

# Joshua 22 Commentary

Previous

Next

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[Joshua 22:1](#)

[Joshua 22:2](#)

[Joshua 22:3](#)

[Joshua 22:4](#)

[Joshua 22:5](#)

[Joshua 22:6](#)

[Joshua 22:7](#)

[Joshua 22:8](#)

[Joshua 22:9](#)

[Joshua 22:10](#)

[Joshua 22:11](#)

[Joshua 22:12](#)

[Joshua 22:13](#)

[Joshua 22:14](#)

[Joshua 22:15](#)

[Joshua 22:16](#)

[Joshua 22:17](#)

[Joshua 22:18](#)

[Joshua 22:19](#)

[Joshua 22:20](#)

[Joshua 22:21](#)

[Joshua 22:22](#)

[Joshua 22:23](#)

[Joshua 22:24](#)

[Joshua 22:25](#)

[Joshua 22:26](#)

[Joshua 22:27](#)

[Joshua 22:28](#)

[Joshua 22:29](#)

[Joshua 22:30](#)

[Joshua 22:31](#)

[Joshua 22:32](#)

[Joshua 22:33](#)

[Joshua 22:34](#)

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LAND ALLOTMENTS

(Joshua 13-21)

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**JOSHUA**  
**A BOOK ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE and REST**  
**HOW TO POSSESS YOUR POSSESSIONS**

<b>CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND</b>		<b>DIVISION OF THE PROMISED LAND</b>		<b>CLOSE OF JOSHUA'S LIFE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>		<b>ALLOCATION</b>		<b>APPEAL</b>
Josh 1:1-5:15	Josh 6:1-12:24	Joshua 13:1-21:45		Josh 22:1-24:33
<b>WARLORDS IN CANAAN</b>		<b>LANDLORDS IN CANAAN</b>		
<b>ENTERING CANAAN</b>	<b>CONQUERING CANAAN</b>	<b>DIVIDING CANAAN</b>		
<b>SECURING THE LAND</b>		<b>SETTLING THE LAND</b>		
<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Conquest</b>	<b>Possession</b>		<b>Consecration</b>
ca. 1 Month	ca 7 Years	ca. 18 Years		

[See also more detailed Chart by Charles R Swindoll](#)

**Joshua 22:1 Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh,**

- **Joshua:** Nu 32:18-33 De 29:7,8
- **Reubenites:** We have already seen, that a detachment of 40,000 men, of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, had passed over Jordan armed, with their brethren, according to their agreement with Moses. The war being now concluded, the land divided, and their brethren settled, Joshua assembles these warriors; and with commendations for their services and fidelity, he dismisses them, having first given them the most pious and suitable instructions. They had now been about seven years (OR POSSIBLY LONGER) absent from their respective families; and though there was only the river Jordan between the camp of Gilgal and their own inheritance, yet it does not appear that they had, during that time, ever revisited their home, which they might have done at any time of the year, except the harvest, as the river was at other times easily fordable.
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Numbers 32:20-22+ So Moses said to them, "If you will do this, if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for the war, 21 and all of you armed men cross over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven His enemies out from before Him, 22 and the land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you shall return and be free of obligation toward the LORD and toward Israel, and this land shall be yours for a possession before the LORD. (Consider reading Numbers 32:1-33 for background)

Joshua 1:12-18+ (**JOSHUA BEGAN BY ADDRESSING THE 2.5 TRIBES CHARGING THEM TO JOIN THE OTHER TRIBES IN CONQUEST OF CANAAN**) To the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, 13 "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God gives you rest and will give you this land.' 14 "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them, 15 until the LORD gives your brothers rest, as He gives you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise." 16 They answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17" Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. 18"Anyone who rebels against your command

and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous.”

#### Outline - [Don Anderson](#)

1. THE ADMONITION - Joshua 22:1-8 on the part of Joshua to the two and a half tribes.
2. THE PROVOCATION - Joshua 22:9,10 the building of the altar.
3. THE MOBILIZATION - Joshua 22:11-20 response of the tribes in the west.
4. THE EXPLANATION - Joshua 22:21-29
5. THE SATISFACTION - Joshua 22:30-34

#### Outline - Rod Mattoon

1. The Commendation - Joshua 22:1-4
2. The Charge - Joshua 22:5-9
3. The Construction of the Altar - Joshua 22:10
4. The Concerns of the Nation - Joshua 22:11-12
5. Confrontation - Joshua 22:13-20
6. The Confirmation of Commitment - Joshua 22:21-29
7. Contentment - Joshua 22:30-34

Note that these last 3 chapters have a similar beginning with Joshua calling for an assembly - the same verb qara means to call or summon and is used in Josh 22:1, Josh 23:2 and Josh 24:1, marking the closing of this book with three assemblies of Israel.

See Jensen's chart at top of page - he entitles Joshua 22-24 the (1) **Close of Joshua's Life**, (2) **Consecration**, (3) **Appeal**. Jensen adds this notes on Joshua 22:1–24:33. The first five chapters of Joshua, the **Preparation** section, are chapters of anticipation of conquest. The last three chapters, this **Consecration** section, are chapters of anticipation of continued dwelling in God's rest land. The intense action of the first half of the book, which reached a plateau in the business of land allotments, now gives way to relatively quiet but emotion-filled moments of crisis, when Joshua appeals for total commitment, and elicits Israel's consecration to God, a heartwarming climax to the years of his ministry among them." ([Survey of the Old Testament](#))

**Reformation Study Bible Note** on the final 3 chapters, Joshua 22-24 - The book closes with three chapters about Israel's faithfulness, following God's faithfulness that has been the main subject so far (Joshua 21:43–45 and note). The human response demanded by God's remarkable grace is the recurring theme of the final chapters. Each chapter begins with Joshua summoning the people (Joshua 22:1; 23:1–2; 24:1), and focuses on the faithfulness God now requires of them. ([Josh 22–24](#))

**POSB** - The summons & strong commendation given them: A lesson on loyalty, faithfulness, & completing one's mission. (**ED**: We all do well to follow their example to be loyal to our Lord, following Him faithfully all of days, until we come to our end, having completed the mission He has given us in Christ Jesus - Eph 2:10. Let it be so Lord, for every soul who is reading these notes, for the glory of Thy Name, by the power of Thy Spirit, through our Great High Priest, Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen).

**Cyril Barber** - So far the book of Joshua has been concerned with God's initiatives. For example, He enabled the Israelites to cross the Jordan; He enabled them to take Jericho; He gave them victories over the people of the land; He supervised the division of the land; and He provided cities of refuge. Now, in these remaining chapters, Joshua undertakes to admonish the Israelites to obey and serve the Lord. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

**Hess** has an interesting introduction to these closing chapters - "Each of the final three chapters describes a single event. At first glance, these events seem to be a random collection of leftovers: a dispute between the tribes about an altar, a farewell address, and another covenant ceremony. However, upon closer examination it becomes apparent that they all focus on a single matter, the proper worship of Israel's God—how to offer it and what will happen if Israel does not do so." ([Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

## JOSHUA'S FAREWELL SPEECH TO TRANSJORDAN TRIBES

**Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh** - Now that the land allotments were completed, one other piece of unfinished business was to release the soldiers of **Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh** who had crossed the Jordan (from their allotment of land on the east side of the Jordan) to fight with the other 9 1/2 tribes until the latter had received their allotment.

**Utley** - Based on Josh 22:3, some commentators have wondered about how long these three tribes stayed and helped their brothers. It is possible that they were home and Joshua summoned them, but it is more likely that v. 3 states they had stayed the whole time, possibly even as long as fourteen years.

**Bush** The war being now, for the present at least, concluded, and their services no longer required.

**Joshua 22:2** and said to them, "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you.

- **ou have kept** Nu 32:20-29 De 3:16-20
- **have listened to my voice** Jos 1:12-18
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Joshua 1:16-18+ They answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. 18 "Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous."

Joshua 4:12-14+ The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them; 13 about 40,000 equipped for war, crossed for battle before the LORD to the desert plains of Jericho. 14 On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life.

### THE 2 1/2 EASTERN TRIBES FULFILLED THEIR OBLIGATION

Note the 3 pronged commendation reflecting their obedience - (1) **you have kept...** (2) **and have listened..** (3) **.(v3) have not forsaken your brothers.**

**Dale Ralph Davis** - There is much to commend the practice of commending God's people when it may be done sincerely. In fact, it is quite commendable! As Matthew Henry observed:

Though it was by the favour of God and his power that Israel got possession of this land, and he must have all the glory, yet Joshua thought there was a thankful acknowledgment due to their brethren who assisted them, and whose sword and bow were employed for them. **God must be chiefly eyed in our praises, yet instruments must not be altogether overlooked.** ([Joshua: No Falling Words Focus on the Bible](#))

**And said to them, "You have kept ([shamar](#)) all that Moses the servant ('[ebed](#)) of the LORD ([Jehovah](#)) commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you - KJV** = "and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you." This is quite a commendation from Joshua (note the two uses of "all!"). Clearly the 2.5 tribes have been obedient to the Words of Moses and Joshua. The idea of **listened** ([shama](#)) means listening with attention with the implication of acting on what is heard (obedience), which is what they did. This is a wonderful report about the eastern 2.5 tribes who had listened and obeyed Joshua.

**Moses the servant of the LORD**- Deut. 34:5; Jos. 1:1; Jos. 1:13; Jos. 1:15; Jos. 8:31; Jos. 8:33; Jos. 11:12; Jos. 12:6; Jos. 13:8; Jos. 14:7; Jos. 18:7; Jos. 22:2; Jos. 22:4; Jos. 22:5; 2 Ki. 18:12; 2 Chr. 1:3; 2 Chr. 24:6

**Utley** - Joshua addresses the eastern tribes and affirms them for (1) obeying Moses (cf. Num. 32:28–32; Deut. 3:18–20) and (2) listening to him (cf. Josh. 1:12–18).

**THOUGHT** - Follow-through is vital in God's work. Beware of the temptation to quit early and leave God's work undone. ([Life Application Study Bible](#))

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 1-9. Joshua dismisses the tribes with good counsel. **Those who have the commandment have it in vain, unless they do the commandment; and it will not be done aright unless we take diligent heed.** (Jas 1:22, Lk 8:21, Jn 13:17) In particular to love the Lord our God, as the best of beings, and the best of friends; and as far as that principle rules in the heart (cf Ro 5:5, Gal 5:22), there will be constant care and endeavour to walk in his ways, even those that are narrow and up-hill. In **every** instance to keep his commandments. At **all** times, and in **all** conditions, with purpose of heart to

cleave unto the Lord, and to serve him and his kingdom among men, with **all** our heart, and with **all** our soul. This good counsel is given to all; may God give us grace to take it (**ED: AMEN** - see "Spirit of grace" - Heb 10:29b)!

**Joshua 22:3 "You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God.**

- Php 1:23-27
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MISSION ACCOMPLISHED**

**You have not forsaken** ([azab](#); Lxx - [egkataleipo](#)) **your brothers these many days to this day** - They remained loyal to their brethren. They were never [AWOL!](#) Their obedience was complete, giving a good example to all saints of all ages. Since they already possessed their possession it would have been tempting to forsake their obligation, but they followed through on their commitment. **These many days** would be approximately 7+ years, time when they presumably were separated from their families. There is no note that they crossed over to visit their families during this time (no mention of [furloughs](#) in this book, but that cannot be excluded). One thinks about soldiers in WWII who were deployed for several years, but even they did not have to endure such a long separation (7 years of fighting) from their loved ones.

**But have kept** ([shamar](#)) **the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God** This speaks of their faithfulness, loyalty and commitment to the Lord and His command, fighting on the side of their brothers, and doing so realizing that they would not benefit from any of the lands they conquered. And clearly they did receive abundant [booty](#) for their efforts (Joshua 22:8).

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**Forsake** (leave) ([05800](#)) ['azab](#) basically means to depart from something -- to leave, to forsake (48x), to leave (26x; "left" 22x), to loose, to depart, to abandon. Things that can be left behind or forsaken include persons (Ge 44:22; Nu 10:30; Ru 1:16; 2Ki4:30), people who should be left behind (Ge 2:24); places (2Ki 8:6; Jer 18:14; 25:38) and objects (Ge 39:12,13; 50:8; Ex 9:21). Men can forsake God (apostatize) (Dt 28:20, 31:16, Jer 1:16), can abandon qualities of virtue (1Ki 12:8, 2Chr 10:8, 13), the way (of righteousness) (Pr 15:10), instruction/wisdom (Pr 4:2, 6), reproof (Pr 10:17 - "ignore" = forsake), kindness (lovingkindness, faithfulness) (Pr 3:3). God promises to not forsake His people (Ge 24:27, 28:15, Dt 31:6,7 contrast what God's people will do = Dt 31:16). In a use similar to Pr 28:13, we are instructed to "forsake wrath." (Ps 37:8)

**Azab - 5x in Joshua** - Joshua 1:5, Joshua 8:17, Joshua 22:3, Joshua 24:16, Joshua 24:20

**Kept** (in perfect tense; Lxx = [phulasso](#)) (observed) ([08104](#)) [shamar](#) conveys the basic idea = exercise great care over something. Thus it means to keep, observe, watch, preserve, to guard, to be careful, be circumspect, to watch over, to watch carefully over (like a watchman), to be on one's guard. Keep or perform a vow. People are told to guard covenant, Sabbath, or commandments Ge 17:9; Ex 31:14; Dt 28:9. Hedge about as with thorns - the word the Hebrews used for a shepherd's keeping watch over a flock of sheep. Conveyed the idea of protection as in Ps 121:7-8 (used 3 times!) In the great Aaronic blessing Nu 6:24. Check the first use - Ge 2:15 Hedge keeps outsiders out and insiders in! The word can suggest the idea of protecting: David gave orders to keep Absalom safe (1Sa26:15; 2Sa18:12); the Lord keeps those who look to Him (Ps 121:7). **Keep** the Law ([shamar torah](#)) = 8x in OT: 1Chr 22:12 Ps 119:44, 55, 136 Pr 28:4, 29:18 Jer 16:1 Eze 44:24 Translated in NASB a few times as a noun: bodyguard, doorkeeper, gate keeper, guardsman, sentries, watchman, watchmen Lxx often [phulasso](#) = watch, to keep from escaping, be on guard from being lost or perishing (2Ti 1:14)

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### **GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)**

**Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day.** Probably for the space of seven years; for the people were occupied for this period of time in subduing the land. **Yet it is very possible** that in the intervals of action, and when the rest of the army had retired into winter-quarters, some of them at least may have visited their families across the Jordan, or been relieved by other detachments, though we have no clear intimation that this was the fact. Certain it is that these two tribes and a half had always their quota of men, originally amounting to 40,000, in readiness at their respective posts, for any service to which they might be called; and after so long a delay we can easily imagine how ardently they must have longed for the period of their release, when they could return to their peaceful homes to be met with a joyful welcome by their wives and children. But like faithful soldiers they await the full close of the war and an honorable discharge. Had they departed sooner they would have been recalled as fugitives or branded as cowards; now they retire with blessings and applause. So though our home in heaven be ever so attractive, we are

required to remain contentedly on earth till our warfare be accomplished, and instead of anticipating our removal, to wait for a due discharge at the hands of our divine Leader. (I THINK "DISCHARGE" IS THE MOMENT WE ARE GLORIFIED BUT NOT BEFORE!)

**THOUGHT** - THINK ABOUT YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE OF SERVICE - HAVE YOU "RETIRED" FROM ACTIVE SERVICE TO THE LORD? HAVE YOU DRIFTED AWAY FROM THAT FERVOR OF FIRST LOVE YOU ONCE HAD WHEN YOU WOULD HAVE DONE ANYTHING YOUR LORD ASKED? (Rev 2:4-5+) DON'T PASS OVER THESE QUESTIONS LIGHTLY OR QUICKLY DEARLY BELOVED! WE WILL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO REST IN ETERNITY! WORK ENABLED BY HIS WORD AND SPIRIT WHILE IT IS STILL DAY, WHILE YOU STILL HAVE HIS GIFT OF BREATH IN YOUR LUNGS!)

**Joshua 22:4 "And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan.**

- **God has given rest** Jos 21:43-44 De 12:9
- **go to your tents:** Jos 13:8,15-33 14:1-5 Nu 32:33-42 De 3:1-17 29:8
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Joshua 21:43-44+ So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. 44 **And the LORD gave them rest on every side**, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand.

Exodus 33:14+ (GOD SPEAKING TO MOSES - DON'T MISS THE SOURCE OF **REST!** "MY PRESENCE!" cf Ps 16:11) And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and **I will give you rest.**"

Deuteronomy 3:20+ until **the LORD gives rest** to your fellow countrymen as to you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God will give them beyond the Jordan. Then you may return every man to his possession which I have given you.'

Joshua 1:13; 15+ "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God gives you **rest** and will give you this land.' 15 until the LORD gives your brothers **rest**, as He gives you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise."

Joshua Gives Tribes An "Honorable Discharge"

## RETURN TO YOUR FAMILIES IN THE EAST

Because of their loyalty, faithfulness and successful completion of their mission, General Joshua gives the two and one-half tribes an [honorable discharge](#) one which was worth working for.

**THOUGHT** - This event begs the question of each of God's soldiers (cf 2Ti 2:3-4+, Php 2:25+, Philemon 1:2): Will you (I) receive an "*honorable discharge*?" Will you (I) hear the Captain of the host of the LORD (Joshua 5:14+), our "Joshua Jesus ([Iesous](#))" declare to us "'Well done, good ([agathos](#)) and faithful ([pistos](#)) slave ([doulos](#)). You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, **enter** ([arist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) into the joy of your master (cf Ps 16:11+)" (Mt 25:21, cf 1Co 3:11-15+, 2Cor 5:9-10+, Rev 22:12+) Follow-through is vital in God's work. God's word done in God's will will never lack God's supply (or success)! Beware of tiring, retiring (early) or being tempted to quit God's assignment for your life because you only "go around once," so be sure to redeem the time for His glory. Amen.

**And now the LORD your God has given rest**([nuach/nuah](#)) **to your brothers, as He spoke to them** - NET = "Now the LORD your God has made your fellow Israelites secure, just as he promised them." Note that **rest** was a gift from the Lord God. **Your brothers** of course is the 9.5 tribes on the west of the Jordan. And **rest** refers to the rest from active warfare which had been necessary to conquer the land and subdue the Canaanites. It was **rest** in a "relative sense" because there were still Canaanites in the land that

needed to be eradicated by Israel. But for the time being, the Canaanites were not able to mount a significant war against Israel. As He spoke (or promised) for example in Ex 33:14+ or Deut 3:20+ which echoes Joshua 21:45+ that "Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass."

**THOUGHT** - This rest in Joshua is alluded to in Hebrews 4:8 to show there was a better rest, a Sabbath rest, a rest from works performed in an attempt to merit salvation. (Heb 4:9-10). Jesus (NT "Joshua") offers a better rest in Mt 11:28-30. Are you "resting" in Jesus by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9).

**Madvig** - "Rest" means the freedom to live in one's own land without the fear of war with any of the surrounding nations (see Josh 21:44+). Moses ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 3](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [Rest in the Bible](#)
- Dr Walter Kaiser's excellent summary - The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest - Bibliotheca Sacra: Volume 130

**Therefore** - Term of conclusion. Based on the fact that God had given **rest** to the tribes on the eastern side of the Jordan.

**Turn now and go to your tents** - **Red** = commands. Recall that the Israelites had taken over the homes of the people they conquered, so the **NET** is probably a better rendering = "Return to your **homes** in your own land."

**To the land of your possession** ([achuzzah](#); Lxx - [oikos](#)), **which Moses the servant ('ebed) of the LORD (Jehovah) gave you beyond the Jordan** - Joshua tells the faithful soldiers it was time to return to their homes and families the east of the Jordan. Moses gave them the possession but was only Yahweh's servant, distributing the gracious gift of his Master.

**THOUGHT** - And dear follower of Christ, our job is no different - we are simply bondservants of the Most High God dispensing His gracious offer of salvation through His Gospel, not to give poor sinners a temporal land but to give them a rich inheritance and eternal life in Christ.

**Cyril Barber** - The obedience of the two and a half tribes was threefold: to God, to Moses, and to Joshua. Now these warriors are complimented by their general and honorably discharged. With light hearts and loaded with spoil they re-cross the River Jordan en route to their homes. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

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**Rest** (Lxx = [katapauo](#) as in Heb 4:4, 8)([05117](#)) [nuach/nuah](#) means to rest or pause and derives from a root signifying absence of movement/being settled in a particular place with overtones of finality. It can describe a period of relaxing or ceasing to engage in strenuous or stressful activity. Ideas include settle down; dwell, stay, place, let alone, give comfort, cease, let down, be quiet, remain, cause to rest, set down. The ark "rested" on Mount Ararat (Ge 8:4) The first use in Ge 2:15 describes how God "put" Adam in the Garden. The next use describes a physical setting down of something (Ge 8:4, cp 2Sa 21:10, Ex 10:14, Josh 3:13). In its most general and literal sense, the verb means "to settle down" in a place or to be at rest. God's promise (Dt 12:10) and fulfillment (Jos 21:44) to give Israel rest (victory and security) in the promised land.

