemane because He was about to experience separation from the Father.

### [#2]. FEAR

(V. 24 NIV), “. . . WE DID IT FOR FEAR that some day your descendants might say to ours, 'What do you have to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?'"

(V. 25-26 NIV), “. . . Your descendants **MIGHT CAUSE** ours to stop fearing the LORD. {26} "That is why we said, 'Let us get ready and build an altar--but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.'"

- S** They were **afraid** their descendants would **grow distant** from the western tribes. They decided to address their concern before it ever became a problem.

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THE FUTURE IS OFTEN A **SOURCE OF FEAR**. When fear gets a grip on a person's life, it easily becomes the source of many mistakes. It is far better to take God at His word and live by faith than to walk in fear.

- C** (2 Tim 1:7), "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."
- C** (Mat 6:34), "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

### #2. WHAT WAS RIGHT WITH BUILDING THE ALTAR

(V. 27-28 NIV), "On the contrary, it is to be **A WITNESS BETWEEN US** and you and the generations **THAT FOLLOW**, that **WE WILL WORSHIP THE LORD** at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. **THEN IN THE FUTURE** your descendants will not be able to say to ours, 'You have no share in the LORD.' {28} "And we said, 'If they ever say this to us, or to our descendants, we will answer: Look at the replica of the Lord's altar, which our fathers built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but **AS A WITNESS BETWEEN US AND YOU.**'"

- S** They wanted **A PERMANENT MARKER** that would stand as a witness to all future generations that the eastern tribes had the right to cross the Jordan and worship God in the land of promise. The object they chose to stand as a reminder acknowledged that God was the source of their unity. That is what was right with the altar.
- S** **The truth be known**, there was **NOTHING ELSE RIGHT** with the altar they had built. A lot more can be said regarding what was wrong with the altar, than what was right with it.

### WARREN WIERSBE

"When a whole nation misinterprets what is supposed to be a good deed, and it brings them to the brink of war, then there must be something wrong with that deed."

## #1. THE REASONS FOR BUILDING THE ALTAR

### #2. WHAT WAS RIGHT WITH BUILDING THE ALTAR

### #3. WHAT WAS WRONG WITH BUILDING THE ALTAR

AT LEAST **FOUR THINGS** WERE WRONG WITH THE ALTAR:

#### [#1]. THE ALTAR WAS UNNECESSARY

- S** The eastern tribes failed to realize that **GOD HAD ALREADY PROVIDED A WAY** for the eastern tribes to remain connected with the western tribes. All they had to do was obey what God had already instructed them to do. **Three times a year** every able-bodied male was required to appear at the sanctuary to observe the pilgrimage feasts (Ex. 23:17; Deu 16:16).

- S All the eastern tribes had to do was follow the commands of God and God would bless and prosper their tribes.

## [#2]. THE ALTAR BORE THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL

- S **THREE DIFFERENT WORDS** DESCRIBED THE WESTERN TRIBES' OPINION OF THE ALTAR:

### (1) "TRESPASS"

(V. 16), "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?"

- S It is common for **landowners** to post **NO TRESPASSING SIGNS** on their property, especially during hunting season. If you get on their property, you have put your body in a place where it has been prohibited. It makes me think of a sign I read not too many months ago that said, "Trespassers will be shot. Survivors will be shot again."

- S "**MA`AL**" (maw-al') is used to describe the sin of **ACHAN** in Joshua 7:1. THE SIN OF **ACHAN** took place after the victory at Jericho. God had strictly forbidden the soldiers from taking any items from Jericho. Achan took some items anyway and buried them in the ground under his tent. When Israel went up against the lesser city of Ai, Israel was defeated because of Achan's sin. Though one person had committed the sin, the whole nation was affected. That was a concern of the western tribes regarding the building of the altar by the eastern tribes.

### (2) "INIQUITY"

(V. 17), "Is the **INIQUITY** OF PEOR too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD,"

- S "**INIQUITY**" is used in that verse to describe the sin committed at **PEOR**.

- S THE SIN OF **PEOR** is found in **NUMBERS 25** where Israel was camping east of the Jordan at the place called Shittim. Some of the Israelites participated in pagan worship committing fornication with **MOABITE WOMEN** in the name of religion. The result was that 24,000 people died.

### (3) "REBELLION"

THE WORD "**REBEL**" IS USED **THREE TIMES** IN VV. 18-19: (V. 18-19), "But that ye must turn away this day from following the LORD? and it will be, seeing ye **REBEL** to day against the LORD, that to morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel. {19} Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the LORD, wherein the LORD'S tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but **REBEL NOT** against the LORD, **NOR REBEL** against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the LORD our God."

- S Rather than abstaining from the appearance of evil, their altar made onlookers think it was evil. Even though it later proved not to be evil, it certainly made the western tribes think it was.