**Uses of nuach in Joshua and Judges** - Jos. 1:13; Jos. 1:15; Jos. 3:13; Jos. 4:3; Jos. 4:8; Jos. 6:23; Jos. 21:44; Jos. 22:4; Jos. 23:1; Jdg. 2:23 = "allowed to remain"; Jdg. 3:1 = "left"; Jdg. 6:18; Jdg. 6:20

**Possession** (property, site) ([0272](#)) [ahuzzah/achuzzah](#) from **achaz** = to grasp, to take hold, take possession) is a feminine noun meaning something seized or grasped a picture of the root verb achaz we see when Jacob "took hold" of Esau's heel (Gn 25:26); Samson "took hold" of the city gate (Judges 16:3) and Ruth "held" the cloak as Boaz poured six measures of barley into it (Ruth 3:15). Given this meaning of the root (achaz to seize) it is a somewhat ironic wordplay that the land of Canaan (Israel's inalienable possession) was conquered by Israel "seizing" the promised land as ordained by God. In Psalm 2 the Father makes a promise to His Son declaring "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the [very] ends of the earth as Your possession. " (Ps 2:8). **Ahuzzah** is usually translated **possession** (slaves only in Lev 25:45, 46) or **property** and has the nuances of either "personal property" or more frequently, "landed property." Jehovah rather than giving the Levites land (although they did own houses in the Levitical cities) would be their possession (Nu 18:20; Ezek. 44:28). In regard to property, **ahuzzah** refers primarily to the **possession** of Promised Land in Canaan by Israel. While the Promised Land is said to be the possession of Israel, the true Landlord is the Lord Himself ("for the land is Mine" Lev 25:23) Who Alone is strong and sovereign enough to give Abraham and his seed the land as an everlasting possession. (Ge 17:8), this being the first use of ahuzzah. Ahuzzah refers to a **burial site** in Ge 23:4,9,20.

**Achuzzah** - 58v - Gen. 17:8; Gen. 23:4; Gen. 23:9; Gen. 23:20; Gen. 36:43; Gen. 47:11; Gen. 48:4; Gen. 49:30; Gen. 50:13; Lev. 14:34; Lev. 25:10; Lev. 25:13; Lev. 25:24; Lev. 25:25; Lev. 25:27; Lev. 25:28; Lev. 25:32; Lev. 25:33; Lev. 25:34; Lev. 25:41; Lev. 25:45; Lev. 25:46; Lev. 27:16; Lev. 27:21; Lev. 27:22; Lev.

27:24; Lev. 27:28; Num. 27:4; Num. 27:7; Num. 32:5; Num. 32:22; Num. 32:29; Num. 32:32; Num. 35:2; Num. 35:8; Num. 35:28; Deut. 32:49; Jos. 21:12; Jos. 21:41; Jos. 22:4; Jos. 22:9; Jos. 22:19; 1 Chr. 7:28; 1 Chr. 9:2; 2 Chr. 11:14; 2 Chr. 31:1; Neh. 11:3; Ps. 2:8; Ezek. 44:28; Ezek. 45:5; Ezek. 45:6; Ezek. 45:7; Ezek. 45:8; Ezek. 46:16; Ezek. 46:18; Ezek. 48:20; Ezek. 48:21; Ezek. 48:22

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**Get you unto your tents.** To your settled habitations, frequently called tents in the scriptures. 2 Sam. 18:17; Hos. 9:6; Mal. 2:12. It is probable, however, that they still retained somewhat of the nomade habits of their ancestors, and that tents were by no means uncommon among them. (ED: BUT THEY ALSO HAD TAKEN OVER CANAANITE TOWNS WITH BUILDINGS - cf Dt 19:1+).

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### Joshua 22:4 Dr. Woodrow Kroll Rest for the Weary

Joshua 22:4 - And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brethren, as He promised them; now therefore, return and go to your tents and to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

**Rest for the Weary** - [William Booth](#), the founder of the Salvation Army, received a letter from his wife while he was on a long trip. She wrote in part, "Your Tuesday's notes arrived safe, and I was rejoiced to hear of the continued prosperity of the work, though sorry you were so worn out. I fear the effect of all this excitement and exertion upon your health, and though I would not hinder your usefulness, I would caution you against an injudicious prodigality of your strength. Remember a long life of steady, consistent, holy labor will produce twice as much fruit as one shortened and destroyed by spasmodic and extravagant exertions; be careful and sparing of your strength when and where exertion is unnecessary."

God also is aware of this truth. After five years of battles, Joshua declared, "God has given rest." It was not that the land had been completely conquered, but it was time for the people to rest anyway.

Some Christians are quick to remind us that "Satan never takes a vacation." That may be true, but Satan is not the example we want to follow. One scholar who studied the Gospels claims that during the three years of Jesus' ministry, ten periods of resting are mentioned. If Jesus felt it necessary to punctuate His ministry with seasons of rest, how much more so should we.

Being alone and resting for a while is not selfish; it's Christlike. Taking a vacation is not fleshly; it's spiritual. God's kingdom is not advanced by those who work themselves into a coronary or nervous breakdown. God gives rest to the weary, so don't be too proud to take it.

### Come apart for rest or you may come apart forever

**Joshua 22:5 "Only **be** very careful **to observe** the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."**

KJV Joshua 22:5 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.

NET Joshua 22:5 But carefully obey the commands and instructions Moses the LORD's servant gave you. Love the LORD your God, follow all his instructions, obey his commands, be loyal to him, and serve him with all your heart and being!"

BGT Joshua 22:5 ἅλ φυλ ξασθε ποιε ν σφ ὄρα τς ντολς κα τν νμον ν νετε λατο μν ποιε ν Μωυς ς πας κυρ ου γαπ ν κριον τν θε ν μν πορε εσθαι πσαις τα ς ὄο ς ατο φυλ ξασθαι τς ντολς ατο κα προσκε σθαι ατ κα λατρε ει ν ατ ξ λη ς τς διανο ας μν κα ξ λη ς τς ψυχ ς μν

NLT Joshua 22:5 But be very careful to obey all the commands and the instructions that Moses gave to you. Love the LORD your God, walk in all his ways, obey his commands, hold firmly to him, and serve him with all your heart and all your soul."

ESV Joshua 22:5 Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul."



NIV Joshua 22:5 But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul."

YLT Joshua 22:5 Only, be very watchful to do the command and the law which Moses, servant of Jehovah, commanded you, to love Jehovah your God, and to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commands, and to cleave to Him, and to serve Him, with all your heart, and with all your soul.'

LXE Joshua 22:5 But take great heed to do the commands and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you to do; to love the Lord our God, to walk in all his ways, to keep his commands, and to cleave to him, and serve him with all your mind, and with all your soul.

CSB Joshua 22:5 Only carefully obey the command and instruction that Moses the LORD's servant gave you: to love the LORD your God, walk in all His ways, keep His commands, remain faithful to Him, and serve Him with all your heart and all your soul."

NKJ Joshua 22:5 "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."

NRS Joshua 22:5 Take good care to observe the commandment and instruction that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to keep his commandments, and to hold fast to him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul."

- **Only be very careful to observe the commandment** : Ex 15:26 De 4:1,2,6,9 6:6-9,17 11:22 1Ch 28:7,8 Ps 106:3 Ps 119:4-6 Pr 4:23 Isa 55:2 Jer 12:16 Heb 6:11,12 12:15 2Pe 1:5-10
- **love**: Ex 20:6 De 6:5 10:12,13 11:1,13 Mt 22:37 Joh 14:15,21-23 Joh 21:15-17 Ro 8:28 Jas 1:12 2:5 1Jn 5:2,3
- **cling**: Jos 23:8 De 4:4 10:20 13:4 Ac 11:23 Ro 12:9
- **serve**: Jos 24:14,15 1Sa 7:3 12:20,24 Mt 4:10 6:24 Lu 1:74 Joh 12:26 Ac 27:23 Ro 1:9
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Joshua 23:6-8 Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, 7 so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them. 8 "But you are to **cling to the LORD your God**, as you have done to this day.

Deuteronomy 4:9+ "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and **they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life**; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.

Deuteronomy 4:29+ (**A PROPHECY ISRAEL WOULD FULFILL IN THE LAST DAYS**) But from there (Dt 4:27-28) you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him **with all your heart and all your soul**.

**COMMENT - with all your heart** - 21x in 21v - note concentration of this important phrase in Deuteronomy as God's Spirit prepares the second generation of Israel for entry into the promised land. Notice Dt 30:6 explains how it is possible to love God with all one's heart! Deut. 4:29; Deut. 6:5; Deut. 10:12; Deut. 11:13; Deut. 13:3; Deut. 26:16; Deut. 30:2; Deut. 30:6; Deut. 30:10; Jos. 22:5; 1 Sam. 7:3; 1 Sam. 12:20; 1 Sam. 12:24; Prov. 3:5; Jer. 29:13; Joel 2:12; Zeph. 3:14; Matt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30; Lk. 10:27; Acts 8:37

Deuteronomy 6:5+ "You shall **love** the LORD your God **with all your heart** and **with all your soul** and **with all your might**.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13+ Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

Deuteronomy 10:16+ "So circumcise your heart (**MORE LITERALLY** - "THE FORESKIN OF YOUR HEART" - [SEE NOTE BELOW](#)), and stiffen your neck no longer.

Deuteronomy 11:13-14+ "It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, **to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul**, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil.

Deuteronomy 26:16+ "This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore **be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul**.

Deuteronomy 30:1-3+ (**A PROPHECY ISRAEL WILL FULFILL IN THE LAST DAYS**) "So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you (SEE [the Diaspora](#)), 2 and you return to the LORD your (WHOSE GOD?) God and **obey Him with ALL your heart and soul (READ THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE TO SEE HOW THEY CAN FULFILL THIS GREAT PROPHECY)** according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 **then** (MARKS PROGRESS IN NARRATIVE - CONDITIONED ON THEIR OBEDIENCE) the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples (GENTILE NATIONS) where the LORD your God has scattered you ([Diaspora](#)).

Deuteronomy 30:6+ (**GOD PROMISES TO CIRCUMCISE THEIR HEART IN THE FUTURE** [SEE NOTE BELOW](#)) "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, **to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul**, so that you may live.

## JOSHUA'S WORDS OF WARNING

In these farewell chapters (Joshua 22-24), the Spirit filled, wise, aging Joshua speaks his last words (which should always be "lasting words") to the young nation of Israel. He gives three strong closing exhortations replete, the last 2 including warnings for disobedience - (1) Joshua 22:5-6 to the 2.5 tribes (2) Joshua 23:6-13 (3) Joshua 23:14-28. The book of Judges is a sad testimony that the following generations did not heed his warnings.

This is a good pattern for leaders to follow - commend (vv 2-4) before you command!

**Ryrie** - Having discharged their military commitments, the 2 1/2 tribes are reminded by Joshua of their continuing spiritual responsibilities. It is unnecessary to suppose that these tribes were not in God's will in settling E of the Jordan. God had given them that land (Josh 24:8), and it was part of Palestine, the mountains of Gilead, E of the Jordan (and not the Jordan itself), being the eastern boundary of Palestine.

**Irving Jensen** - notes that Joshua "did not bless them without exhorting them to take diligent heed to fulfill the conditions for continual blessing, namely, to do, to love, to walk, to keep, to cleave unto, and to serve. It was a brief but passionate charge." ([Joshua- Everyman's Bible Commentary: Rest-Land Won](#))

**Anderson** - Joshua commends them for their actions in the past, but he challenges them for the future if they want to continue to be successful.

**Madvig - Be very careful to keep** ("šimrû me'ôḏ la'ásôṭ") is a common expression in Deuteronomy. This is the key verse in this chapter. It is another statement of the theme of the book that the people must be faithful to the Lord and obey (**ED**: "TRUST AND OBEY") his laws if they wish to be blessed and live in the land. In order to urge the Transjordanian tribes to continue to be faithful, Joshua reminded them of the way God had rewarded their faithfulness during the Conquest. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 3](#))

Observe the verbs Joshua used - **be very careful to observe, love, walk, hold fast**. Note also the qualifier "all His ways."

**Only be very careful** ("diligent heed" where "heed" = [shamar](#)) **to observe** ("just do it" - [asah](#)) **the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep (shamar) His commandments** - Note two commands (**be very careful to observe**) and the associated actions (love, walk, keep, hold fast, serve).

In his last farewell message in Joshua 24:14 the wise old general would charge Israel to **put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt**." Some think these were not actual idols (only "idols in their heart"), but I think they were actual tangible idols (cf Amos 5:26, Acts 7:42, 43+). The best way to put away idols is to be very careful...to observe...(and) to love Yahweh, for Jesus taught "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth ([Mammon](#))." (Mt 6:24+, cf The Expulsive Power of a New

Affection and "Vertical Vision")

**Young's Literal** has "be very watchful to **DO** the command and the law," which reminds us of James 1:22+ "**prove** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourselves **doers** of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." Yes "**DO**" the law, but be careful not to attempt to "DO" the law in your own strength. That's called **legalism**, which nullifies grace, grieves the Spirit, and ends in futility and frustration in your walk ("Been there, done that!") The only way Israel could **DO** the law was by the sanctifying power of the Spirit (Who was "alive and well" in the Old Testament contrary to what many think! Ge 1:2, Micah 3:8, 1Pe 1:10-11). They (like all believers) needed the Spirit in the Old Testament and so do we in the New Testament!

**THOUGHT** - Is Joshua's charge not a call to holiness and a holy walk? The way to receive and retain divine blessing is to trust and obey. This principle is timeless and was not just for Israel in the *promised land* but for followers of Jesus seeking to experience a *promised life*, an **abundant life** (Jn 10:10b) truly partaking of **His precious and magnificent promises** (2Pe 1:4+). If we **love** the LORD, we will show it by a Spirit empowered walk of obedience (cf Jn 14:15, 21, Jn 15:10). **Talk is cheap** as they say. We need to [substantiate](#) our *talk* with our *walk*. And remember that God's *commandments* **ALWAYS** come "*prepackaged*" with His *enablements*, His supernatural power to enable us to keep His commandments (see [circumcision of the heart below](#)) (cf the command to "work out your salvation in fear and trembling" with the "power" He supplies in Phil 2:13NLT+).

Note that Joshua is not calling for rigid obedience to the law for that would be **legalism**. He is calling for obedience from the heart (ultimately only possible from a [circumcised heart](#)), which is really the only obedience that is pleasing to the LORD.

**Utley** - This emphasizes not only lifestyle obedience, but also complete loyalty.

**And hold fast** (cling) **to Him** - The Hebrew verb [dabaq](#) means to cling to Him, to "stick like glue," and is the same word to describe a husband holding fast to his wife (Ge 2:24). This verb is especially apropos because Israel in the Old Testament is clearly called "the Wife of Jehovah" and so to **hold fast** or cling to her Husband, Israel would remain faithful to Him.

The Septuagint translates [dabaq](#) with the rare verb **proskeimai** which means 'maintain allegiance to or adhere to God. The idea is to be closely attached to, be involved in, absorbed in, be devoted to. **Proskeimai** is used in Dt 1:36+ to describe Caleb who "**followed** (Lxx - proskeimai) the LORD **fully**." Thus in that context to **hold fast** to the LORD describes one who wholeheartedly follows Yahweh! In Dt 4:4+ Moses said "you who **held fast** ([dabaq](#); Lxx - proskeimai) to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you." The implication of the charge to **hold fast to Him** is Joshua knew that they would be strong temptations to compromise His commandments (especially since Canaanite idol worshippers were still in many parts of the promised land!)

E'en so I love you and will love,  
and in your praise will sing,  
solely because you are my God  
and my eternal king.

**And serve** ([abad](#)) **Him** - **Serve** is translated in the Lxx with [latreuo](#) which speaks of religious service and includes the idea of worship. Note the first order of business is to obey which is tantamount to loving God, for Jesus said "If you **love Me**, you will **keep** My commandments." (Jn 14:15). The corollary is don't say you love Him, if you are not obeying Him! Love is an "action" verb.

**THOUGHT** - It is easy to fall into the trap of saying you are serving the Lord, when in truth you are not obeying the Lord. Saul fell into this snare and it cost him his kingdom! "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice...." (1 Sa 15:22-23, 27, 28, Ps 51:16, 17+, Isa 57:15). God always desires us to "**BE**" before we "**DO**." Our flesh wants to "**DO**" but not the "**BE** (obedient)!"

**With all your heart and with all your soul** (Dt 4:29+).-Note the two "**all's**." This is a powerful call to [holistic](#) holiness." This echoes the repeated charge by Moses to the second generation of Israel before they crossed the Jordan - Dt 5:32; 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20. To reiterate love for God is expressed through obedience to His covenant (see the Wife of Jehovah). As seen in the [related passages](#) above, God repeatedly emphasizes wholehearted obedience. How is this possible? See discussion below on [Circumcision of the Heart](#).

**Cyril Barber** adds "How simple this all sounds, and yet how difficult to perform. Faithfulness to the Lord necessitates continued diligence. It requires of us the same commitment to God's Word that the Lord required of Joshua (Joshua 1:8). And it is the only way to continuously walk in His ways, keep His commandments, hold fast to Him, and serve Him with all of our being!" ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#)) (ED: **SEE** [Filled with His Spirit/Richly Indwelt with His Word](#))

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**Hold fast** (cling, cleave) ([1692](#)) **dabaq** means to stick to, adhere to, cling to, join with, stay with, stay in close proximity to and which yields the noun form for "glue". Dabaq describes something that sticks or clings to something else (Ezek 29:4 and Ezekiel's tongue to roof of his mouth Ezek. 3:26). It is interesting that one of the most concentrated uses of "**dabaq**" in the OT is found in this short story of Ruth (Ru 1:14, 2:8, 2:21, 23-see [notes Ru 1:14; 2:8; 21; 23](#)) -- Ruth 2:8 "**stay** here with my maids"; Ruth 2:21 "You should **stay close** to my servants"; Ruth 2:23 "So she **stayed close** by the maids of Boaz";

**Dabaq** often refers to physical things sticking to each other, especially parts of the body as described vividly by Job who said "My bone **clings** to my skin and my flesh, and I have escaped only by the skin of my teeth" (Job 19:20, cf one's tongue "**stuck** to their palate" Job 29:10).

King Hezekiah heeded this instruction and "**clung to** the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses." and the result of his **clinging** was that "Jehovah was with him; wherever he went he prospered." (2Ki 18:6 18:7, cf : Ps 63:8)

A vivid picture of the meaning of **dabaq** is found in David's declaration "I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not **fasten its grip** on me." (Ps 101:3), picturing the power of sin to entrap the sinner. ([Spurgeon on Ps 101:3](#))

#### **Positive clinging and negative clinging:**

Deuteronomy 10:20 "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him **and cling to Him**, and you shall swear by His name.

Deuteronomy 11:22 "For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and **hold fast to Him**,

Deuteronomy 13:4 "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and **cling to Him**.

Deuteronomy 13:17 "**Nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand** in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers,

Deuteronomy 28:21 "The LORD will make the **pestilence cling to you** until He has consumed you from the land where you are entering to possess it.

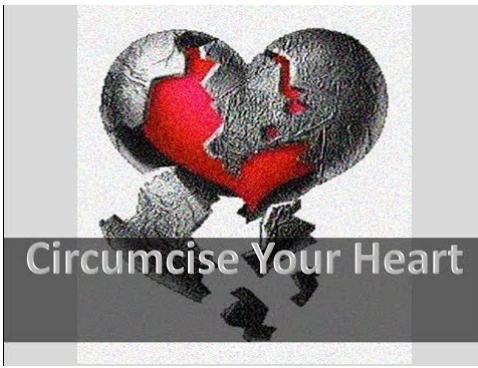
Deuteronomy 28:60 "He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and **they will cling to you**.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by **holding fast to Him**; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

**Serve** (worship) ([05647](#)) **abad** means to work (to cultivate, till - Ge 2:5, 15 - Lxx = [ergazomai](#) before the fall! Ge 3:23 after the fall, Lxx = [ergazomai](#)), to serve (be enslaved or hold in bondage - [Ex 6:6](#) - Lxx = katadouloo = make a slave; Lev 25:38, 39 Lxx = [douleuo](#))(Ge 14:4, 15:13, 14 - Lxx = [douleuo](#)), worship. It is interesting that abad is translated **labor** when Israel was in Egyptian bondage (Ex 1:13,14) but is translated **worship** after Israel was redeemed from slavery (Ex 3:12 translated in Lxx = [latreuo](#)). In Joshua 23:7NET (And Josh 23:16NET) **abad** is translated "**worship**" (Lxx = [latreuo](#)) = "you must not **worship** or bow down to them!" In sum, there is a very clear association between what/who one **serves** and what/who one **worships**. When the focus of the labor is the Lord, it is a religious service to worship Him. In other words our service is really an act of worship. Moreover, in these cases, the word does not have connotations of toilsome labor but instead of a joyful experience of liberation (Ex. 3:12; 4:23; 7:16; Josh. 24:15, 18). Unfortunately, this worship service was often given to false gods (Deut. 7:16; 2 Ki. 10:18, 19, 21-23).

**Abad in Joshua especially in Joshua 24!**- Jos. 16:10; Jos. 22:5; Jos. 22:27; Jos. 23:7; Jos. 23:16; Jos. 24:2; Jos. 24:14; Jos. 24:15; Jos. 24:16; Jos. 24:18; Jos. 24:19; Jos. 24:20; Jos. 24:21; Jos. 24:22; Jos. 24:24; Jos. 24:31

## **CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT**



### Passages on Spiritual Circumcision:

Leviticus 26:41+ I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies—or if their **uncircumcised** (Heb = [arel](#) = having foreskin) **heart** becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity,

Deuteronomy 10:16+ “So **circumcise** (Heb - [mul](#)) **your heart**, and stiffen your neck no longer. (ESV = “circumcise the foreskin of your heart”)

Deuteronomy 30:6+ “Moreover the LORD your God will **circumcise** (Heb - [mul](#)) **your heart** and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

Jeremiah 4:4 “**Circumcise** (Heb - [mul](#)) **yourselves** to the LORD And **remove the foreskins of your heart**, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds.”

Jeremiah 6:10 To whom shall I speak and give warning That they may hear? Behold, their ears are **closed** (Heb - [arel](#) = having foreskin = uncircumcised) And they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it.

Jeremiah 9:25-26 Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “that I will punish all who are circumcised (Heb - [mul](#)) and yet **uncircumcised** (Hebrew = orlah = foreskin)—Egypt and Judah, and Edom and the sons of Ammon, and Moab and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are **uncircumcised of heart.**”

Acts 7:51+ “You men who are stiff-necked and **uncircumcised in heart** and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.

Romans 2:28-29+ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Colossians 2:11+ and in Him **you were also circumcised** with a **circumcision made without hands**, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

One other point to make is to notice the repetition of the phrase **all your heart** in the context of the frequent call for obedience...

Deuteronomy 4:29+ “But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him **with all your heart** and all your soul.

Deuteronomy 6:5+ “You shall love the LORD your God **with all your heart** and with all your soul and with all your might.

Deuteronomy 10:12+ “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God **with all your heart** and with all your soul,

Deuteronomy 11:13+ “It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him **with all your heart** and all your soul,

Deuteronomy 13:3+ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God **with all your heart** and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 26:16+ "This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them **with all your heart** and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 30:2+ and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him **with all your heart** and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,

Deuteronomy 30:6+ "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God **with all your heart** and with all your soul, so that you may live.

Deuteronomy 30:10+ if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God **with all your heart** and soul.

Joshua 22:5+ "Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him **with all your heart** and with all your soul."

Joshua 23:14+ "Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in **all your hearts** and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.

1 Samuel 7:3 (Read this entire chapter 1Sa 7:1-17 for the context) Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD **with all your heart**, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and **direct your hearts** to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."

1 Samuel 12:20 Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD **with all your heart**."

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me **with all your heart**.

Joel 2:12+ "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to Me **with all your heart**, And with fasting, weeping and mourning;

Zephaniah 3:14 Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel! Rejoice and exult **with all your heart**, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Matthew 22:37 And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD **WITH ALL YOUR HEART**, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

Mark 12:30+ AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD **WITH ALL YOUR HEART**, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

Luke 10:27+ And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD **WITH ALL YOUR HEART**, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

The question arises "**How is wholehearted obedience humanly possible?**" My contention is that it is **not** humanly possible, that is possible by the natural man, for as Paul explained in Colossians we were **ALL** "formerly (BEFORE THE COLOSSIANS' HEARTS WERE "CIRCUMCISED" - Col 2:11+) **alienated** and **hostile** in mind, engaged in evil deeds," (Col 1:21+) and we were God's enemies (Ro 5:10+, cf Ro 8:7-8+). Therefore it is clear that the only way Israelites could truly love God **with all their heart and soul** was if they had a "new heart," which in OT terms would be a "circumcised heart."

Notice the the **stringent requirements** of God in Deuteronomy 10:12-13+. And then 3 verses later in Dt 10:16+ there is a "clue" as to how it is possible to fulfill the **stringent requirements**, for in that verse Moses tells Israel to "**circumcise** (Hebrew verb is **Perfect tense** - "denoting completed [or "perfected"] action" - which would imply a permanent change) **your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer**." The **NET Note** says the Hebrew literally reads "**circumcise the foreskin of**" (and adds that) "Reference to the Abrahamic covenant prompts Moses to recall the sign of that covenant, namely, physical circumcision (Ge 17:9-14). Just as that act signified total covenant obedience, so **spiritual circumcision** (cleansing of the heart) signifies more **internally a commitment to be pliable and obedient to the will of God** (cf. Dt 30:6+; Jer 4:4; Jer 9:26)."

The Holy Spirit is omnipresent in space and time (Ge 1:2), and He is the member of the Trinity who is convicting men and constraining them. Somehow, some men are moved by Him to begin then to seek God for themselves, and God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6+, cf Jer 29:13). The Gentile Cornelius was evidently one such man, so God then led Peter to go to Cornelius to instruct Him concerning Christ (Acts 10:1-2+).

Notice that in Jeremiah 4:4 the prophet issues two commands calling for his hearers (Jews in Judah about to be taken into captivity in Babylon) to experience **spiritual circumcision** calling on them...

**Circumcise** (Heb = [mul](#); Lxx = [peritemno](#)) yourselves to the LORD And **remove** the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds." (Jeremiah 4:4)

**Note** - **Circumcise** in the Lxx is a command in the [aorist imperative](#) ("Just do it!") which can only be carried out by [depending on the Holy Spirit to obey!](#) (cf Ro 2:29+). It is also in the passive voice, in this context clearly a "divine passive" (the Spirit of course being the effecting Agent.) The second command to **remove** (also [aorist imperative](#)) **the foreskins of your heart** is translated in the Lxx with [peritemno](#) and sklerokardia (skleros = hard + kardia = heart) which reads "**circumcise** the hardness of your hearts." Human beings cannot carry out this "internal circumcision" without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit! Clearly, Jeremiah is calling for spiritual circumcision just as Moses was calling for the second generation of Israelites to circumcise their hearts in Dt 10:16+

And so in calling for **circumcision of their hearts**, Moses and Jeremiah are not speaking of a human (natural) work, as with external circumcision, but a supernatural work of internal heart circumcision, a work made possible and carried out only by the Holy Spirit of God, not by the will of man. This would be the OT equivalent of being "born again" in the New Covenant and receiving a new heart (cf Ezekiel 36:26-27+, Jer 31:31-34+). It follows that when Abram believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness in Genesis 15:6+, the Spirit of God in effect "*circumcised*" Abram's heart.

As we look at Israel's behavior toward God beginning with the unbelief and disobedience of the majority of the nation at Kadesh-Barnea, it seems that many, if not most, of the Israelites in the Old Testament failed to believe in the manner of their physical father Abraham, and thus they failed to have a "circumcised heart," and were not even able to obey God's commandments from an internal motivation and energization. Any obedience that many of the Israelites did show to God had to be external obedience, energized by their flesh and not by the Holy Spirit. Caleb, Joshua, Moses, Aaron and doubtless others not named would of course be exceptions.

Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 would support this idea of "heart circumcision" as an absolute necessity to enable a person to truly obey God with **all one's heart and all one's soul** as in Dt 10:12. In his message to the Jews who were opposing his ministry (Acts 6:8-15+), he boldly (remember he was Spirit filled/empowered Acts 6:3, 5, 8+) declared "You men who are **stiff-necked** and **uncircumcised in heart** and ears are always (NOT JUST "SOMETIMES") resisting (present tense = continuous attitude/action) the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did (see COMMENT below)." (Acts 7:51+) The Greek word for **stiff-necked** is [sklerotrachelos](#) ([skleros](#) = hard + [trachelos](#) = the neck).

**COMMENT** - Read 2 Ki 17:7-20 which explains why God sent the fathers into exile. Israel stiffened their neck and would not listen to Yahweh, they rejected His statutes and His covenant and forsook all His commandments! A stiffened neck is a manifestation of an uncircumcised heart, which was the tragic condition of most of Israel, but God always preserved a remnant of Israel who had circumcised hearts (cf 2 Ki 19:18)

In the Septuagint Translation of Dt 10:16+ we find two similar Greek words, [sklerokardia](#) ([skleros](#) = hard + [kardia](#) = the heart) which translates as "the foreskin of your heart" and [skleruno](#) (from [skleros](#) = hard) which translates stiff-necked. Stephen explains that these Jews were continually (present tense and active voice = making a choice of their will) **resisting** ([antipipto](#)) **the Holy Spirit**, which clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit was the member of the Trinity Who produced heart circumcision in the **New Testament** (as Paul taught in Ro 2:29+, cf Col 2:11+) and also in the **Old Testament**. It also implies that in those Israelites who did not resist the work of the Holy Spirit, He would supernaturally "circumcise" their hearts. Notice Stephen's statement "**just as your fathers did**" indicates that OT Israelites had also been resistant to the work of the Spirit and thus their hearts remained uncircumcised and unable to obey God with **all** their heart and **all** their soul.

**Physical circumcision** was originally intended by God to be a sign that one had entered into the Abrahamic covenant (Ge 17:9, 10). In other words, physical circumcision was an outward act which testified that the individual had experienced an inner "circumcision" of their heart. While God is calling on Israel to "circumcise" their hearts, clearly no human being can carry out such an act without supernatural intervention. As the **ESV Study Bible** says that "Circumcision of the heart comes from renewal through the Spirit of Christ." God's charge is not just for Israel to "get a grip" and change their rebellious attitude toward Him! Our hearts are intractably deceitful and sick (Jer 17:9) and we are all by nature, hard hearted, stiff necked rebels toward God and His Word, **unless and until** He graciously brings about an individual's "heart circumcision" in response to that individual's **faith** - in other words, "spiritual circumcision" is by grace through faith, which sounds like salvation in the NT, because it is!

Of course, some Israelites did yield to the work of the Spirit and they would have been part of the **believing remnant of Israel**.

Obviously Joshua and Caleb were prime examples of the **remnant**, for God Himself testified that "they have followed the LORD fully." (Nu 32:12+), something they could not have accomplished without a "circumcised heart," and the sanctifying influence (power) of the Holy Spirit. We need to remember that the Agent of regeneration and of subsequent sanctification in both testaments is the Holy Spirit.

### Have you experienced supernatural circumcision of your heart?

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#### Related Resources:

- See more notes below on circumcision of the heart
  - See related comments on Deuteronomy 30:6 and comments on Deuteronomy 10:16
  - [Scriptures on Circumcision](#)
  - [Excursus on Circumcision](#) - duplicates some of "Scriptures on Circumcision"
  - [What is circumcision of the heart? | GotQuestions.org](#)
  - [Integrity - A Whole Heart](#)
  - [Give Me An Undivided Heart](#)
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#### QUESTION - [What was the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament?](#)

**ANSWER** - The role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is much like [His role in the New Testament](#). When we speak of the role of the Holy Spirit, we can discern four general areas in which the Holy Spirit works: 1) regeneration, 2) indwelling (or filling), 3) restraint, and 4) empowerment for service. Evidence of these areas of the Holy Spirit's work is just as present in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament.

**The first area of the Spirit's work is in the process of regeneration.** Another word for regeneration is "rebirth," from which we get the concept of being "born again." The classic proof text for this can be found in John's gospel: "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). This begs the question: what does this have to do with the Holy Spirit's work in the Old Testament? Later on in His dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus has this to say to him: "You are Israel's teacher...and do you not understand these things?" (John 3:10). The point Jesus was making is that Nicodemus should have known the truth that the Holy Spirit is the source of new life because it is revealed in the Old Testament. For instance, Moses told the Israelites prior to entering the Promised Land that "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live" (Deuteronomy 30:6). **This circumcision of the heart is the work of God's Spirit and can be accomplished only by Him.** We also see the theme of regeneration in Ezekiel 11:19-20 and Ezekiel 36:26-29.

The fruit of the Spirit's regenerating work is faith (Ephesians 2:8). Now we know that there were men of faith in the Old Testament because Hebrews 11 names many of them. If faith is produced by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, then this must be the case for Old Testament saints who looked ahead to the cross, believing that what God had promised in regard to their redemption would come to pass. They saw the promises and "welcomed them from a distance" (Hebrews 11:13), accepting by faith that what God had promised, He would also bring to pass.

**The second aspect of the Spirit's work in the Old Testament is indwelling, or filling.** Here is where the major difference between the Spirit's roles in the Old and New Testaments is apparent. The New Testament teaches the **permanent** indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20). When we place our faith in Christ for salvation, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. The Apostle Paul calls this permanent indwelling the "guarantee of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:13-14). In contrast to this work in the New Testament, the indwelling in the Old Testament was selective and temporary. The Spirit "came upon" such Old Testament people as Joshua (Numbers 27:18 = "a man **in whom** is the Spirit"), David (1 Samuel 16:12-13) and even Saul (1 Samuel 10:10). In the book of Judges, we see the Spirit "coming upon" the various judges whom God raised up to deliver Israel from their oppressors. The Holy Spirit came upon these individuals for specific tasks. The indwelling was a sign of God's favor upon that individual (in the case of David), and if God's favor left an individual, the Spirit would depart (e.g., in Saul's case in 1 Samuel 16:14). Finally, the Spirit "coming upon" an individual doesn't always indicate that person's spiritual condition (e.g., Saul, Samson, and many of the judges). **(ED: THE SAME COULD BE SAID OF BELIEVERS TODAY WHEN THEY FALL INTO SOME SIN OR BACKSLIDE)** So, while in the New Testament the Spirit only indwells believers and that indwelling is permanent, the Spirit came upon certain Old Testament individuals for a specific task, irrespective of their spiritual condition. Once the task was completed, the Spirit presumably departed from that person. **(ED: THIS IS A PRESUMPTION AND NOT CLEARLY STATED IN THE OT - DID THE SPIRIT LEAVE JOSHUA ALL THE DAYS HE LED ISRAEL AND EVEN TO THE END WHEN HE EXHORTED THEM AT AGE 110 TO BE FAITHFUL?)**

**The third aspect of the Spirit's work in the Old Testament is His restraint of sin.** Genesis 6:3 would seem to indicate that the



Holy Spirit restrains man's sinfulness, and that restraint can be removed when God's patience regarding sin reaches a "boiling point." This thought is echoed in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8, when in the end times a growing apostasy will signal the coming of God's judgment. Until the preordained time when the "man of lawlessness" (v. 3) will be revealed, the Holy Spirit restrains the power of Satan and will release it only when it suits His purposes to do so.

**The fourth and final aspect of the Spirit's work in the Old Testament is the granting of ability for service** Much like the way the spiritual gifts operate in the New Testament, the Spirit would gift certain individuals for service. Consider the example of [Bezalel](#) in Exodus 31:2-5 who was gifted to do much of the artwork relating to the Tabernacle. Furthermore, recalling the selective and temporary indwelling of the Holy Spirit discussed above, we see that these individuals were gifted to perform certain tasks, such as ruling over the people of Israel (e.g., Saul and David).

**We could also mention the Spirit's role in creation.** Genesis 1:2 speaks of the Spirit "hovering over the waters" and superintending the work of creation. In a similar fashion, the Spirit is responsible for the work of the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) as He is bringing people into the kingdom of God through regeneration.

**All in all, the Spirit performs much of the same functions in Old Testament times as He does in this current age. The major difference is the permanent indwelling of the Spirit in believers now.** As Jesus said regarding this change in the Spirit's ministry, "But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:17). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**C H Spurgeon** - Circumcision in Deuteronomy 30:6 Mark of Covenant Grace - Faith's Checkbook

HERE we read of the **true circumcision**.

**Note the author of it:** "The Lord thy God." He alone can deal effectually with our hearts and take away their carnality and pollution. To make us love God with all our hearts and souls is a miracle of grace which only the Holy Ghost can work. We must look to the Lord alone for this and never be satisfied with anything short of it.

**Note where this circumcision is wrought:** it is not of the flesh, but of the Spirit (Ro 2:29). It is the essential mark of the covenant of grace. Love to God is the indelible token of the chosen seed; by this secret seal, the election of grace is certified to the believer. We must see to it that we trust in no outward ritual, but are sealed in heart by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

**Note what the result is:** "that thou mayest live." To be carnally minded is death (Ro 8:13a). In the overcoming of the flesh we find life and peace (Ro 8:6) If we mind the things of the Spirit, we shall live ( Ro 8:11, Ro 8:13b).

Oh, that Jehovah, our God, may complete His gracious work upon our inner natures, that in the fullest and highest sense we may live unto the Lord. Amen

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**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**Take diligent heed, &c.** Joshua thinks it not enough merely to dismiss them with the commendations which their zeal and fidelity had so richly merited, but in the spirit of a true servant of God, adds to his encomiums the most pious counsels and exhortations. It is not simply a general admonition relative to their religious duties, in which case one or two brief intimations would have sufficed, but the expressions are remarkably varied and accumulated, to show in the most forcible manner the unspeakable importance to every child of man of a life of devoted obedience. They were to give the most diligent heed to themselves to see that the love of God, as the great ruling principle of action, was deeply seated in their hearts; this must be evinced by the universality of their obedience, extending to every divine precept, and still further illustrated by the constancy, humility, resolution, and affection which were to characterize their walk. Counsel like this can never be unseasonable or superfluous. Even the most established Christian, whose progress in holiness has hitherto been most exemplary, cannot deem himself beyond the need of similar exhortations. As long as he abides in the flesh he needs to be 'put in remembrance of these things, though he knows them, and be established in the present truth.' Especially does he need these kindly monitions when settled down, or about to be settled down, in a state of peace and prosperity; for such a state is one of peculiar danger to his spiritual interests. These disbanded soldiers of Israel were now returning to the bosom of their families, and the peaceful prosecution of their worldly business. They needed, therefore, to be reminded of the danger, of which Moses had long before warned them, of forgetting the Lord their God while enjoying 'houses which they built not, wells which they digged not, and vineyards which they planted not.' A constant mindfulness of God accordingly was the great object of Joshua's solicitude for his departing brethren, and in his example we see the spirit of a Christian parent or guardian, and what kind of counsel he will be most anxious to impart to the children of his charge when about to retire from his immediate control and enter upon the wide stage of action in the world..

- Jos 22:7,8 14:13 Ge 14:19 47:7,10 Ex 39:43 1Sa 2:20 2Sa 6:18,20 2Ch 30:18 Lu 2:34 24:50 Heb 7:6,7
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A BLESSING ON THE EASTERN TRIBES

So Joshua blessed ([barak](#); Lxx- [eulogeo](#)) them and sent them away, and they went to their tents - Blessed...sent...went. Now that is the way to leave! Job well done. Fully accomplished. Their obedience was the pathway to their blessing!

**THOUGHT** - Are you experiencing the good hand of the Lord upon you life (see [The Hand of the Lord](#)), they good hand of blessing from our "Joshua" Jesus? If not take time to pray Psalm 139:23-24 and confess any anxious thoughts or hurtful ways and walk forth into this day filled with His Word (be sure you read it) and filled with His Spirit (Col 3:16+, Eph 5:18+) fully follow what His Word and Spirit say (cf Nu 14:24+) and experience His blessing in your heart and upon your life, now and in the future when you hear "Well done, good and faithful servant." (Mt 25:21).

**Madvig on Joshua blessed them** - Ritual blessing was viewed as an effective means of guaranteeing the well-being of another. It was not regarded as a magic incantation; rather, the one pronouncing the blessing was acting on behalf of God. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 3](#))

**Cyril Barber** has an interesting note on Joshua blessing the people - Then Joshua blessed them. In Scripture we are told that "the lesser is blessed by the greater" (Hebrews 7:7). Blessing is the enrichment of someone or something beyond what is expected. When applied to people it involves making them happy. For example, in Psalm 1:1, because there is no verb in the original, the truest translation of "How blessed is the man who ..." is "O the happiness of the man who..." Someone who is in vital touch with the Members of the Godhead has the God-given power to bless others. Others may mouth the words, but **they lack the unction of the Holy Spirit**. Joshua was God's representative to the people, and he possessed the intrinsic power to bless others." ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

**Utley** - "Joshua blessed them" This seems to be very similar to the blessing of Jacob, Moses, and the patriarchal blessings in general. These were seen almost as an independent power performing good on behalf of the people to whom they were spoken. This reflects the Hebrew concept of the power of the spoken word (cf. Genesis 1; Isa. 55:11; John 1:1).

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**Blessed** (Lxx = [eulogeo](#))(01288) **barak** is a verb which literally can mean to kneel (to go to one's knees - Camel in Ge 24:11, Solomon in 2Chr 6:13) as contrasted with standing position or even a bowing at the waist). And so barak can refer to an act of adoration sometimes on bended knee. To give divine blessings (Ge 1:22, 9:1-7) To esteem greatly or adore God for His blessings (Ge 24:48, Ps 103:1) To invoke blessings upon another (Ge 24:60, 27:4, 27) The Hebrew is usually translated in the Lxx with [eulogeo](#) which literally means to speak well of and in this context to pronounce or bestow a blessing or gracious benefit upon the recipient. The English definition of to bless means "pronounce words in a religious rite, to confer or invoke divine favor upon; ask God to look favorably."