[#1]. THEIR ALTAR WAS **UNNECESSARY**

[#2]. THEIR ALTAR **BORE THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL**

## [#3]. THEIR ALTAR ALMOST PRECIPITATED A WAR

(V. 12), "And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, **TO GO UP TO WAR AGAINST THEM.**"

- S The altar had **the opposite effect** to what they had desired. Rather than the altar uniting the eastern and western tribes, it almost caused a civil war. **HERE IS WHY:**

(Lev 17:8-9), "And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice, {9} And **BRINGETH IT NOT** UNTO THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD; even that man shall be cut off from among his people."

**(Deu 13:13-15)**, “Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; {14} Then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; {15} Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.”

[#1]. THEIR ALTAR WAS **UNNECESSARY**

[#2]. THEIR ALTAR **BORE THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL**

[#3]. THEIR ALTAR **ALMOST PRECIPITATED A WAR**

#### **[#4]. AN INDEPENDENT SANCTUARY EVENTUALLY AIDED IN THE DEMISE OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM**

**S FOURTEEN TIMES THE O.T. USES THE PHRASE “THE SINS OF JEROBOAM.”** One example is found in 1 Kings. AN EXAMPLE:

**(1 Ki 14:16)**, “And he shall give Israel up because of **THE SINS OF JEROBOAM**, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.”

**S JEROBOAM WAS** the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel when it split from the southern kingdom of Judah. In order for the northern kingdom to worship without going to Jerusalem, another altar was built in the northern kingdom. It was built in rebellion against God’s Word. The act was so serious that future kings in the northern kingdom were described in this manner:

**(2 Ki 15:28)**, “. . . He departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.”

ONE ASPECT OF THE SIN OF JEROBOAM was that of leading God’s people to worship at an altar other than the one God had prescribed.

THE LESSON FOR OUR LIVES:

**(1 Th 5:22)**, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

- S** Notice that **it does not just say** “abstain from evil.” It says, “Abstain from the **APPEARANCE OF EVIL.**”
- S** IT IS **A SAD COMMENTARY** on human character to observe how easily people resist that command. People protest, “I have my rights.” “No one is going to keep me from doing what I have every legal right to do.” **The truth is** we are never more **unlike Jesus** than when we demand our rights. Jesus is the best example of someone giving up their rights for the sake of others.

**(2 Cor 8:21 NIV)**, “For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.”

**S** THE EASTERN TRIBES **had every legal right** to build the altar before they crossed the Jordan as long as it was nothing more than a memorial. THE PROBLEM WAS they **rejected the principle** of avoiding the appearance of evil. They did not break the law in so doing, but they **scooted as close to disobedience as they could** without being disobedient. It may not have been evil, but it certainly had the appearance of evil.

**S** **HEREIN LIES THE SOURCE OF MANY DIVISIONS IN CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIPS TODAY.** HOW MANY CHRISTIANS do you know who scoot up as close to sin as they possibly can without actually committing sin? Some even do it in the name of **“witness.”** They are often the source of division in the family of God.

**S** HERE IS **HOW TO BYPASS** SUCH CONFLICT — **INTENTIONALLY AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL.**

- 1) **ATTIRE**
- 2) **CONVERSATION**
- 3) **PLACES**
- 4) **DRINK**

VALUABLE LESSONS FOR LIFE

- I. BE CAREFUL TO **KEEP YOUR COMMITMENTS**
- II. BE CAREFUL TO **KEEP GOD AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE**
- III. BE CAREFUL TO **AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL**

#### IV. BE CAREFUL TO RESPOND IN A GODLY MANNER WHEN CONFRONTED WITH A NEGATIVE SITUATION

THE RESPONSE OF THE WESTERN TRIBES IS WORTH NOTING:

**(JOS 22:13-14)**, "And the children of Israel **SENT UNTO** the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, **PHINEHAS** the son of Eleazar the priest, {14} And with him **ten princes, of each chief house a prince** throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel."

**S** THE TEN WESTERN TRIBES APPOINTED A **DELEGATION** responsible for investigating the matter. They refused to operate on the basis of **hearsay**.

**S** IN SO DOING, THEY FOLLOWED THE DIRECTION OF O.T. SCRIPTURE:

**(Deu 13:12-15)**, "If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, {13} Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; {14} Then shalt thou **INQUIRE**, and **MAKE SEARCH**, and **ASK DILIGENTLY**; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; {15} Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword."

**S** THE **DELEGATION** consisted of **eleven people**, one chief from each of the ten western tribes, and **Phinehas**. **PHINEHAS** had several distinguishing marks.

- 1) He was appointed **THE HEAD** of the delegation.
- 2) He was **THE SON OF ELEAZAR**, the high priest, who was the son of Aaron.
- 3) He had previously proven himself **A MAN WHO HAD A ZEAL** for God's holiness. Phinehas had thrust a spear through an Israelite man named Zimri and a Midianite woman who were committing immorality as an act of worship to a pagan deity. His act stayed a plague that had killed 24,000 Israelites (Num 25:7-8).