**Barak in Joshua** - Jos. 8:33; Jos. 14:13; Jos. 17:14; Jos. 22:6; Jos. 22:7; Jos. 22:33; Jos. 24:10

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

So Joshua blessed them. Spake respectfully of their faithful services, wished them every spiritual and temporal good, and prayed earnestly to God to protect and prosper them. They undoubtedly returned with all convenient expedition. It had been a long absence, and the meeting was no doubt proportionably happy. Here below, business, journeys, voyages, and other casualties are continually separating the dearest relatives; but they are glad to get home in peace. How much happier for the Christian pilgrim, when his warfare of life is accomplished, and receiving the divine blessing, to cross Jordan, and meet his brethren in glory, the family of God!

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Joshua 22:7 Now to the one half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the other half Joshua gave a possession among their brothers westward beyond the Jordan. So when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them,

- Jos 13:29-31 17:1-12
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



See Bashan at top of purple (click to enlarge)

## MANASSEH'S ALLOTMENTS EAST AND WEST OF JORDAN

**Now** - Now marks a change in the subject.

**To the one half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan**(see part of this name in map above just above "East Manasseh") - This is the eastern aspect of the tribe of Manasseh. See comments on Josh. 17:1–13.

**But to the other half Joshua gave a possession among their brothers westward beyond the Jordan. So when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed ([barak](#); Lxx- [eulogeo](#)) them** - Notice the designation **the other half Joshua** referring of course to west Manasseh. Primarily the clan of Makir of the tribe of Manasseh settled on the east side of the Jordan north in the land of Bashan (see map above). The rest of the tribe settled on the west side and received their inheritance as it is recorded in Joshua 17:1-18+.

**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**To the one half of the tribe of Manasseh, &c.** This appears to come in here as a parenthesis, intimating the reason why the tribe was divided into two parts. Moses had before assigned one half of them their lot on the other side Jordan.

Joshua 22:8 and said to them, "**Return** to your tents with great riches and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, iron, and with very many clothes; **divide** the spoil of your enemies with your brothers."

- **Return**: De 8:9-14,17,18 2Ch 17:5 32:27 Pr 3:16 1Co 15:58 Heb 11:26
- **divide**: Nu 31:27 1Sa 30:24 Ps 68:12
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE COMMANDER JOSHUA

## ISSUES HIS PARTING COMMANDS

and said to them, "**Return to your tents with great riches and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, iron, and with very many clothes; divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers**- The **spoil** after 7 years of conquest must have been substantial and they were to share it with their brothers who had remained on the east side (and presumably provided protection for the families). This command is needed for in the sin nature of every heart lurks the sin of greed.

[Utley](#) has an interesting note - This shows three of the four ancient sources of wealth: (1) livestock; (2) weights of precious metals; and (3) clothing. The one source that is not specifically mentioned here is foodstuffs, but it is implied in the term "wealth". The eastern tribes received part of the spoils of the defeated cities in Canaan.

**THOUGHT** - We believe that when we obey God, we will be gainers, not losers. Perhaps not always in this obvious material sense, but in real, wonderful gains none the less. (Guzik)

**Francis Schaeffer** - If we use a little (**ED**: "*SANCTIFIED*") imagination, we can feel the tremendous emotion involved in the parting of these comrades at arms. We can picture the men going through the camp, finding the friends with whom they had fought side by side, and saying good-bye to some who had even saved their lives. They shook hands and they parted, as worshipers of God, as friends, and as companions in war. There is a comradeship among men in titanic moments that is one of the great "mystiques" of life. It is the explanation of the mystique of the rope—two men on a mountain battling nature together, depending for their very lives on a common rope. ([Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History](#))

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren**. Your brethren that have remained on the other side of the Jordan, protecting your families, flocks, and goods. It is not implied, however, that those who remained at home were to have an equal share of the spoil, as this would have been manifestly unjust from their superior numbers and inferior claims. See on Nu 31:27.

**Joshua 22:9** The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home and departed from the sons of Israel at Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession which they had possessed, according to the command of the LORD through Moses.

- **the country of Gilead:** Jos 13:11,25,31 Nu 32:1,26,29,39,40 De 3:15,16 Ps 60:7
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WESTERN 2.5 TRIBES RETURN HOME AFTER CONQUERING THE CANAANITES

The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home and departed from the sons of Israel at Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead ([map](#)), to the land of their possession ([achuzzah](#)) which they had possessed, according to the command (Hebrew literally = "mouth"; Lxx - prostagma = an official order) of the LORD through Moses (literally "by the hand of Moses") - Recall that [Shiloh](#) (see [map just north of name "Benjamin"](#)) was the site of the tabernacle (and the altar of Yahweh) and also the place chosen in Ephraim for the allotment committee's work in allocating the last seven parts of the land to the tribes. The east tribes were returning to Gilead, which is on the east side of the Jordan.

**Madvig** - During the apportioning of the land to the various tribes, Shiloh had been selected as the place of worship. The Tent of Meeting had been set up there (Josh 18:1), and it was still in Shiloh in the time of Eli the priest and Samuel the prophet (1 Sa 1:3; 3:21; et al.). ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

Note the designation **according to the command** which would validate the eastern territory as from the Lord even though not in the original promised land. "For just as the crossing of the Jordan (chs. 3–4) was regarded as Israel's entrance into the Promised Land, so now some of the people believed that the warriors of the two and one-half tribes were leaving God's land when they crossed the Jordan to return home." (Madvig)

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**Possessed** ([0270](#)) ('**achaz**) to grasp, take hold, take possession. First use is dramatic "ram caught in a thicket" (Ge 22:13, cf Ex 4:4) Figuratively of anguish taking hold ("**gripped**") someone( Ex 15:14) and "trembling **grips** them." (Ex 15:15). "**Caught**" in Jdg 1:6. "**Seized** him and slew him" (Jdg 12:6) Samson "**took hold** of the doors" (Jdg 16:3) and "Philistines **seized** him" (Jdg 16:21)

**Gilbrant** - This verb appears 68 times in the Hebrew Bible, with the basic sense of "to seize." It has a wide variety of usages. The

verb often means simply "to seize" or "to hold" objects (e.g., gate by Samson, Judg. 16:3 or Esau's heel by Jacob, Gen. 25:26). Humans can be the object held, generally held prior to meeting a violent end (Judg. 12:6). It is used as an architectural term, denoting things "attached" to other things (1 Ki. 6:10). An idiom formed with this verb is "to be taken" by lot or "to be selected" (1 Chr. 24:6). A second idiom is "to be overcome" with some intense force, either emotive (fear, Exo. 15:14f) or physical pain (childbirth, Jer. 13:21; death on a battlefield, 2 Sam. 1:9). There are metaphorical usages of the verb. Yahweh will lead a believer by grasping one's hand (Ps. 73:23). One mentally grasps a concept (Ecc. 7:18). Finally, in the Niphal stem, the verb is used in the sense of "acquiring" property. The use of the Niphal here is reflexive, in that one takes the property for oneself. In a society where Yahweh served as the divine Landlord over a land of inalienable property, seizure was the only way to acquire more land. ([Complete Biblical Library - Incredible Resource](#))

**Herbert Wolf** - The basic idea of the root is "to take hold of." Jacob "took hold" of Esau's heel (Genesis 25:26); Samson "took hold" of the city gate (Judges 16:3); Ruth "held" the cloak as Boaz poured six measures of barley into it (Ruth 3:15). The curtains of Xerxes's palace were held by cords of linen on silver rings (Esther 1:6). Men could "hold" or "wear" swords (Song 3:8). Pertaining to architecture, it is used of the floors of the side rooms that were "attached" to the temple by cedar beams (1 Kings 6:10), or of the footstool attached to the throne (2 Chron. 9:18, the only Hophal usage). Once it is applied to "bolting" the city gates (Neh. 7:3). Sometimes "to take hold of" has the violent connotation of "seize" or "catch." The Israelites caught Adoni-bezek (Judges 1:6) and Jephthah caught and killed the men of Ephraim unable to pronounce "Shibboleth" (Judges 12:6, 2 Samuel 2:21). A ram is caught in a thicket (Genesis 22:13) and a fish in a net (Eccles. 9:12). Job says that God has "grasped me by the neck and shaken me to pieces" (Job 16:12). "To take" can also refer to selection, as the men taken by lot (1 Chron. 24:6) or the two percent of the plunder taken as the Levites' share (Numbers 31:30, 47). Metaphorically, the righteous man is said to "hold to his way" (Job 17:9). One can "grasp" an idea or "take hold" of folly (Eccles. 7:18; Eccles. 2:3). God in his grace will "take hold of my right hand" as a sign of his guidance and favor (Psalm 73:23; cf Isaiah 45:1, ḥāzaq). Psalm 139:10 speaks of God's right hand leading and "laying hold" of the Psalmist. In Deut. 32:41 the Lord sharpens his sword "to take hold of justice." A common idiom is to be seized by pain, sorrow or fear, often as a woman in childbirth. Anguish grips the enemies of Israel (Exodus 15:14-15), but Israel herself suffers labor pains as she faces exile (Jeremiah 13:21). King Saul was seized by the agony of death on the battlefield (2 Samuel 1:9), and the nations of the world endure pain and anguish as the day of the Lord approaches (Isaiah 13:8-9). In the Niphal stem the verb usually means "to acquire property," thus overlapping with the noun 'aḥūzzā "possession." Sometimes both noun and verb occur in the same verse (Joshua 22:9, 19). The Miphal may arrive at this meaning through its reflexive use, "to take for oneself." The property in view is almost always land. Hamor invited Jacob and his sons to "acquire property" in Shechem and Canaan (Genesis 34:10). Later, Joseph gave his father and brothers possession of the best land of Egypt (Genesis 47:11, 27), but only as a temporary residence. ([Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#))

**Strong's** - 1) grasp, take hold, seize, take possession 1a) (Qal) to grasp, take hold of 1b) (Niphal) to be caught, grasped, be settled 1c) (Piel) to enclose, overlay 1d) (Hophal) fastened

**'Achaz** - 63v - acquire property(1), acquired property(1), attached(1), bolt(1), catch(1), caught(3), drawn(2), fastened(3), grasp(2), grasped(1), grasps(1), gripped(1), grips(1), handle(1), have possessions(1), held(4), held fast(1), hold(3), holding(1), inserted(1), lay hold(1), obscures(1), possessed(1), seized(10), seizes(3), take hold(6), take possession(1), taken(2), taken hold(3), takes hold(2), took(1), took hold(3), trapped(1), wielders(1). Gen. 22:13; Gen. 25:26; Gen. 34:10; Gen. 47:27; Exod. 4:4; Exod. 15:14; Exod. 15:15; Num. 31:30; Num. 31:47; Num. 32:30; Deut. 32:41; Jos. 22:9; Jos. 22:19; Jdg. 1:6; Jdg. 12:6; Jdg. 16:3; Jdg. 16:21; Jdg. 20:6; Ruth 3:15; 2 Sam. 1:9; 2 Sam. 2:21; 2 Sam. 4:10; 2 Sam. 6:6; 2 Sam. 20:9; 1 Ki. 1:51; 1 Ki. 6:6; 1 Ki. 6:10; 1 Chr. 13:9; 1 Chr. 24:6; 2 Chr. 9:18; 2 Chr. 25:5; Neh. 7:3; Est. 1:6; Job 16:12; Job 17:9; Job 18:9; Job 18:20; Job 21:6; Job 23:11; Job 26:9; Job 30:16; Job 38:13; Ps. 48:6; Ps. 56:1; Ps. 73:23; Ps. 77:4; Ps. 119:53; Ps. 137:9; Ps. 139:10; Eccl. 2:3; Eccl. 7:18; Eccl. 9:12; Cant. 2:15; Cant. 3:4; Cant. 3:8; Cant. 7:8; Isa. 5:29; Isa. 13:8; Isa. 21:3; Isa. 33:14; Jer. 13:21; Jer. 49:24; Ezek. 41:6

**Joshua 22:10** When they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a large altar in appearance.

- **the sons:** This verse should probably be rendered, "And when they came to 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, Then built an altar by (or beyond, {al}) Jordan, a great altar to the view." It would appear, that when they came to the river, they formed the purpose of building the altar; and when they crossed it they put that purpose into execution. It is evident that they did not build it west of the Jordan, for that was not in their territories, and the next verse expressly says that it was built over against the land of Canaan.
- **built:** Jos 22:25-28 4:5-9 24:26,27 Ge 28:18 31:46-52
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **THE PROVOCATION: ANOTHER ALTAR - A LARGE ONE!**

**When they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a large altar in appearance** - So they build an altar next to the Jordan. The question arises was it on the western or eastern side. Commentaries disagree. The altar had to be large to be easily seen, for as the story unfolds it was to serve as a witness of the unity of the eastern 2.5 with the western 9.5 tribes.

**Paul Enns** - When the people got to the edge of the Jordan River, suddenly somebody said, "Wait a minute. I see some problems here. Suppose after we go back, sometime in the future, someone should say, 'You can't really be God's people--you're on the wrong side of the river!'" And so, in order to safeguard their future connection with the rest of God's people, they decided to build a monument. They built an altar there. It looked like the altars that had been used before by people of God for worship and sacrifice. But it was never intended for that. Their motives were pure. They simply felt they must have some kind of a monument so that, when people asked about their connection with God's people, they would have a witness. Then they could say, "There stands the altar, which is a monument. It tells the story. We fought for seven years; we fulfilled our obligation to our people; then we came home." ([This Land is Your Land](#).)

**Ryrie** - It was a needless act, for God had ordained that all the males should appear at the sanctuary three times each year (see Ex. 23:14) in order to preserve the unity of the tribes.

**Utley** - **built an altar there by the Jordan, a large altar in appearance**" We learn from vv. 28–29 that it was a large replica of (1) the altar of sacrifice which was in the tabernacle or (2) the altar on Mt. Ebal (cf. 8:30–35). Apparently it was not for the purpose of sacrifice, but for a memorial like so many others (stone heaps) in Joshua.

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 10-20. Here is the care of the separated tribes to keep their hold of Canaan's religion. At first sight it seemed a design to set up an altar against the altar at Shiloh. God is jealous for his own institutions; we should be so too, and afraid of every thing that looks like, or leads to idolatry. Corruptions in religion are best dealt with at first. But their prudence in following up this zealous resolution is no less commendable. Many an unhappy strife would be prevented, or soon made up, by inquiries into the matter of the offence. The remembrance of great sins committed formerly, should engage us to stand on our guard against the beginnings of sin; for the way of sin is down-hill. We are all concerned to reprove our neighbour when he does amiss, lest we suffer sin upon him, Leviticus 19:17. The offer made that they should be welcome to come to the land where the Lord's tabernacle was, and settle there, was in the spirit of true Israelites.

**Alan Redpath** has an interesting explanation of why they 2.5 eastern tribes erected an altar on the western side of the Jordan -

"When the departing tribes came to the border, to the brink of the river, as recorded in Joshua 22:24, they suddenly bethought themselves, "Now, suppose we go back to the other side of this river, our children and future generations will say, concerning us, 'What have you got to do with the people of God, anyway? They live over there, you live here. You have nothing to do with them, for you never did any of the fighting, you never helped subdue the enemy. Why, what have you got to do with the people of Israel?'" And so they erected an altar on the very westward brink of Jordan, not for sacrifice, but as a witness to their oneness with the people on the other side of Jordan. When the other tribes heard what was happening, they immediately jumped to false conclusions and presumed that this altar was for worship and sacrifice, that it showed division among the people of God, that it indicated that these two and a half tribes who were departing from them were apostate, and no longer worshiping God, but rebellious against Him and indifferent to His law. Therefore they presumed there was schism right in the very heart of the people of God. So the tribes which had remained with Joshua in Canaan prepared to attack the supposed apostates. Before doing so, however, they sent up a committee to discover exactly what the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh were doing, and to complain very frankly of their action. The committee accused them of being disloyal and in rebellion against God and warned them of the awful consequences to them and to all Israel if they continued in their action. These two and a half tribes had, in fact, no trouble at all in convincing the committee that their motives were perfectly pure, and that they had not intended their altar for worship, but as a testimony. They were not going to sacrifice to another God; they were simply raising a witness which declared their unity with their brethren. This easily proved that their motive was pure and sincere and the others were completely wrong in their judgment. What might have ended in tragedy, ended, indeed, in close ties of fellowship!

**(ED: APPLICATION) What lessons we have just here! What peril lies in the incompatibility of Christian with Christian! How easily misunderstandings occur, and with what damaging results! How rapidly**

they spread, and the farther they go the worse they get, until often an evangelical church is completely ruined by this very sin. Why is it we are all so ready to listen to gossip? Why is it that we are so quick to impute the worst motives to other people? Why do we believe so quickly a rumor concerning another person's character, and then repeat it with hundredfold exaggeration? ([Perils to Avoid from Victorious Christian Living: Studies in the Book of Joshua](#))

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**The borders of Jordan.** Heb. גלילות geliloth, properly the windings, meanderings made by the Jordan in its course, sometimes assuming almost a circular form, in accordance with the sense of the original term, which is used in some cases to signify a ring. The altar was doubtless erected on the eastern side of the Jordan, but it might have been situated upon a projecting tongue or promontory of land, that extended into the borders of Canaan proper. The reader will observe, moreover, that the word 'are,' being printed in Italics, does not occur in the original, so that we may as properly render it 'is,' and understand the relative 'that' of the river Jordan.

**A great altar to see to.** Very conspicuous. Heb. 'an altar great to the sight.' A vast mass of earth, stones, &c., elevated to a commanding height and visible at a great distance; intended merely as a memorial to all future ages that they belonged to the tribes of Israel, and that they were worshippers of Israel's God, but made in imitation of the altar of burnt-offering at the tabernacle. Their motive in this was an apprehension that at some future period they might be disowned by their brethren on account of their not having their inheritance in the land of Canaan proper.

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### Joshua 22:10-34 Beware Of Jumping To Conclusions

Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools. — Ecclesiastes 7:9

Today's Scripture: Joshua 22:10-34

The e-mail contained nothing but Bible verses, and it came from someone I didn't know very well at a time when there was disagreement among members of a church committee I was on. I assumed that the verses were aimed at me in an accusing way, and I was angry that someone who didn't know all the issues involved would use Scripture to attack me.

Before I could retaliate, my husband, Jay, suggested I give her the benefit of the doubt instead of assuming the worst. "Perhaps there's an innocent explanation," he said. I couldn't imagine what it would be, but I followed his advice and called. "Thank you so much for calling," she said. "My computer has a virus and it spewed out e-mails using pieces of our Sunday school lesson to random people in my address book." Gulp. I'm thankful that God used Jay to keep me from creating a problem where none existed.

By jumping to a conclusion that was logical but untrue, I came dangerously close to unnecessary conflict. The Israelites did the same thing. They were ready to go to war because they wrongly assumed that the altar built by their brothers was a sign of rebellion against God (Josh. 22:9-34). To avoid making wrong judgments, we must be careful to get the facts right. By: Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When you're forming your opinions,  
Do it carefully—go slow;  
Hasty judgments oft are followed  
By regretting—that I know.  
—Anon.

To avoid an embarrassing fall, don't jump to a wrong conclusion.

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### Joshua 22:10-16,21-29 Urge To Jump

If you hear someone . . . saying, "Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants," . . . then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. —Deut. 13:12-14

Today's Scripture: Joshua 22:10-16,21-29

In April 2006, a stuntman tried to jump from the top of the Empire State Building. At the last minute, authorities restrained him and charged him with reckless endangerment. After a judge had looked carefully at all the facts, he dismissed the charges, noting that the accused had taken steps to ensure the safety of others. With a parachute strapped to his back, Jeb Corliss had safely made 3,000 previous jumps, including leaps from the 1,483-foot Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur and the Eiffel Tower.

As extreme as Corliss' sport is, it is safer than the kind of leap that almost took place in Joshua 22. Israel had just engaged in a 7-year conquest of Canaan. Suddenly, an alarming rumor raised the possibility of civil war. Word spread that the families who settled east of the Jordan River had built an idolatrous altar (v.10).

A national catastrophe was averted that day, only because someone took time to investigate the facts and listen to both sides of the issue (vv.16-29). A terrible, costly misunderstanding was avoided. The wisdom of God was honored (v.31). Our loving Lord taught His people that the cost of listening is not nearly as great as the cost of jumping to wrong conclusions. Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lest judgment should be based on wrong conclusion,  
Distinguish right from vain and carnal pleading;  
The world is rife with error and confusion;  
Rely alone on God the Spirit's leading.  
—Mollon

Jumping to wrong conclusions is one of the greatest of all dangers.

**Joshua 22:11 And the sons of Israel heard it said, 'Behold, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, on the side belonging to the sons of Israel.'**

- **heard:** Lev 17:8,9 De 12:5-7 13:12-14 Joh 20:1,12
- **in the region of the Jordan:** Jos 2:7 3:14-16 Jdg 12:5 Joh 1:28
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THE 9.5 TRIBES HEAR ABOUT THE ALTAR

The lapse of time between the building and the sighting of the large altar is not specified. Obviously if it were a large altar it would have taken a while to build it.

**And the sons of Israel heard it said, 'Behold, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, on the side belonging to the sons of Israel -** In context the phrase **sons of Israel** refers to the other 9.5 tribes who had their inheritance on the western side of the Jordan. The word "**behold**" was used to get the attention regarding this "alternative" altar. They soon jumped to a false conclusion which could have had disastrous results for the nation, if cooler heads had not prevailed!

**John Calvin** - Here, then, we have an illustrious display of piety (**ED: REACTION OF THE WESTERN TRIBES**), teaching us that if we see the pure worship of God corrupted, we must be strenuous, to the utmost of our ability, in vindicating it.

[The Believer's Study Bible](#) - Having heard about the altar, the western tribes prepared for war (v. 12) and sent representatives (vv. 13-15) with a warning (vv. 16-20). They acted on the basis of such directives as Lev. 17:8, 9; Deut. 12:2-5; 13:12-15. They demonstrated zeal not only to avoid disobedience, but also to keep their fellows from disobedience which would anger the Lord (cf. Gal. 6:1, 2; 1 Cor. 5:1-13). However, they balanced their jealousy for the glory of the Lord with wisdom and humility, allowing the possibility that the actions of their brothers had been misunderstood. Therefore, an embassy was sent directly to the persons involved (cf. Matt. 18:15) to conduct an investigation before any action was taken.

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**on the side belonging to the sons of Israel** - This may be deemed conclusive proof that the site of the altar was on the east of the Jordan, in the inheritance of the two tribes and a half, and not on the west. There would have been no cause of suspecting it designed for sacrifice, had it been built on the Canaan side of Jordan.

**Joshua 22:12 When the sons of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the sons of Israel gathered themselves at Shiloh to go up against them in war.**



- **the whole congregation:** De 13:15 Jdg 20:1-11 Ac 11:2,3 Ro 10:2 Ga 4:17,18
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

#### **THESE PASSAGES GIVE SOME JUSTIFICATION AS TO WHY THE WESTERN TRIBES WANTED TO GO TO WAR AGAINST THE EASTERN TRIBES**

Leviticus 17:8-9+ “Then you shall say to them, ‘Any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, 9 and does not bring it to the doorway of the tent of meeting to offer it to the LORD, that man also shall be cut off from his people.

Deuteronomy 12:2-5+ “You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. 3 “You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. 4 “You shall not act like this toward the LORD your God. 5 “But you shall seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.

Deuteronomy 13:12-16+ “If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, anyone saying that 13 some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, ‘**Let us go and serve (WORSHIP) other gods’ (whom you have not known)**, 14 then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, 15 **you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword.** 16 “Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt.

### **AN POTENTIAL ALTAR ALTERCATION**

**When the sons of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the sons of Israel gathered themselves at Shiloh to go up against them in war** - The western tribes were preparing to attack the eastern tribes over the altar because they had misinterpreted the actions. They assumed the altar was going to be used for sacrifices and would have been competition with the true altar of sacrifice at the Tabernacle in Shiloh. Note the irony for Shiloh means "the place. of rest," and here is Israel is preparing to go to war with their brothers. Note it does not say they inquired of the LORD before they gathered themselves. One has to wonder what was going through Joshua's mind!

**THOUGHT** - Beware of making assumptions or drawing (false) conclusions concerning your Christian brethren, for you may not have the complete story and the results of a false conclusion could be disastrous in the body of Christ!

Anger is one letter short of danger.

**Madvig on gathered themselves at Shiloh to go up against them in war**- They were not unmindful of the fact that the Transjordanian tribes served them at great personal sacrifice; nevertheless, they would not tolerate for a moment what appears to be a flagrant act of apostasy. They expected dire consequences for the entire nation (vv.17–20) if they did not obey Moses’ command to deal severely with any such acts (cf. Lev 17:8–9; Deut 13:12–15). ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Francis Schaeffer** has an interesting comment - Joshua 22:12 is one of the most touching verses we will ever find, if we do not just read it as words but see the human content in it: “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.” That is just terrific! We ought to play the bagpipes! These men had just parted as companions of war. I do not know whether they shook hands as we do or rubbed noses like the Eskimos or, like the Brazilians, slapped each other on the back until they could not breathe any longer, but whatever it was, they had said good-bye in the strongest, heartiest sense imaginable. But now they thought the holiness of God was being threatened. So these men, who were sick of war, said, “The holiness of God demands no compromise.” I would to God that the church of this century would learn this lesson. The holiness of the God who exists demands that there be no compromise in the area of truth. Tears? I am sure there were tears, but there had to be battle if there was rebellion against God. ([Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History](#))

**William Blaikie** - But who can estimate all the misery that has come in almost every age, in circles both public and private, from

hasty suspicions of evil, which a little patience, a little inquiry, a little opportunity of explanation, might have at once averted? History, tradition, fiction, alike furnish us with instances. We recall the story of Llewellyn and his dog Gelert, stabbed by his master, who thought the stains upon his mouth were the blood of his beloved child; while, on raising the cradle which had been turned over, he found his child asleep and well, and a huge wolf dead, from whose fangs the dog had delivered him. We remember the tragedy of Othello and Desdemona; we see how the fondest love may be poisoned by hasty suspicion, and the dearest of wives murdered, when a little patience would have shown her innocent-- shown her all too pure to come in contact with even a vestige of the evil thing. ([Joshua 22 The Altar](#))

**Donald Campbell** - In the beautiful lake country of England, the haunt of many English poets, there is a peak of land over a lakeshore called Point Rash Judgment. On one occasion Wordsworth, his sister, and Coleridge were walking along the shore when they saw a man fishing in a distant boat. Since it was the harvest season when all able-bodied men were working in the fields, the poets were harshly critical of the fisherman until on closer sight they saw he was aged and weak. Struck with the falsity and unkindness of their criticism, they named the place "Point Rash Judgment." Israel made a similar mistake. A rash and impetuous judgment, made when the eastern tribes returned to their own inheritance, threatened the newly settled communities with civil war. It was a dangerous and potentially explosive situation. But in the providence of God the tragedy was averted and Israel learned some valuable and important lessons. ([No Time for Neutrality](#))

**Don Anderson** - A number of weeks ago when Pearl and I had stopped at a very crowded shopping mall on Saturday afternoon, we drove around several times through the parking lot looking for a parking place and finding none. Finally on one last turn I noticed a man in front of me all of a sudden whip into a very close handicapped parking place without a handicap sticker on his bumper. I immediately told Pearl how angry I was over the fact that someone who wasn't even handicapped would have the gall on a very crowded Saturday to take the place designated for people who had a need for this provision. I no sooner got the words out of my mouth than the door of the car flew open and out came the crutches and a man with only one leg.

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**The whole congregation—gathered themselves together.** Not perhaps in their own persons, but by their representatives the elders, who transacted all affairs of this nature in the name and behalf of the people.

**To go up to war against them.** The case was one that laid a just ground for suspicion. Having no conception of an altar being erected for any purpose but that of sacrifice, the other tribes naturally regarded it as an act of rebellion against God, and determined instantly to go and punish the supposed apostates. By an express command. Ex. 20:24; Lev. 17:8, 9; Deut. 12:5–13, the nation had been prohibited from worshipping God except at one altar, and for what other than a religious purpose could this structure have been reared? They moreover felt themselves impelled to this course by the tenor of the law, Deut. 13:7–13, requiring the most summary judgment to be executed upon the individuals or cities that should be found setting up an idolatrous worship. Their zeal for the Lord of hosts under this impression was very commendable. Though these trans-Jordanic tribes are their own brethren, bone of their bone, companions with them in tribulation in the wilderness, and their generous allies in the wars of Canaan, yet if they revolt from the true God and turn to the service of idols, or openly make a breach in the unity of his worship, they are determined to treat them no longer as brethren, but as enemies who were to be cut off as unsparingly as the Canaanites themselves. Their holy jealousy, therefore, in these circumstances was no more than a proper expression of their intense concern for the glory of God and the honor of his institutions. But their zeal was tempered with the meekness of wisdom, and before proceeding to extremities they determined to send an embassy to inquire into the facts, and if their suspicions were confirmed, to see whether they could not be prevailed upon by milder methods to abandon their wicked enterprise and return to their allegiance to the God of Israel. Instead of saying that the case was too clear to admit of doubt, or too gross to allow of apology, they evidently go on the presumption that they may have been mistaken in their construction of the affair, and that at any rate it was proper that they should not condemn their brethren unheard, but should give them the opportunity of justifying themselves in the measure if it were possible. According to the wise man's direction they will 'upon good advice make war.' A noble example of moderation, forbearance, and charity, shines forth in this conduct. How many an unhappy strife might be prevented by similar precaution, by simply staying to inquire calmly into that which constitutes the avowed matter of offence! How often would a few words of candid explanation smother in embryo the most angry controversies, violent quarrels, and embittered persecutions! By barely adopting the prudent conduct of Israel on this occasion, individuals families, churches, and communities, might, in a thousand instances, be saved a world of jealousy, enmity, discord, war and bloodshed.

**Joshua 22:13** Then the sons of Israel sent to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest,

- **sent:** De 13:14 Jdg 20:12 Pr 20:18 Mt 18:15
- **Phinehas:** Ex 6:25 Nu 25:7,11-13 Jdg 20:28 Ps 106:30,31 Pr 25:9-13
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 6:25 Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him **Phinehas**. These are the heads of the fathers' households of the Levites according to their families.

Numbers 25:7; 11-13 When **Phinehas the son of Eleazar**, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand, (25:11-13) 11"Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy. 12"Therefore say, 'Behold, I give him My covenant of peace; 13 and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel.'"

Judges 20:28 and **Phinehas the son of Eleazar**, Aaron's son, stood before it to minister in those days), saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?" And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."

### PHINEHAS LEADS DELEGATION TO INVESTIGATE

**Then** - This marks progression in the narrative and describes how "cooler" heads prevailed and sought to first get the facts before acting in haste and presumption.

**the sons of Israel sent to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest** (see Nu 25:7, 11, Nu 31:6,) - This was a good move, for as noted above (Joshua 22:12), western tribes were on the verge of initiating a civil war. And given that it was an altar altercation, the western tribes sent a priestly representative to make a religious assessment. Note that the eastern tribes have finished the altar on the western side of the Jordan and have crossed back over **into the land of Gilead** on the west. Later, Phinehas will deal with another problem of impurity in Jdg. 20:28.

**Francis Schaeffer** - The leaders on the west side did their best, however, to straighten the matter out. They did not fight without first attempting reconciliation. This is a good example of the simultaneous exhibition of both the holiness and the love of God. It is a biblical example of truth and beauty. Because of the concern of the children of Israel for God's holiness, they were ready for battle; but the fact that they did not attack immediately was a practical demonstration of love. Instead, they chose a prince from each of the tribes and sent them along with Phinehas, the high priest, to see if this matter could be straightened out. When they confronted the two and a half tribes on the east, they did not beat around the bush. I am convinced that what we see here is the kind of thing that Jesus later commanded concerning a practical relationship among the people of God. They came without compromise, talked face to face, and made an honest charge. ([Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History](#))

#### Related Resource:

- [Who was Eleazar in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**13, 14. Phineas**—and with him ten princes. Persons of age, experience, and approved discretion, possessing weight of character in the congregation, and likely to be influenced more by the dictates of cool judgment than of hasty passion, were very properly selected to act in behalf of the people on this occasion. The ardent temperament of younger men could not so safely be trusted on such a trying emergency.

**Joshua 22:14** and with him ten chiefs, one chief for each father's household from each of the tribes of Israel; and each one of them was the head of his father's household among the thousands of Israel.

- **chief:** Ex 18:25 Nu 1:4
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PHINEHAS ACCOMPANIED BY LEADERS FOR COUNSEL

and with him ten chiefs, one chief for each father's household from each of the tribes of Israel; and each one of them was the head of his father's household among the thousands of Israel - NET = "He was accompanied by ten leaders, one from each of the Israelite tribes, each one a family leader among the Israelite clans." They also sent 10 leaders who would have been able to provide good counsel to Phinehas for as Proverbs says "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed." (Pr 15:22)

**Utley** - "chiefs" One of the major leaders (cf Josh 22:30, 32; 9:15, 18, 19, 21; 17:4; Ex 16:22) of each tribe accompanied Phinehas. This was a very illustrious group which was sent to the eastern tribes.

**Joshua 22:15** They came to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying,

- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CONFRONTATION

**They came to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying** - Phinehas and the 10 leaders crossed the Jordan into Gilead and spoke with the 2 1/2 tribes to get the facts.

**Joshua 22:16** "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this unfaithful act which you have committed against the God of Israel, turning away from following the LORD this day, by building yourselves an altar, to rebel against the LORD this day?'

- **the whole congregation** Jos 22:12 Mt 18:17 1Co 1:10 5:4 Ga 1:1,2,
- **What is this unfaithful act which you have committed**, Lev 5:19 26:40 Nu 5:6 1Ch 21:3 2Ch 26:18 28:13 Ezr 9:2,15 Mt 6:14,15, to
- **turning away from following the LORD this day**, Jos 22:18 Ex 32:8 Nu 14:43 32:15 De 7:4 30:17 2Ch 10:19 25:27 Heb 12:25,
- **to rebel against the LORD this day**, Lev 17:8,9 De 12:4-6,13,14 1Sa 15:23 Ps 78:8 Isa 63:10
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS QUESTIONING THE WESTERN TRIBES

**Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this unfaithful act([maal](#)) which you have committed against the God of Israel, turning away from following the LORD this day, by building yourselves an altar, to rebel against the LORD this day** - It is clear that the delegation and all they represented had [jumped to a conclusion](#). They make a strong accusation. The delegation from the 9.5 tribes interpreted the altar as a "breach of faith" (ESV) **against the God of Israel. Unfaithful act ([maal](#))** is translated in the Septuagint with the Greek noun plemmeleia which was first a "false note in music" ("a discord in the harmonies of God's universe") and by extension something contrary to a generally recognized standard (a fault, sin, offense). So they do interpret the altar as an act of "treachery," using the same word ([maal](#)) that was used to describe the sin of Achan in Joshua 7:1+ ("acted unfaithfully"). The verb **rebel ([marad](#))** was used in the warning of Joshua and Caleb to the entire nation in Nu 14:9 not **rebel** against the LORD, which of course they did with fatal consequences! The Septuagint translates rebel with the Greek noun apostates (also Jos 22:19) which described a deserter, rebel or apostate (one who renounces a religious or political belief).

**Keil and Delitzsch** - Assuming at the outset that the altar was intended for a second place of sacrifice in opposition to the command of God, the delegates, with Phinehas no doubt as their speaker, began by reproaching them for falling away from the Lord. "What faithlessness is this (מעל : see at Leviticus 5:15+) that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from Jehovah, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against Jehovah?" מרד (to rebel) is stronger than מעל .

**Woudstra** - The obvious purpose of the story of the altar near the Jordan is to warn Israel against the danger of losing sight of its

unity, a unity which can be disrupted when unauthorized cult places are erected. The law of Deut. 12 did not insist on the limitation to one central sanctuary, although this is the way that the law has been widely understood. The chief concern of Deut. 12:5 was to set the place where the Lord was to be worshipped in sharp antithesis to the places where Canaanites practiced their fertility rites. ([The Book of Joshua The New International Commentary](#))

#### **Utley - The eastern tribes' actions are described in three ways.**

1. "an unfaithful act," BDB 591, KB 612, Qal PERFECT. This term is often used in connection with an act specifically toward YHWH, cf. 2:20; 7:1; 22:16, 20, 31; Lev. 6:2; 26:40; Num. 5:6, 12, 27. This term can have a sexual connotation.
2. "turning away from following the LORD," BDB 996, KB 1427, Qal INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, which implies they had purposefully violated the Mosaic covenant (i.e., by building an altar to rebel against the Lord). There is a play on the VERB in this chapter. (a) "return to your tents," vv. 8, 9 (b) "turn away," vv. 16, 18, 23, 29, 32
3. "to rebel against the LORD," BDB 597, KB 632, Qal INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. vv. 18, 19 (twice), 29; Num. 14:9

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**Unfaithful act** (Treachery) ([04604](#)) **maal** from the verb **maal** = to act unfaithfully or treacherously, to violate a legal obligation) is a masculine noun which refers to an unfaithful (not adhering to vows, allegiance, or duty) act, a violation of allegiance (the fidelity owed by a subject to his or her Sovereign God) or of faith and confidence. Most uses of maal reflect violations are against Jehovah (exception = Job 21:34). The idea is the breaking or violation of religious law as a conscious act of treachery.

**Maal** - 26v - falsehood(1), treachery(2), trespass(1), trespass\*(1), unfaithful(3), unfaithful act(4), unfaithful deeds(1), unfaithfully(6), unfaithfulness(6), very unfaithful(1). Lev. 5:15; Lev. 6:2; Num. 5:6; Num. 5:12; Num. 5:27; Num. 31:16; Jos. 7:1; Jos. 22:16; Jos. 22:20; Jos. 22:22; Jos. 22:31; 1 Chr. 9:1; 1 Chr. 10:13; 2 Chr. 28:19; 2 Chr. 29:19; 2 Chr. 33:19; 2 Chr. 36:14; Ezr. 9:2; Ezr. 9:4; Ezr. 10:6; Job 21:34; Ezek. 15:8; Ezek. 17:20; Ezek. 18:24; Ezek. 39:26; Dan. 9:7

**Rebel** ([04775](#)) (**marad**) is a primary root and means to revolt or be rebellious against a human king, against God or figuratively against light of God's truth (Job 24:13) To renounce a former allegiance. The idea is resisting authority, God (Nu 14:9, Da 9:9) or men (Ge 14:4, Neh 2:19). Marad describes the rebellious character of a nation (Ezek 2:3, Ezek 20:38) or an individual (Hezekiah in 2Ki 18:7, 20, Isa 36:5), or Zedekiah rebelling against King Nebuchadnezzar (2Ki 24:1, 20, Jer 52:3, Ezek 17:15).

**Gilbrant** adds "Occurring twenty-five times in the Hebrew OT, the verb **mārad** is always in the Qal stem. The verb denotes obstinacy, resistance, and disobedience. Its cognates in South Semitic and later Aramaic dialects convey rebellion. In the Bible, māradh is used of two areas of rebellion, the secular and the religious. In the human sphere, it involves a political figure, such as a king. Concerning the matter of the altar constructed by the Trans-jordanian tribes, the delegation sent to investigate exhorted, "Do not rebel against the Lord, or against us" (Josh. 22:19, NIV). A question had existed as to the purpose and function of its construction. This issue was understood to have both political and theological implications. Hezekiah placed his trust in Yahweh in his confrontation with Assyria and successfully freed the nation from the oppressor (2 Ki. 18:7, 20). When the Judean king Abijah confronted Jeroboam's army, in a preliminary verbal exchange, he stressed Judah's position. It was the Northern Kingdom which had first rebelled against the House of David. The subsequent battle was won through divine intervention (2 Chr. 13:6). On the other hand, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah were condemned for rebelling against the king of Babylon and trusting in their political alliance with Egypt, rather than Yahweh's control of the situation (2 Ki. 24:1, 20). Efforts were made (by Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem) to intimidate those returning from exile. Jerusalem was being rebuilt, they suggested, with the intention to rebel against the Persians (Neh. 2:19; 6:6). In his prayer, Nehemiah confessed the nation's sins, notably its rebellious inclination. His confession noted a history of rebellion against God (Neh. 9:16-37). Daniel prayed similarly (Dan. 9:5, 9). This characteristic rebelliousness had been reflected in disobedience (not trusting the Lord to help defeat the Canaanites; Num. 14:9), idolatry (the golden calves of Jeroboam; 2 Chr. 13:6) and foreign alliances (with Egypt; Ezek. 17:15). All this resulted in a history of covenant breaking, failing their legal obligations to observe the covenant. Māradh is used once poetically to signify rebellion against truth, "those who rebel against the light" (Job. 24:13, NIV). ([Complete Biblical Library - Incredible Resource](#))

**Marad** -23v - rebel(8), rebelled(14), rebelling(1), rebellious(1), rebels(1). Gen. 14:4; Num. 14:9; Jos. 22:16; Jos. 22:18; Jos. 22:19; Jos. 22:29; 2 Ki. 18:7; 2 Ki. 18:20; 2 Ki. 24:1; 2 Ki. 24:20; 2 Chr. 13:6; 2 Chr. 36:13; Neh. 2:19; Neh. 6:6; Neh. 9:26; Job 24:13; Isa. 36:5; Jer. 52:3; Ezek. 2:3; Ezek. 17:15; Ezek. 20:38; Dan. 9:5; Dan. 9:9

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#### **GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)**

**What trespass is this, &c.** Without acquitting the ten tribes of the charge of somewhat of an undue precipitancy in taking up their unfavorable impressions, the matter in question was one on which they were justified in feeling strongly and acting promptly. As it now appeared, it was a step fraught with the most momentous consequences to the whole body of Israel. **Repeated occasions**

**had arisen wherein the sin of individuals had been visited upon the entire nation.** The iniquity of Achan had not long since caused the defeat of Israel's hosts, together with the loss of six and thirty men; and not very long before the connexion of many with the Midianitish women had brought destruction on twenty-four thousand Israelites in one day. What then could be expected, but that, if those who had erected the altar should go unpunished, God would punish all the other tribes as partners in their guilt? **And if formerly one man's sin wrought so much indignation, what would be the consequences of the apostasy of two tribes and a half?** To avert so terrible an evil, therefore, they felt to be their bounden duty at all events, and in order to this nothing could be more effectual than plainly reminding them of the sad effects of past transgression. 'It is good to recollect and improve those instances of the wrath of God which have fallen out in our own time, and of which we ourselves have been eye-witnesses.