4) He was **COMMENDED BY GOD** for his act. **(Psa 106:30-31)**, "Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. {31} And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore."

**S** THEIR INVESTIGATION **RESULTED IN RECONCILIATION** WITH THE EASTERN TRIBES.

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**FIVE WAYS WE SHOULD APPROACH NEGATIVE SITUATIONS:**

#### #1. WEIGH THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION

**S** **NOT EVERY SITUATION** demands drastic action.

**S** From a biblical perspective, **THREE CIRCUMSTANCES** APPEAR TO **MERIT** church discipline:

##### [#1]. UNRESOLVABLE DISPUTES BETWEEN CHURCH MEMBERS

**(Rom 16:17)**, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

##### [#2]. PERSISTENT TEACHING OF FALSE DOCTRINE

**(Titus 3:10)**, "A man that is **AN HERETIC** after the first and second admonition reject;"

##### [#3]. CONTINUED IMMORALITY & DISORDERLINESS

**(1 Cor 5:9-11 NIV)**, "I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- {10} not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. {11} But now I am writing you that you must **NOT ASSOCIATE** with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat."

#1. **WEIGH THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION**

#### #2. BE MINDFUL OF THE POTENTIAL NEGATIVE WITNESS

**(Mat 13:25-40)**, "But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed **TARES** among the wheat, and went his way. {26} But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. {27} So the servants of the

householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? {28} He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. **THE SERVANTS SAID** unto him, **Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?** {29} But **HE SAID**, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. {30} Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

**S ABRAM'S CONCERN** regarding the strife between Lot and himself was primarily that unbelievers were in the land.

**C (Gen 13:7)**, "And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and **THE PERIZZITE** dwelled then in the land."

**S NEHEMIAH'S CONCERN** with the Jew's dispute with one another was what the unbelievers would think.

**C (Neh 5:9)**, "Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?"

**S JESUS SAID**

**C (John 13:35)**, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

#1. **WEIGH THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION**

#2. **BE MINDFUL OF POTENTIAL NEGATIVE WITNESS**

### **#3. APPOINT GODLY PEOPLE TO LOOK INTO THE SITUATION**

**(Gal 6:1)**, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, **YE WHICH ARE SPIRITUAL**, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

**S THE MARK OF SPIRITUALITY IS NOT** whether a person is able to expose a brother, rather **IT IS** whether a person is able to **RESTORE** a brother. Anybody can **shoot** a wounded soldier when he has fallen. It takes God's help restore a fallen brother.

### **#4. GET ALL THE FACTS**

**(PROV 18:13, NKJV)**, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him."

**(Mat 18:15-17)**, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, **GO AND TELL HIM** his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. {16} But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. {17} And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

**S INVESTIGATE** before advancing. Circumstantial evidence and hearsay are often misleading. Be careful not to jump to conclusions.

**A LITTLE POEM TELLS US WHY:**

Once there was a dog named August

Who was always jumping to conclusions.

One day he jumped at the conclusion of a mule

That was the last day of August

**S** As believers we should make **AN ABIDING COMMITMENT** to give **only good reports** on others unless we have followed the steps presented in Matt 18. **IT IS A SIN** to give a bad report on someone if we have failed to follow the steps spelled out by our Lord.

#1. **WEIGH THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION**

#2. **BE MINDFUL OF POTENTIAL NEGATIVE WITNESS**

#3. **APPOINT GODLY PEOPLE TO LOOK INTO THE SITUATION**

#4. **BE SURE YOU HAVE ALL THE FACTS**

### **#5. MAKE RESTORATION YOUR GOAL**

**(Gal 6:1)**, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, **RESTORE** such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

**S If restoration is not the motivating factor**, then the person does not meet the scriptural qualifications of Gal 6:1 and Matt 18 and should not participate.

**S MOTIVE IS PARAMOUNT**

C **(Prov 25:9)**, "Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself; and discover not a secret to another:"

C **(James 4:11-12)**, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. {12} There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"

S **ONE THING THAT PROVED** THE SINCERITY and PURITY of the ten western tribes was their willingness to be a **part of the solution**. They offered assistance to help the eastern tribes.

**(Josh 22:19 NIV)**, "If the land you possess is defiled, **COME OVER TO THE LORD'S LAND**, where the Lord's tabernacle stands, and share the land with us. But do not rebel against the LORD or against us by building an altar for yourselves, other than the altar of the LORD our God."

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**SOME VERSES TO PONDER**

**(Psa 133:1, 3)**, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! . . . {3} . . . For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

**(Eph 4:3)**, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

- I. BE CAREFUL TO **KEEP YOUR COMMITMENTS**
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**WHAT IF YOU HAVE BEEN WRONGLY ACCUSED? WHAT DO YOU DO?**

C **(Prov 15:1)**, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger."

C **(1 Pet 2:21-24)**, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: {22} Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: {23} Who, **WHEN HE WAS REVILED**, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: {24} Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."