**THOUGHT** - The remembrance of great sins committed formerly, should engage us to stand upon our guard against the least occasions and beginnings of sin; for the way of sin is down-hill' Henry.

**Joshua 22:17 'Is not the iniquity of Peor enough for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, although a plague came on the congregation of the LORD,**

- **Is not the iniquity of Peor.** Nu 25:1-4, 5-18 De 4:3,4 Ps 106:28,29
- **from which:** Ezra 9:13,14 1Co 10:8,11
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 25:1-3+ While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. 2 For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel.

Numbers 25:4-11+ (**PHINEHAS WAS INTIMATELY FAMILIAR WITH THE INIQUITY AT PEOR**) The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel." 5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you slay his men who have joined themselves to Baal of Peor." 6 Then behold, one of the sons of Israel came and brought to his relatives a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 7 When **Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand, 8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through the body. So the plague on the sons of Israel was checked.** 9 Those who died by the plague were 24,000. 10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 11 "**Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy.**

### REMINDER OF REBELLION AND PUNISHMENT AT PEOR

**Is not the iniquity ('[avon](#)) of [Peor](#) enough for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, although a plague came on the congregation of the LORD - [Phinehas](#) and the 10 leaders based their exhortation in Joshua 22:19 on the bad experience at Peor, which alludes to the sin of idolatry described in Numbers 25:1-4+ ([see above](#)).**

**Cyril Barber** comments that "The transgression of the Israelites at Baal-peor and their subsequent punishment made such a lasting impression on the nation that it was even mentioned by the prophet Hosea approximately 675 years later (see Hosea 9:10), ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

**Keil and Delitzsch** - To show the greatness of the sin through apostasy from the Lord, the speaker reminds them of two previous acts of sin on the part of the nation, which had brought severe judgments upon the congregation. "Is there too little for us in the iniquity of Peor (i.e., with Peor, or through the worship of Peor, Numbers 25:3), from which we have not cleansed ourselves till this day, and there came the plague upon the congregation of Jehovah? "...That plague, of which 24,000 Israelites died, was stayed through the **zeal of Phinehas** for the honour of the Lord (Numbers 25:4-11). The guilt connected with the worship of Peor had thereby been avenged upon the congregation, and the congregation itself had been saved from any further punishment in consequence of the sin. When Phinehas, therefore, affirmed that the congregation had not yet been cleansed from the crime, he did not mean that they were still bearing or suffering from the punishment of that crime, but that they were not yet cleansed from that

sin, inasmuch as many of them were still attached to idolatry in their hearts, even if they had hitherto desisted from it outwardly from fear of the infliction of fresh judgment.

**Utley** - "Is not the iniquity of Peor enough for us" This is a reference to the Israelites worshipping the Canaanite fertility gods. This occurred on the plains of Moab and is recorded in Num. 25:1–13. It was apparently instigated by Balaam's advice to Balak, which is also recorded in Num. 22–24. Israel was severely punished for this by God and the implication here is that they still carried the scars of that punishment.

#### Related Resource:

- [What was Baal Peor in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#) - **Excerpt** - "Baal Peor, or the Baal of Peor, was a local deity worshiped by the Moabites. When the Israelites, following Moses to the Promised Land, were in the vicinity of Peor, some of them fell into idolatry and worshiped Baal Peor. As a result of their sin, the men of Israel were judged by God. The story of Baal Peor starts when [Balak](#), the king of the Moabites, hired [Balaam](#), a prophet-for-hire, to curse Israel. Balaam had seen the progress and might of Israel and was trying to do something that would stop them. Balaam took the money but was unable to curse Israel because the Lord would not allow him to do so. Balaam then met with the king of Moab and went through the motions of receiving a word from God; each time (seven times total) he ended up blessing Israel instead of cursing them (Numbers 23–24). At the time of the third oracle, Balaam and Balak were observing the Israelite camp from a place called Peor (Numbers 23:28). By the end of the seventh try, Balaam finally got the message that Balaam would not curse Israel for him. In Numbers 25, we find that the women of Midian began to seduce the men of Israel to [sexual sin](#) and to sacrifice to their gods. Since the gods of the pagans were often fertility gods, the "worship" often involved sexual acts. The incident is recorded in Numbers 25:1–3: "While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Midianite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them." As a judgment against the Israelites' sin, God sent a plague among the people (Nu 25:9).

**Joshua 22:18 that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? If you rebel against the LORD today, He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow.**

KJV Joshua 22:18 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.

NET Joshua 22:18 Now today you dare to turn back from following the LORD! You are rebelling today against the LORD; tomorrow he may break out in anger against the entire community of Israel.

NLT Joshua 22:18 And yet today you are turning away from following the LORD. If you rebel against the LORD today, he will be angry with all of us tomorrow.

ESV Joshua 22:18 that you too must turn away this day from following the LORD? And if you too rebel against the LORD today then tomorrow he will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel.

NIV Joshua 22:18 And are you now turning away from the LORD? " 'If you rebel against the LORD today, tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel.

YLT Joshua 22:18 that ye turn back to-day from after Jehovah? and it hath been -- ye rebel to-day against Jehovah -- and to-morrow against all the company of Israel He is wroth.

LXE Joshua 22:18 And ye have this day revolted from the Lord; and it shall come to pass if ye revolt this day from the Lord, that to-morrow there shall be wrath upon all Israel.

CSB Joshua 22:18 and now, you would turn away from the LORD? If you rebel against the LORD today, tomorrow He will be angry with the entire community of Israel.

- **from following the LORD:** Jos 22:16 De 7:4 1Sa 12:14,20 1Ki 9:6 2Ki 17:21 2Ch 25:27 34:33
- **If you rebel against the LORD today:** Ezra 9:13,14
- **He will be angry:** Jos 22:20 7:1,11,21 Nu 16:22 2Sa 24:1 1Ch 21:1,14
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**DANGER TO ALL ISRAEL IF  
THEY REBELLED AGAINST YAHWEH**

**that you must turn away this day from following the LORD?** - The **NET** (and NIV) interpret this not as a question but a declaration - "Now today you dare to turn back from following the LORD!"

**Keil and Delitzsch** - are about to bring His wrath upon the whole congregation again through a fresh rebellion.

**If you rebel against the LORD today, He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow**- The treachery of two and one-half tribes was interpreted by Phinehas and the 10 leaders as an act which result in God's wrath against all 12 tribes.

**Utley** - "that He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow" Notice the sense of corporeality is not only seen in the closing verse of Joshua 17, but is reaffirmed in the account of Achan's sin (cf. Joshua 7), mentioned in Josh 7:20. It seems that this delegation mentioned one account of sin which had occurred on the eastern side of the Jordan, i.e., the Baal of Peor, and another account which happened on the western side of the Jordan, i.e., Achan and the defeat at Ai (cf. Joshua 7). When one person (or a few) sins, all are negatively affected!

**Anderson** - In essence, the delegation is saying, "We are all in this together."

**Joshua 22:19 'If, however, the land of your possession is unclean, then cross into the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD'S tabernacle stands, and take possession among us. Only do not rebel against the LORD, or rebel against us by building an altar for yourselves, besides the altar of the LORD our God.**

KJV Joshua 22:19 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.

NET Joshua 22:19 But if your own land is impure, cross over to the LORD's own land, where the LORD himself lives, and settle down among us. But don't rebel against the LORD or us by building for yourselves an altar aside from the altar of the LORD our God.

BGT Joshua 22:19 κα ν ν ε μικρ μ ν γ τ ς κατασχ σεως μ ν δι βητε ε ς τ ν γ ν τ ς κατασχ σεως κυρ ου ο κατασκηνο κε σκην κυρ ου κα κατακληρονομ σατε ν μ ν κα μ ποστ ται π θεο γεν θητε κα μ π σπητε π κυρ ου δι τ ο κοδομ σαι μ ς βω μ ν ξω το θυσιαστηρ ου κυρ ου το θεο μ ν

NLT Joshua 22:19 "If you need the altar because the land you possess is defiled, then join us in the LORD's land, where the Tabernacle of the LORD is situated, and share our land with us. But do not rebel against the LORD or against us by building an altar other than the one true altar of the LORD our God.

ESV Joshua 22:19 But now, if the land of your possession is unclean, pass over into the LORD's land where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and take for yourselves a possession among us. Only do not rebel against the LORD or make us as rebels by building for yourselves an altar other than the altar of the LORD our God.

NIV Joshua 22:19 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.

- **unclean:** Ex 15:17 Lev 18:25-28 Am 7:17 Ac 10:14,15 11:8,9
- **where the LORD'S tabernacle stands:** Jos 18:1 Lev 17:8,9 De 12:5,6 2Ch 11:13,16,17
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **DO NOT REBEL AGAINST YAHWEH**

**If, however, the land of your possession ([achuzzah](#)) is unclean then cross into the land of the possession ([achuzzah](#)) of the LORD where the LORD'S tabernacle stands and take possession among us.** - NLT = "If you need the altar because the land you possess is defiled, then join us in the LORD's land, where the Tabernacle of the LORD is situated, and share our land with us." Phinehas and the 10 leaders were willing to give land to the 2.5 tribes if their **possession** east of the Jordan was unclean. The point about the land on the east potentially being unclean is brought up because why else would they build an altar on the west side for themselves unless their land was defiled.



**NET Note** - The western tribes here imagine a possible motive for the action of the eastern tribes. T. C. Butler explains the significance of the land's "impurity" -- "East Jordan is impure because it is not Yahweh's possession. Rather it is simply **'your possession.'** That means it is land where Yahweh does not live, land which his presence has not sanctified and purified" (Joshua [WBC], 247).

**Guzik** - This was an invitation made at great cost. It would have meant a much smaller area of land for the western tribes. But it didn't matter, because they were willing to sacrifice to see their brothers free from this sin.. Too many of us lack this willingness; we tell people to stop sinning, but are not willing to help them if it costs us something.

**Keil and Delitzsch** - "And truly," the speaker continued, " if the land of your possession should be unclean," sc., so that you think it necessary to have an altar in the neighbourhood to expiate your sins and wipe away your uncleanness, " pass over into the land of Jehovah's possession, where His dwelling-place stands, and settle in the midst of us ('settle,' as in Genesis 34:10); but do not rebel against Jehovah nor against us, by building an altar beside the (one) altar of Jehovah our God."

**Utley** "If, however, the land of your possession is unclean" There are two ways to understand this phrase: (1) the eastern lands were considered outside the Promised Land (2) the sin of Peor permanently polluted the whole area.

**Luis Palau** asks "Do you get the picture? Suddenly the Israelites became such self-righteous Promised-Land-dwellers that they didn't even bother to ask questions. They just began to sermonize. "Now if your land is unclean on the other side of the Jordan, why don't you come over to our land, the land of God?" In other words, "Even though the Lord gave you that land, you'd be better off over here where we are. We've got a seminary graduate over here. Why don't you come over here where you'll really get the Word, where the land is really clean?" ([The moment to shout](#))

**Only do not rebel ([marad](#)) against the LORD, or rebel ([marad](#)) against us by building an altar for yourselves, besides the altar of the LORD our God** - NLT = "But do not rebel against the LORD or against us by building an altar other than the one true altar of the LORD our God." Rebel ([marad](#)) is a keyword in this interchange (4x - Josh 22:16, 18, 19, 29).

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#### **GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)**

**If the land of your possession be unclean.** If you have any prejudice against the land of your inheritance; if you think it not equally with ours under the divine favor and protection. They imagined that the two tribes and a half might think their land less holy for the want of an altar and such tokens of the divine presence as pertained to the tabernacle. An opinion was generally prevalent among the ancients, that those countries, in which there was no place set apart for the worship of God, were unhallowed and unclean. The proposal displayed a very generous and disinterested spirit, a willingness to make sacrifices in order to preserve purity, and consequently peace. Rather than they should set up a separate altar from a groundless dissatisfaction with their inheritance, they would cheerfully welcome them back to the other side of the Jordan, 'where the Lord's tabernacle dwelt,' though they should straiten themselves by so doing. But what was a little inconvenience to themselves when such an evil was to be averted, and such a good secured? How kind, how conciliating, how self-denying, how eager for accommodation, is the spirit of true piety!

**But rebel not against the Lord.** Implying that a deliberate departure from the instituted mode of worship is nothing short of downright rebellion against the God of heaven. Compare with this the parallel expression of Samuel relative to the conduct of Saul, 1 Sam. 15:13.

**Besides the altar of the Lord our God** In addition to it.

**Joshua 22:20 'Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.'"**

- Jos 7:1,5,18,24 1Co 10:6 2Pe 2:6 Jude 1:5,6
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **REMINDER OF ACHAN'S UNFAITHFULNESS AND HIS END**

**Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully ([maal](#) is repeated for emphasis) in the things under the ban ([herem](#)) and wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel?** - This is the final question addressed to the eastern 2.5 tribes. This is somewhat rhetorical with a touch of rebuke. The answer of course was "Yes, Achan was unfaithful and yes, the nation suffered an ignominious, shameful defeat at Ai."

**And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity**- Phinehas' and the 10 leaders' concern was that the wrath of God would fall on all twelve tribes, in light of the fact that this exactly what had occurred as a result of the sin of a single man **Achan!** A similar sin of unfaithfulness by the 2.5 tribes would bring a similar judgment on the entire nation.

**Keil and Delitzsch** - The allusion to this fact is to be understood as an argument *a minori ad majus*, as *Masius* has shown. "If Achan did not perish alone when he committed sacrilege, but God was angry with the whole congregation, what think ye will be the consequence if ye, so great a number, commit so grievous a sin against God?"

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Achan in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why did God judge the sin of Achan so severely? | GotQuestions.org](#) - **Excerpt** - Achan's sin caused God's blessing upon the Israelites to be withheld in their subsequent battle against the city of [Ai](#), and the Israelites "were routed by the men of Ai, who killed about thirty-six of them" (Joshua 7:4-5). Thirty-six innocent men died because of Achan's sin. He stole that which was "devoted to destruction" and so brought destruction on others. God explained to Joshua, "That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction" (Joshua 7:12; see also Joshua 22:20). We fool ourselves if we think that our sin affects only us. Disobedience brings ruin even upon the innocent. Sin's effects go beyond the initial sinner.

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**And that man perisheth not alone in his iniquity.** The idea expressed in these words of our common translation is unquestionably conveyed by the original; still it is not an exact version. The literal rendering of the Heb. is, 'and he, one man, did not perish in his iniquity.' That is, though he were but a single individual, and it might have been supposed that his death would have been the winding up of his existence in every respect, yet in reality such was his relation to the whole people as a sinner; such the connexion between his offence and the punishment of the whole nation, that in one sense he may be said to have survived his own death. He still lived in the fearful effects of his transgression, as visited upon the entire congregation.

**His life and his crime did not terminate together.** A strikingly analogous passage occurs Num. 27:3.

**Joshua 22:21** Then the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered and spoke to the heads of the families of Israel.

- **answered:** Pr 15:1 16:1 18:13 24:26 Ac 11:4 Jas 1:19 1Pe 3:15
- **heads:** Ex 18:21-25 Mic 5:2
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### EASTERN 2.5 TRIBES ADDRESS ALLEGATIONS

Now in Joshua 22:21-29 the *accused* gets an opportunity to address their *accusers* false assumptions.

**Then the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered and spoke to the heads of the families of Israel** - The accused 2.5 address the serious allegations against them, keeping in mind that the word "allegation" means assertions that they had done something illegal or wrong but without proof.

**TSK** - The conduct and answer of these Reubenites and the associates are worthy of admiration and imitation. Though conscious of their innocence, they permitted Phinehas to finish his speech, though composed of little else than accusations, without any interruption; and taking in good part the suspicions, reproofs, and even harshness of their brethren, with the utmost meekness and solemnity they explain their intention, give all the satisfaction in their power, and with great propriety and reverence, appeal to that God against whom they were supposed to have rebelled.

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 21-29. The tribes took the reproofs of their brethren in good part. With solemnity and meekness they proceeded to give all the satisfaction in their power. Reverence of God is expressed in the form of their appeal. This brief confession of faith would remove their brethren's suspicion that they intended to worship other gods. Let us always speak of God with seriousness, and mention his name with a solemn pause. Those who make appeals to Heaven with a careless "God knows," take his name in vain: it is very unlike this. They express great confidence of their own uprightness in the matter of their appeal. "God knows it," for he is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of the heart. In every thing we do in religion, it

highly concerns us to approve ourselves to God, remembering that he knows the heart. And if our sincerity be known to God, we should study likewise to let others know it by its fruits, especially those who, though they mistake us, show zeal for the glory of God. They disdained the design of which they were suspected to be guilty, and fully explained their true intent in building this altar. Those who have found the comfort and benefit of God's ordinances, cannot but desire to preserve them to their seed, and to use all possible care that their children may be looked upon as having a part in him. Christ is the great Altar that sanctifies every gift; the best evidence of our interest in him is the work of his Spirit in our hearts.

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**Then the children of Reuben—answered.** If we find somewhat to blame in each of the opposite parties; in the one, an undue precipitation in building the altar, and in the other, an undue hastiness in ascribing it to wrong intentions, we yet behold very much to admire in both. When the accusers found themselves mistaken, they did not shift their ground, and condemn their brethren for imprudence; nor when the accused had evinced their innocence, did they upbraid their accusers with hasty, rash, or unjust surmises. Aware that the measure was easily susceptible of the interpretation their brethren had put upon it, they took their reproofs, severe as they were, in good part, and instead of angry retorts or recriminations, gave them the soft answer which turneth away wrath, and by a candid and honest declaration of their real intentions, at once set themselves right in the opinion of their brethren.

**Joshua 22:22 "The Mighty One, God, the LORD, the Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows, and may Israel itself know. If it was in rebellion, or if in an unfaithful act against the LORD do not save us this day!"**

KJV Joshua 22:22 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,)

NET Joshua 22:22 "El, God, the LORD! El, God, the LORD! He knows the truth! Israel must also know! If we have rebelled or disobeyed the LORD, don't spare us today!

LXX Joshua 22:22 θες θες σιν κριος κα θες θες κριος α τ ς ο δεν κα Ισραηλ α τ ς γν σεται ε ν ποστασ πλημμελ σαμεν νανπι το κυρ ου μ σαπο μ ς ν τα τ

LXX Eng Joshua 22:22 God even God is the Lord, and God even God himself knows, and Israel he shall know; if we have transgressed before the Lord by apostasy, let him not deliver us this day.

NLT Joshua 22:22 "The LORD, the Mighty One, is God! The LORD, the Mighty One, is God! He knows the truth, and may Israel know it, too! We have not built the altar in treacherous rebellion against the LORD. If we have done so, do not spare our lives this day.

ESV Joshua 22:22 "The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows; and let Israel itself know! If it was in rebellion or in breach of faith against the LORD, do not spare us today

NIV Joshua 22:22 "The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows! And let Israel know! If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the LORD, do not spare us this day.

YLT Joshua 22:22 'The God of gods -- Jehovah, the God of gods -- Jehovah, He is knowing, and Israel, he doth know, if in rebellion, and if in trespass against Jehovah (Thou dost not save us this day!)

CSB Joshua 22:22 " Yahweh is the God of gods! Yahweh is the God of gods! He knows, and may Israel also know. Do not spare us today, if it was in rebellion or treachery against the LORD

- **The Mighty One, God, the LORD, the Mighty One, God, the LORD** Ex 18:11 De 10:17 Ps 82:1 95:3 97:7 136:2 Da 2:47 11:36 1Ti 6:16 Rev 19:16
- **He knows:** 1Ki 8:39 Job 10:7 23:10 Ps 7:3 44:21 139:1-12 Jer 12:3 17:10 Joh 2:24,25 21:17 Ac 1:24 2Co 11:11,31 Heb 4:13 Rev 2:23
- **may Israel itself know:** Ps 37:6 Mic 7:9 Mal 3:18 Ac 11:2-18 2Co 5:11
- **if it be:** 1Sa 15:23 Job 31:5-8,38-40 Ps 7:3-5 Ac 25:11
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

## THEY OFFER THEIR DEFENSE BEFORE THE ALL-KNOWING GOD

**The Mighty One, God (Elohim), the LORD (Yahweh), the Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows (yada), and may Israel itself know (yada)- NET** = "El, God, the LORD! El, God, the LORD! He knows the truth! Israel must also know!" Note the 5 repetitions of Names of God which would have been a strong refutation that they had any intention of worshipping other gods.

- El = The Mighty One
- Elohim = God, the Creator
- Yahweh = The Lord, I AM, the Redeemer

**Utley** - "**the Mighty One, God, the LORD, the Mighty One, God, the LORD!**" Here we have three of the most common names for God in the Old Testament: (1) "El," which is the general name for God and seems to mean "the strong One"; (2) "Elohim," which is the plural form of "El" and is translated "God" in Genesis 1; it can refer to angels (cf. Ps. 8:5) or judges of Israel (cf. Ps. 82:6); and (3) the term "LORD," which seems to refer to the covenant name for God given in Exod. 3:14, "YHWH." The fact that these three names (cf. Ps. 50:1) are repeated twice possibly refers to the Hebrew concept that when something is stated three times it becomes a superlative. This may be a way of saying "the highest and only God" (cf. Ps. 50:1). This repetition of God's name is meant to show the solemnity of their oath. Deity is not only characterized by titles, but by His actions. (1) "He knows," (3) "may Israel itself know," (3) "save" (negated conditional sentence). The implication here is "save" us from the attack of the rest of the Israeli army.

**Keil and Delitzsch** - In utter amazement at the suspicion expressed by the delegates of the congregation, the two tribes and a half affirm with a solemn oath, that it never entered into their minds to build an altar as a place of sacrifice, to fall away from Jehovah. The combination of the three names of God-El, the strong one; Elohim, the Supreme Being to be feared; and Jehovah, the truly existing One, the covenant God (Joshua 22:22), - serves to strengthen the invocation of God, as in Psalms 50:1; and this is strengthened still further by the repetition of these three names. God knows, and let Israel also know

**Don Anderson** - Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. They have been totally devastated by all of these wrong interpretations for their actions, and now they call God to witness

**If it was in rebellion, or if in an unfaithful act (maal) against the LORD do not save us this day- NET** = "If we have rebelled or disobeyed the LORD, don't spare us today!" They based their willingness to be subject to punishment on God's perfect knowledge and the fact that He knew the intention of their hearts.

**Keil and Delitzsch** - "Mayst Thou not help us to-day," sc., if we did it in rebellion against God. An appeal addressed immediately to God in the heat of the statement, and introduced in the midst of the asseveration, which was meant to remove all doubt as to the truth of their declaration.

**Believer's Study Bible** - The accused tribes responded with an oath (vv. 22, 23), an explanation (vv. 24-28), and a final denial of wrongdoing (v. 29).

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### Related Resources:

- [Omniscient](#)
- [Name of the LORD is a Strong Tower: Summary](#)
- [Name of the LORD is a Strong Tower: Why Should You Study It?](#)
- Elohim: My Creator
- [Jehovah](#)

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**The Lord God of gods.** The original words יהוה אל אלהים יהוה El Elohim Jehovah, are exceedingly emphatic, and cannot be easily translated. They are the three principal names by which the supreme God was known among the Hebrews, and may be rendered 'The strong God, Elohim Jehovah,' which is nearly the version of Luther, 'Der starke Gott, der Herr,' the strong God, the Lord. q. d. 'that almighty and omniscient Jehovah, whom we as well as you acknowledge and adore as the God of gods, infinitely superior to all that are called gods—to him we appeal as knowing our innocency, and that we would shudder at the thought of forsaking or dividing his worship.' By this solemn appeal they would convince their brethren that their religious faith was unchanged, and their future conduct, they also intimate, should satisfy all Israel that with clean hands and an upright heart they had engaged in this undertaking. Where there is evidence of a deep and heart-felt reverence for God, there is the best security for pure intentions and a blameless course of conduct.

**Save us not this day.** Let God the Judge cause us to perish by the sword of our enemies or of our brethren, if either in principle or practice we have knowingly departed from him. It is a sudden apostrophe to God, prompted by strong emotion and frequently occurring in speeches of a very earnest and vehement character, and highly expressive of conscious integrity.

**Joshua 22:23 "If we have built us an altar to turn away from following the LORD, or if to offer a burnt offering or grain offering on it, or if to offer sacrifices of peace offerings on it, may the LORD Himself require it.**

NET Joshua 22:23 If we have built an altar for ourselves to turn back from following the LORD by making burnt sacrifices and grain offerings on it, or by offering tokens of peace on it, the LORD himself will punish us.

BGT Joshua 22:23 κα ε κοδομ σαμεν α το ς βωμ ν στε ποστ ναι π κυρ ου το θεο μ ν στε ναβιβσαι π α τ ν θυσ αν λοκαυτωμ των στε ποισαι π α το θυσ αν σωτηρ ου κ ριος κζητ σει

NLT Joshua 22:23 If we have built an altar for ourselves to turn away from the LORD or to offer burnt offerings or grain offerings or peace offerings, may the LORD himself punish us.

ESV Joshua 22:23 for building an altar to turn away from following the LORD. Or if we did so to offer burnt offerings or grain offerings or peace offerings on it, may the LORD himself take vengeance.

NIV Joshua 22:23 If we have built our own altar to turn away from the LORD and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it, may the LORD himself call us to account.

- **may the LORD Himself require it.** Ge 9:4 De 18:19 1Sa 20:16 2Ch 24:22 Ps 10:13,14 Eze 3:18 Eze 33:6,8
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **IF GUILTY OF SIN THEY CALL ON YAHWEH TO PUNISH THEM**

**If we have built us an altar to turn away from following the LORD, or if to offer a burnt offering or grain offering on it, or if to offer sacrifices of peace offerings on it** - The oath begun in the previous passage continues. They first address the accusation of treachery or rebellion from Yahweh.

**May the LORD Himself require it** - NLT - "may the LORD himself punish us." They admit that had they committed treachery and rebellion they would deserve Yahweh's punishment.

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#### **GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)**

**Let the Lord himself require it.** Requite it. Let him call us to account for it and punish us as the offence may deserve, as the word 'requite,' often signifies. See on Gen. 9:5; Deut. 18:19; 1 Sam. 20:16. The trans-Jordanic tribes were accused of erecting an altar prohibited by the law, and that with the design of apostatizing from the true religion. They in their answer imply that the law is not violated except by altars intended for sacrifice; but such was not theirs, as they show by specifying the three principal, uses of the divinely appointed altar, and denying that they contemplated either of these uses in erecting theirs.

**Joshua 22:24 "But truly we have done this out of concern, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your sons may say to our sons, "What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?"**

KJV Joshua 22:24 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?

NET Joshua 22:24 We swear we have done this because we were worried that in the future your descendants would say to our descendants, 'What relationship do you have with the LORD God of Israel?'

BGT Joshua 22:24 λλ νεκεν ε λαβε ας ματος ποι σαμεν το το λ γοντες να μ ε πωσιν α ριον τ τ κνα μ ν το ς τ κνοις μ ν τ μ ν κυρ τ θε Ισραηλ

NLT Joshua 22:24 "The truth is, we have built this altar because we fear that in the future your descendants will say to ours, 'What right do you have to worship the LORD, the God of Israel?'

ESV Joshua 22:24 No, but we did it from fear that in time to come your children might say to our children, 'What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?'

NIV Joshua 22:24 "No! 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?'

YLT Joshua 22:24 'And if not, from fear of this thing we have done it, saying, Hereafter your sons do speak to ours sons, saying, What to you and to Jehovah God of Israel?'

- **out of concern, for a reason** Ge 18:19
- **In time to come:** Jos 4:6 Ge 30:33 Ex 13:14 De 6:20
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE REAL REASON FOR THE ALTAR

**But** - Term of contrast. Instead of the altar showing treachery and rebellion, the purpose was to facilitate unity of the tribes and honor to the LORD.

**truly we have done this out of concern, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your sons may say to our sons, "What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel - NET = "We swear we have done this because we were worried that in the future your descendants would say to our descendants, 'What relationship do you have with the LORD God of Israel?"** The reason for building the altar was that the LORD would continue to be honored by tribes on both sides of the Jordan.

**NET NOTE** - The Hebrew reads "What is there to you and to the LORD God of Israel?" The rhetorical question is sarcastic in tone and anticipates a response, "Absolutely none!"

**Utley** - **"but truly we have done this out of concern, for a reason"** This explanation, phrased in such strong terms, is meant to show the visiting delegation that they have totally misunderstood the reason for the altar. The altar was not meant for sacrifice, but to remind the tribes of the western bank that the three eastern tribes were also their brothers and that they should not be cut off from each other.

**Don Anderson** - We didn't do it for these other reasons that you have accused us of. We did it because some day your descendants might say to ours, "What do you have to do with the Lord, the God of Israel?" Just because we're moving over on the east bank doesn't mean that we still do not love the Lord our God with all of our heart. This too is part of the consequence of remaining short of the will of God because the Jordan River lies between them and the meeting place of God at Shiloh. It sure will be easy for them to drift away from the Lord their God because of the inconvenience of the river that flows between them and the place of God in the west

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**For fear of this thing.** What this thing was they immediately go on to state. They were apprehensive of certain consequences resulting from their local separation from their brethren, which are fully detailed in the ensuing verses. The original word for 'fear' denotes a great perplexity and solicitude of mind bordering upon actual distress. It occurs Prov. 12:25, where it signifies affliction. The amount of their answer is, that they were actuated by motives directly the reverse of those attributed to them.

In time to come. Heb. 'to-morrow.' See note on ch. 4:6.

**Joshua 22:25 "For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between us and you, you sons of Reuben and sons of Gad; you have no portion in the LORD." So your sons may make our sons stop fearing the LORD.'**

KJV Joshua 22:25 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.

NET Joshua 22:25 The LORD made the Jordan a boundary between us and you Reubenites and Gadites. You have no right to worship the LORD.' In this way your descendants might cause our descendants to stop obeying the LORD.

NLT Joshua 22:25 The LORD has placed the Jordan River as a barrier between our people and you people of

Reuben and Gad. You have no claim to the LORD.' So your descendants may prevent our descendants from worshipping the LORD.

ESV Joshua 22:25 For the LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you, you people of Reuben and people of Gad. You have no portion in the LORD.' So your children might make our children cease to worship the LORD.

NIV Joshua 22:25 The LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you--you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in the LORD.' So your descendants might cause ours to stop fearing the LORD.

YLT Joshua 22:25 for a border hath Jehovah put between us and you, O sons of Reuben, and sons of Gad -- Jordan; ye have no portion in Jehovah -- and your sons have caused our sons to cease, not to fear Jehovah.

LXE Joshua 22:25 Whereas the Lord has set boundaries between us and you, even Jordan, and ye have no portion in the Lord: so your sons shall alienate our sons, that they should not worship the Lord.

CSB Joshua 22:25 For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between us and you descendants of Reuben and Gad. You have no share in the LORD! ' So your descendants may cause our descendants to stop fearing the LORD.

- **you have no portion in the LORD:** Jos 22:27 2Sa 20:1 1Ki 12:16 Ezr 4:2,3 Ne 2:20 Ac 8:21
- **may make our sons stop fearing the LORD:** 1Sa 26:19 1Ki 12:27-30 14:16 15:30
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## EXPLANATION OF THEIR CONCERN

**For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between us and you, you sons of Reuben and sons of Gad-** NIV = " The LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you--you Reubenites and Gadites!"

Mattoon has an interesting comment - The Lord is blamed for the division of the tribes (vs. 25). No, it was the two and a half tribes that chose this situation, not the Lord. Their fears were created by their own actions. We need to take responsibility for our own actions and stop blaming God for mistakes and willfulness. Building this altar was dangerous. The concern of the tribes of Israel was a valid one. We find that later on in Israel's history, Jeroboam built separate altars after the succession of the ten tribes in the North (1 Kings 12).

**you have no portion in the LORD - NET** = "You have no right to worship the LORD." They postulate that this could be the mindset of the western tribes in the future toward the eastern tribes, because the latter were on the other side of the Jordan.

**So your sons may make our sons stop fearing the LORD - NET** gives a good translation = "In this way your descendants might cause our descendants to stop obeying the LORD."

[Believer's Study Bible](#) - Note the theme again of the spiritual legacy believers leave to their children

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**So shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord.**The danger to which they allude was not immediate, but prospective. There was little probability of their being **disowned** by their brethren of the present generation, but their children might be looked upon in after ages as having no interest in the God of Israel, or his instituted worship. **The consequence would be, that, being cut off from public ordinances, the life and power of religion would die out from among them, they would become reckless of their duty and allegiance to God, wickedness would abound, and they would sink to a state of comparative heathenism.** This was a prospect of which they could not endure to think. It was a state of things to be by all means averted; and though it would perhaps have been better to have consulted Joshua, or rather to have taken counsel of the Lord, respecting this measure before they carried it into execution, yet this solicitude for the spiritual welfare of their posterity cannot be too highly praised. Nothing weighs more deeply on the truly pious heart, than the transmission to the latest generations of those inestimable religious privileges, which have been the comfort and blessing of their fathers. If the outward institutions of piety are wanting in any community, the very existence of piety itself is endangered, and where that is the case, the judgments instead of the mercies of heaven will descend, as the inheritance of posterity.

**THOUGHT** - Yet, alas! how much more anxious are thousands to entail (in law settle the inheritance of (property) over a number of generations so that ownership remains within a particular group,) upon their descendants ample worldly possessions, even at the hazard of all their better interests, than to perpetuate

among them those invaluable means of grace which take hold on eternal life! (1Ti 6:12+) God forbid that we should ever be willing that our children should dwell in splendid mansions, or revel in accumulated riches, on which 'Ichabod' is written! ([What does the term "Ichabod" mean in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org/What-does-the-term-Ichabod-mean-in-the-Bible/))

**Joshua 22:26 "Therefore we said, 'Let us build an altar, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice;**

- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THEIR EXPLANATION: A NON-SACRIFICIAL ALTAR

**Therefore we said, 'Let us build an altar, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice-** This is not an altar that is made to compete with the altar at the Tabernacle.

**G Campbell Morgan - Josh. 22.26, 27.**

The two and a half tribes now returned to their possessions on the other side of Jordan. As they did so, they built an altar to the west of the river. To this the nine and a half tribes objected, not because they had any fear of their brethren possessing within the central borders of the land so recently divided, but because this act of erecting an altar seemed to indicate the setting up of a new centre of worship. In these words they replied to that fear, declaring that the altar was not raised for purpose of worship, but for a witness that they remained an integral part of the nation. It was a recognition of God, born of a fear of man. They were afraid that subsequent generations of those dwelling in the land might repudiate those dwelling on the other side of Jordan. It is all a very humiliating story, as it shows how suspicions and misunderstandings may exist between different tribes of the one nation. Its value to us is that it does indicate the true way of realizing unity. It is that of recognizing and testifying to our common allegiance to the one Lord. That is the bed-rock of our unity. There may be many temperaments, many dialects, many modes of expression, but there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and in proportion as each recognizes this, and yields wholly to it, all come to the realization of true unity, which is ever that of harmony—not monotony, but concordant difference.

**Joshua 22:27 rather it shall be a witness between us and you and between our generations after us, that we are to perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices and with our peace offerings, so that your sons will not say to our sons in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD."**

KJV Joshua 22:27 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.

NET Joshua 22:27 but as a reminder to us and you, and to our descendants who follow us, that we will honor the LORD in his very presence with burnt offerings, sacrifices, and tokens of peace. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to our descendants, 'You have no right to worship the LORD.'

BGT Joshua 22:27 ἵνα τοῦτο μαρτυριὸν ᾖ ὑμῶν καὶ ἡμῶν καὶ τῶν γενεῶν ὑμῶν μεθ' ἡμῶν ἵνα λατρεύωμεν λατρεύοντες κύριον ἑνώπιόν αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν θυσιασίων καὶ τῶν θυσιῶν καὶ τῶν εὐχαριστιῶν ἵνα οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν μὴ εἰπὴν ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ

NLT Joshua 22:27 but as a memorial. It will remind our descendants and your descendants that we, too, have the right to worship the LORD at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices, and peace offerings. Then your descendants will not be able to say to ours, 'You have no claim to the LORD.'

ESV Joshua 22:27 but to be a witness between us and you, and between our generations after us, that we do perform the service of the LORD in his presence with our burnt offerings and sacrifices and peace offerings, so your children will not say to our children in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD."

NIV Joshua 22:27 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.'

YLT Joshua 22:27 but a witness it is between us and you, and between our generations after us, to do the service of Jehovah before Him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace-offerings,



and your sons do not say hereafter to our sons, Ye have no portion in Jehovah.

LXE Joshua 22:27 but that this may be a witness between you and us, and between our posterity after us, that we may do service to the Lord before him, with our burnt-offerings and our meat-offerings and our peace-offerings: so your sons shall not say to our sons, hereafter, Ye have no portion in the Lord.

CSB Joshua 22:27 Instead, it is to be a witness between us and you, and between the generations after us, so that we may carry out the worship of the LORD in His presence with our burnt offerings, sacrifices, and fellowship offerings. Then in the future, your descendants will not be able to say to our descendants, 'You have no share in the LORD!'

- **a witness:** Jos 22:10,34 24:27 Ge 31:48,52 1Sa 7:12
- **that we:** De 12:5,6,11,17,18,26,27
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## AN ALTAR FOR A WITNESS

**Rather it shall be a witness between us and you and between our generations after us, that we are to perform(abad) the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices and with our peace offerings, so that your sons will not say to our sons in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD - NLT - "but as a memorial. It will remind our descendants and your descendants that we, too, have the right to worship the LORD at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices, and peace offerings. Then your descendants will not be able to say to ours, 'You have no claim to the LORD.'"**

**Don Anderson** - This imposing altar that we have built in your territory is there for the express purpose to remind your people, that we do have access to worship the Lord at His sanctuary with our burnt offerings or sacrifices and our fellowship offerings.

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**That it may be a witness.** An indelible monument and assurance that we are as truly the Lord's people as yourselves, and entitled to share unto perpetuity in the same distinguishing services and privileges.

**Joshua 22:28** "Therefore we said, 'It shall also come about if they say this to us or to our generations in time to come, then we shall say, "**See (BEHOLD) the copy of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice; rather it is a witness between us and you.**"

KJV Joshua 22:28 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.

NET Joshua 22:28 We said, 'If in the future they say such a thing to us or to our descendants, we will reply, "See the model of the LORD's altar that our ancestors made, not for burnt offerings or sacrifices, but as a reminder to us and you."

BGT Joshua 22:28 κα ε παμεν ν γνητα ποτε κα λαλ σωσιν πρ ς μ ς κα τα ς γενεα ς μ ν α ριον κα ρο σιν δετε μο ωμα το θυσιαστηρ ου κυρ ου πο ησαν ο πατρ ρε ς μ ν ο χ νεκεν καρπωμ των ο δ νεκεν θυσι ν λλ μαρτρ ιν σπι ν μ σον μ ν κα ν μ σον μ ν κα ν μ σον τ ν υ ν μ ν

NLT Joshua 22:28 "If they say this, our descendants can reply, 'Look at this copy of the LORD's altar that our ancestors made. It is not for burnt offerings or sacrifices; it is a reminder of the relationship both of us have with the LORD.'

ESV Joshua 22:28 And we thought, 'If this should be said to us or to our descendants in time to come, we should say, "Behold, the copy of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifice, but to be a witness between us and you."

NIV Joshua 22:28 "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.'

YLT Joshua 22:28 'And we say, And it hath been, when they say so unto us, and unto our generations

hereafter, that we have said, See the pattern of the altar of Jehovah, which our fathers made -- not for burnt-offering nor for sacrifice -- but a witness it is between us and you.

LXE Joshua 22:28 And we said, If ever it should come to pass that they should speak so to us, or to our posterity hereafter; then shall they say, Behold the likeness of the altar of the Lord, which our fathers made, not for the sake of burnt-offerings, nor for the sake of meat-offerings, but it is a witness between you and us, and between our sons.

CSB Joshua 22:28 We thought that if they said this to us or to our generations in the future, we would reply: Look at the replica of the LORD's altar that our fathers made, not for burnt offering or sacrifice, but as a witness between us and you.

NKJ Joshua 22:28 "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.'

NRS Joshua 22:28 And we thought, If this should be said to us or to our descendants in time to come, we could say, 'Look at this copy of the altar of the LORD, which our ancestors made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifice, but to be a witness between us and you.'

- **Behold:** Ex 25:40 2Ki 16:10 Eze 43:10,11 Heb 8:5
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Exodus 20:24-26 24 (comments). 'You shall make an **altar** of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. 25 'If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it. 26 'And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, so that your nakedness will not be exposed on it.'

### ALTAR TO SERVE TO REMINDE FUTURE GENERATIONS

Therefore we said, 'It shall also come about if they say this to us or to our generations in time to come, then we shall say, "**See the copy** (replica, model, pattern) **of the altar of the LORD (AT THE TRUE TABERNACLE) which our fathers made, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice; rather it is a witness between us and you.**"' - Note the "if...then" condition. The verb "**see**" (or behold) is a command calling for attention -- look at this, inspect it, consider, perceive the purpose of the altar. First it is only a **copy** and not meant to be a replacement. Second, it is not "functional" in terms of being an altar for offering sacrifice. Thirdly, it is in fact a witness and as such is meant to bear a true testimony that the tribes on the eastern side revere Yahweh and His place of rest in the tabernacle on the western side of the Jordan.

[Keil and Delitzsch](#) - For this reason they had built the altar according to the pattern of the altar before the tabernacle, and that not in their own land, but on the western side of the Jordan, where the dwelling-place of Jehovah was standing, as a **witness** that they worshipped one and the same God with the tribes on this side.

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**Say to us, or to our generations in time to come.** Rather according to the well-known Heb. idiom, 'say to us, even to our generations.' It is evident that their fears concerned their offspring, and not themselves.

**That we may say again.** That is, that our posterity, who shall be then living, may say. See on ch. 4:23.

**Behold the pattern.** Rather the copy; the exact representation and resemblance. This they would have regarded as a sign, a memorial, that they both acknowledged and served the same God, and both made use of one and the same altar.

Joshua 22:29 "Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away from following the LORD this day, by building an altar for burnt offering, for grain offering or for sacrifice, besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle."

KJV Joshua 22:29 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.

NET Joshua 22:29 Far be it from us to rebel against the LORD by turning back today from following after the LORD by building an altar for burnt offerings, sacrifices, and tokens of peace aside from the altar of the LORD our God located in front of his dwelling place!"

BGT Joshua 22:29 μ γ νοπο ο ν μ ς ποστραφ ναι π κυρ ου ν τα ς σ μερον μ ραι ς ποστ ναι π κυρ ου στε ο κοδομσαι μ ς θυσιαστ ριον το ς καρπ μασιν κα τα ς θυσαι ς σαλαμιν κα τ θυσ το σωτηρ ου πλ ν το θυσιαστηρ ου κυρ ου στιν ναντ ον τ ς σκην ς α το

NLT Joshua 22:29 Far be it from us to rebel against the LORD or turn away from him by building our own altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings, or sacrifices. Only the altar of the LORD our God that stands in front of the Tabernacle may be used for that purpose."

ESV Joshua 22:29 Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away this day from following the LORD by building an altar for burnt offering, grain offering, or sacrifice, other than the altar of the LORD our God that stands before his tabernacle!"

NIV Joshua 22:29 "Far be it from us to rebel against the LORD and turn away from him today by building an altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings and sacrifices, other than the altar of the LORD our God that stands before his tabernacle."

YLT Joshua 22:29 'Far be it from us to rebel against Jehovah, and to turn back to-day from after Jehovah, to build an altar for burnt-offering, for present, and for sacrifice, apart from the altar of Jehovah our God, which is before His tabernacle.'

LXE Joshua 22:29 Far be it from us therefore that we should turn away from the Lord this day so as to apostatize from the Lord, so as that we should build an altar for burnt-offerings, and for peace-offerings, besides the altar of the Lord which is before his tabernacle.

CSB Joshua 22:29 We would never rebel against the LORD or turn away from Him today by building an altar for burnt offering, grain offering, or sacrifice, other than the altar of the LORD our God, which is in front of His tabernacle."

NKJ Joshua 22:29 "Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn from following 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."

NRS Joshua 22:29 Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn away this day from following the LORD by building an altar for burnt offering, grain offering, or sacrifice, other than the altar of the LORD our God that stands before his tabernacle!"

- God forbid: Jos 24:16 Ge 44:7,17 1Sa 12:23 1Ki 21:3 Ro 3:6 6:2 9:14
- to build: Jos 22:23,26 De 12:13,14 2Ki 18:22 2Ch 32:12
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **HORROR EXPRESSED AT THOUGHT THEY WOULD REBEL**

**Far be it from us** (KJV = "God forbid") **that we should rebel** ([marad](#); Lxx-[apostrepho](#)) **against the LORD and turn away** ([shub/sub](#); Lxx-[aphistemi](#)) **from following the LORD this day, by building an altar for burnt offering** ([olah](#)), **for grain offering or for sacrifice, besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle** - The eastern tribes express their strong aversion to and horror at the thought they would rebel and turn away.

**Cyril Barber** comments that "The motivation behind building the altar was one of fear. The eastern tribes were concerned lest in time they cease to be regarded as a part of the nation. The altar was designed as a memorial, nothing more."([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

Teach me to feel that you are always nigh;  
teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,  
to check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;

teach me the patience of unceasing prayer.

**Joshua 22:30** So when Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the congregation, even the heads of the families of Israel who were with him, heard the words which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the sons of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them.

- **it pleased them:** Jos 22:33 Ge 28:8 Jdg 8:3 1Sa 25:32,33 29:6 2Ch 30:4 Es 1:21 \*margins Pr 15:1 Ac 11:18
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THEIR EXPLANATION WAS ACCEPTED

**So when Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the congregation, even the heads of the families of Israel who were with him, heard the words which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the sons of Manasseh spoke** - Crisis averted! Civil war shelved! They heard the transjordan tribes' words and believed them.

**It pleased them** Hebrew literally is "it was good in their eyes."

A Song of Ascents, of David.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is

For brothers to dwell together in unity!

-- Psalm 133:1

**Utley** - "it pleased them" This VERB ([yatab/yatav](#) Qal imperfect) is used in this sense several times (cf. Josh 22:33; Lev. 10:19, 20; Deut. 1:23; 1Sam. 18:5; 24:4; 2Sam. 3:36; 18:4; 1Ki 3:10).

**TSK** has an interesting comment - It is remarkable, that Joshua is not once named in this transaction; but this only shows, that he did not in his old age assume any regal authority, but left the elders and magistrates to conduct the general business, only acting himself when great occasions made it necessary. Yet we cannot doubt, that his wisdom and piety influenced the counsels of the elders and people at this time. (ED: THIS COULD ALSO BE INTERPRETED AS HIS LEADERSHIP INTEGRITY AND CHARACTER WAS SUCH THAT IT RAISED UP MEN OF SIMILAR QUALITY.

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 30-34. It is well that there was on both sides a disposition to peace, as there was a zeal for God; for quarrels about religion, for want of wisdom and love, often prove the most fierce and difficult to be made up. Proud and peevish spirits, when they have passed any unjust blame on their brethren, though full evidence be brought of its unfairness, can by no means be persuaded to withdraw it. But Israel was not so prejudiced. They looked upon their brethren's innocence as a token of God's presence. Our brethren's zeal for the power of godliness, and faith and love, notwithstanding the fears of their breaking the unity of the church, are things of which we should be very glad to be satisfied. The altar was called ED, a witness. It was a witness of their care to keep their religion pure and entire, and would witness against their descendants, if they should turn from following after the Lord. Happy will it be when all professed Christians learn to copy the example of Israel, to unite zeal and steady adherence to the cause of truth, with candour, meekness, and readiness to understand each other, to explain and to be satisfied with the explanations of their brethren. May the Lord increase the number of those who endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace! may increasing grace and consolation be with all who love Jesus Christ in sincerity!

**Pleased** (good - combined with Heb - ayin = eye = good in eyes) ([03190](#)) [yatab/yatav](#) means to be good, to be well, to be pleasing. To be made well, happy, cheerful, joyful. Using the same language of Ru 3:1 (security ... **be well** [well = yatab]) Boaz is described as having a sense of well being which is most readily explained by the full harvest in contrast to previous years of famine (cf. Jdg 18:20-[note](#)). **Yatab** is often used in idiomatic expressions with **heart** (as in current verse) where it means to be pleased or to be happy. It is often used in idiomatic expressions with heart (**lêb**), meaning to be pleased or to be happy ([Jdg](#). 18:20; 19:6, 9; Ruth 3:7); and with eyes, to be pleasing to someone else (i.e., pleasing or good in their eyes Ge. 34:18; 1 Sa 18:5). **Yatab/yatav** is found first in the story of Cain and Abel, where it is used twice in one verse: "If you do **well**, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do **well**, sin is crouching at the door" (Ge 4:7)

**Joshua 22:31** And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Manasseh, "Today we know that the LORD is in our midst, because you have not committed this unfaithful act against the LORD; now you have delivered the sons of Israel from the hand of the LORD."

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KJV Joshua 22:31 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.

NET Joshua 22:31 Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the priest, said to the Reubenites, Gadites, and the Manassehites, "Today we know that the LORD is among us, because you have not disobeyed the LORD in this. Now you have rescued the Israelites from the LORD's judgment."

BGT Joshua 22:31 κα ε πεν Φινεες ερε ς το ς υ ο ς Ρουβην κα το ς υ ο ς Γαδ κα τ μ σει φυλ ς Μανασση σ μερον γν καμεν τι μεθ μ ν κ ριος δι τι ο κ πλημμελ σατε ναντ ον κυρ ου πλημμ λειαν κα τι ρρ σασθε το ς υ ο ς Ισραηλ κ χειρ ς κυρ ου

NLT Joshua 22:31 Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, replied to them, "Today we know the LORD is among us because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD as we thought. Instead, you have rescued Israel from being destroyed by the hand of the LORD."

ESV Joshua 22:31 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the people of Manasseh, "Today we know that the LORD is in our midst, because you have not committed this breach of faith against the LORD. Now you have delivered the people of Israel from the hand of the LORD."

NIV Joshua 22:31 And Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, said to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, "Today we know that the LORD is with us, because you have not acted unfaithfully toward the LORD in this matter. Now you have rescued the Israelites from the LORD's hand."

YLT Joshua 22:31 And Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest saith unto the sons of Reuben, and unto the sons of Gad, and unto the sons of Manasseh, 'To-day we have known that Jehovah is in our midst, because ye have not committed against Jehovah this trespass -- then ye have delivered the sons of Israel out of the hand of Jehovah.'

LXE Joshua 22:31 And Phinees the priest said to the sons of Ruben, and to the sons of Gad, and to the half of the tribe of Manasse, To-day we know that the Lord is with us, because ye have not trespassed grievously against the Lord, and because ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord.

- **the Lord:** Jos 3:10 Lev 26:11,12 Nu 14:41-43 2Ch 15:2 Ps 68:17 Isa 12:6 Zec 8:23 Mt 1:23 1Co 14:25
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## "ALTAR ACQUITTAL"

**And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Manasseh, "Today we know ([yada](#): Lxx-[ginosko](#) in perfect tense) that the LORD ([Jehovah](#)) is in our midst, because you have not committed this unfaithful act ([maal](#)) against the LORD ([Jehovah](#))** - Phinehas recognizes the Lord's presence in this interaction, so that Yahweh was glorified in what could have been a tragic situation for the nation of Israel.

**Anderson** explains why Phinehas says "**Today we know that the Lord is with us**" - The reason we know that is because you have not acted unfaithfully toward the Lord in this matter. As a result of that, you have now rescued the Israelites from the Lord's hand."

**now you have delivered the sons of Israel from the hand of the LORD**- NET - "Now you have rescued the Israelites from the LORD's judgement." **Phinehas** put a "positive spin" on the misunderstanding (but without patronizing), the sign of a wise leader.

**Utley** - "**you have delivered the sons of Israel from the hand of the LORD** This VERB in the Hiphil means "rescue," "save," or "snatch away" (cf. 2:13; 9:26; Jdgs. 9:17; 1 Sam. 14:48). If these tribes would have acted unfaithfully, then YHWH's judgment would have fallen on all Israel (cf. vv. 17, 20). Since the eastern tribes had not rebelled, then all of Israel was "delivered"!"

**Believer's Study Bible** (Joshua 22:31-33) makes an excellent point that "The Lord will not work among an unfaithful people. Reconciliation demonstrates His presence and results in worship (cf. 1Co 12:25, 26; 13:6; 2Co 2:5-11)."

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**Delivered** (Lxx in Josh 22:31 = [rhuomai](#))([05337](#)) [natsal](#) means primarily to deliver, often by the power of one entity overcoming another. Deliverance from the hand or power (Ge 32:11, Hos 2:10). Idols and human might cannot deliver (1 Sa 12:21, Ps 33:16).

Strong's = 1) to snatch away, deliver, rescue, save, strip, plunder 1a) (Niphal) 1a1) to tear oneself away, deliver oneself 1a2) to be torn out or away, be delivered 1b) (Piel) 1b1) to strip off, spoil 1b2) to deliver 1c) (Hiphil) 1c1) to take away, snatch away 1c2) to rescue, recover 1c3) to deliver (from enemies or troubles or death) 1c4) to deliver from sin and guilt 1d) (Hophal) to be plucked out 1e) (Hithpael) to strip oneself

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**This day we perceive that the Lord is among us.** Rendered in the Targum of Jonathan, 'This day we know that the majesty of the Lord dwelleth among us, because ye have not committed this prevarication against the Word of the Lord, and thus ye have delivered the children of Israel from the hand of the Word of the Lord.' The sense undoubtedly is, that the happy issue of the affair proved conclusively that God was among them by his preventing goodness. Had their motives been less pure and conscientious than they were, the result would have been unquestionably far more disastrous. But as all unhappy consequences had been avoided, the inference was inevitable that God was that day in the midst of them, that he had approved the spirit and motives in which the step originated, and, accordingly, would not suffer a well meant design to be productive of the injurious and mournful effects which they at one time apprehended. The obvious lesson taught by the passage is, that pure and pious motives in our conduct secure the presence of God with us, and consequently an exemption from the evils and disasters that would be sure to follow a contrary course. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, even his enemies shall be at peace with him.' How delightful to recognize the hand of a gracious Providence overruling the most untoward events and brightening the darkest prospects, in reference to his humble servants who are aiming to walk in his fear! How desirable to afford to others the evidence that God is with us and smiling upon us by the happy and prosperous results of all our undertakings!

**Ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord.** As it is a sinful and perverse deportment that delivers us into the hand of God for punishment, so it is only repentance and a corresponding humble and conscientious walk, that will deliver us out of his hand. The effect of our example on the public welfare should operate at once to deter us from transgression, and engage us in the practice of every moral virtue.

**Joshua 22:32** Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest and the leaders returned from the sons of Reuben and from the sons of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the sons of Israel, and brought back word to them.

- **brought back word to them:** Jos 22:12-14 Pr 25:13
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DELEGATION RETURNS TO INFORM THE CONGREGATION

**Then** - This marks progress in the narrative. Their explanation had been satisfactory and met with approval by all.

**Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest and the leaders returned from the sons of Reuben and from the sons of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the sons of Israel, and brought back word to them** - The delegation returns to the western tribes and brings good news. They "Made a full and faithful report of the whole transaction upon their return to their brethren." ([Bush](#))

**Joshua 22:33** The word pleased the sons of Israel, and the sons of Israel blessed God; and they did not speak of going up against them in war to destroy the land in which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad were living.

- **The word pleased the sons:** Jos 22:30 Ac 15:12,31 2Co 7:7 1Th 3:6-8
- **blessed God:** 1Sa 25:32,33 1Ch 29:20 Ne 8:5,6 Da 2:19 Lu 2:28 Eph 1:3
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE CONGREGATION IS PLEASED AND PRAISES GOD

**The word pleased the sons of Israel** - The word that the altar was not an act of rebellion but a witness was pleasing to the western tribes.

**And the sons of Israel blessed ([barak](#); Lxx- [eulogeo](#)) God** - The result of the conflict resolution was praise to God. Would it be that

more church altercations when resolved end in a praise and worship service!

**And they did not speak of going up against them in war to destroy the land in which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad were living** - The matter was dropped entirely and not even spoken of again.

**Cyril Barber** - What is important for us to realize is that certain actions taken unilaterally, even those free from ulterior motives, may result in misunderstanding and schism. And if there is no one like Phineas to heal the breach that is forming, then an irreparable rift may be the result. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

Did not intend to go up. Heb. 'said not to go up.' So 2 Sam. 21:16, 'And Ishbi-benob—thought to have slain David;' Heb. 'said to have slain;' i. e. purposed, intended. They renounced the intention of going up. They had at first intended it, but the statements of their delegates convinced them there was no necessity for it, and they accordingly abandoned the idea entirely.

To destroy the land. To lay waste, to ravage, to make desolate the land.

#### **Joshua 22:34 The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad called the altar [Witness]; "For," they said, "it is a witness between us that the LORD is God."**

KJV Joshua 22:34 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.

NET Joshua 22:34 The Reubenites and Gadites named the altar, "Surely it is a Reminder to us that the LORD is God."

BGT Joshua 22:34 κα πων μασεν ησο ς τν βωμν τν Ρουβην κα τν Γαδ κα το μ σους φυλ ς Μανασση κα επεν τι μαρτι ς τιν ν μ στον α τν τι κ ριο ς θε ς α τν σπιν

NLT Joshua 22:34 The people of Reuben and Gad named the altar "Witness," for they said, "It is a witness between us and them that the LORD is our God, too."

ESV Joshua 22:34 The people of Reuben and the people of Gad called the altar Witness, "For," they said, "it is a witness between us that the LORD is God."

NIV Joshua 22:34 And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name: A Witness Between Us that the LORD is God.

YLT Joshua 22:34 And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad proclaim concerning the altar, that 'it is a witness between us that Jehovah is God.'

LXE Joshua 22:34 And Joshua gave a name to the altar of the children of Ruben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasse; and said, It is a testimony in the midst of them, that the Lord is their God.

CSB Joshua 22:34 So the Reubenites and Gadites named the altar: It is a witness between us that the LORD is God.

NKJ Joshua 22:34 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."

NRS Joshua 22:34 The Reubenites and the Gadites called the altar Witness; "For," said they, "it is a witness between us that the LORD is God."

NAB Joshua 22:34 The Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar its name as a witness among them that the LORD is God.

NJB Joshua 22:34 The Reubenites and the Gadites called the altar . . . , 'Because', they said, 'it will be a witness between us that Yahweh is God.'

- **witness** Jos 22:27 24:27 1Ki 18:39 Isa 43:10 Mt 4:10
- [Joshua 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WITNESS OF UNITY

**The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad called the altar *Witness*; "For," they said, "it is a witness between us that the LORD ([Jehovah](#)) is God** - The altar was a Witness to the unity of the 12 tribes and reminds us of the work of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 4:3 for the Western tribes had been "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

**Mattoon** - Frank, open discussion cleared the air and lead to reconciliation and rest. The stones of the altar were a witness, but unfortunately the people were not a witness. They fell quickly into idolatry (1 Chronicles 5:25-26).

But they acted treacherously against the God of their fathers and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. 26 So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away into exile, namely the **Reubenites**, the **Gadites** and the **half-tribe of Manasseh**, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara and to the river of Gozan, to this day.

**Utley** - "**called the altar Witness**" In the NASB, the term "*witness*" is in italics, which means that it is not in the ancient Masoretic or Hebrew text. This term does not appear in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, or the Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Old Testament. It is simply supplied for an English reader to understand what the altar was called (following the Syriac translation). It really refers to the term mentioned in Josh 22:27 ("it shall be a **witness** between us and you and between our generations after us").

**Irving Jensen** - The explanation pleased the children of Israel, whose one concern was that the Lord would remain in the midst of all the people (Josh 22:31). The altar was called "Ed" ("witness"), for it was a witness between the two peoples that "Jehovah is God" (Josh 22:34). ([Joshua- Everyman's Bible Commentary: Rest-Land Won](#))

**TSK** - , The word witness, or testimony, is not found in the common editions of the Hebrew Bible; and is supplied in Italics by our venerable translators, at least in our modern copies; for in the first edition of this translation, it stands in the text without any note of this kind; but it is found in several of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., and also in the Syriac and Arabic. Several also of the early printed editions of the Hebrew Bible have the word {ed,} either in the text or in the margin; and it must be allowed to be necessary to complete the sense. It is very probable that an inscription was put on this altar, signifying the purpose for which it was erected. Thus was this affair most happily terminated.

**F B Meyer** - It was a great altar to see to, not intended for burnt-offering or meal-offering, or for religious rites; but as a perpetual witness that its builders were leal-hearted Israelites. But it was a great mistake. No pattern for its shape had been received from God, nor any direction as to its construction; whilst if they had obeyed the divine instruction, that three times in the year all their males should appear before God in Shiloh, there would have been no need for this clumsy contrivance. In their view the unity of the people could not be preserved by a merely spiritual bond, but by an outward and mechanical one. The common ties of the altar at Shiloh were insufficient; there must be in addition the great altar of Ed.

**Donald Campbell** asks a pertinent question - In a book describing the occupation and distribution of the Promised Land, why should this single incident be treated in such detail? Simply because it illustrates certain principles that were vital to Israel living together in the land harmoniously and under God's full blessing. The same principles apply to those in God's family today. It is commendable for believers to be zealous for the purity of the faith. Compromise of truth is always costly. (See Jude 3) It is wrong to judge people's motives on the basis of circumstantial evidence. We need to gather all the facts and to avoid a quick response on the basis of an emotionally charged account of a situation. Frank and open discussion will often clear the air and lead to reconciliation. But we must approach such a confrontation in a spirit of meekness, not arrogance. (See Gal. 6:1) If we are wrongly accused, we would do well to remember the wise counsel of Solomon, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1). ([No Time for Neutrality](#))

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 22](#)

**Called the altar Ed.** It is remarkable that the last word in this clause, 'Ed,' a witness, is not found in the original, at least in the common copies, though others are said to contain it, and it occurs in the Arabic and Syriac versions. Our translators have properly supplied it in Italics, as it is the word which the sense evidently requires. How it comes to be lacking in the common editions of the Heb. it is impossible to determine. This altar, upon which there was probably an inscription, was henceforth to be a witness of the relation in which they stood to God and to Israel, and of their concurrence with the rest of the tribes in the great fundamental truth, that 'the Lord he is God,' he and no other, and that he was to be worshipped in no other way, and at no other place, than he had himself prescribed. It was, moreover, a witness to posterity of their care to transmit their religion pure and unimpaired to them, and would be a witness against them, if ever they should forsake God and turn to idolatry.—From the incidents above related we may gather, (1) That the best meant things may afford cause of suspicion; as those are sometimes suspected of aiming to effect a



breach in the unity of the church, who are most diligently laboring to heal her divisions, and to preserve to posterity the purity of her doctrines and worship. (2) It can do our brethren no injury to be jealous over them with a godly jealousy, even when we may be mistaken in our fears. (3) Nothing will so soon kindle the zeal of a faithful and devoted spirit, as the symptoms of apostasy from God in others, because to such an one nothing is so dear as his glory. (4) Rising corruptions and dangerous errors should, in the spirit of meekness, be resisted as soon as broached, lest the evil leaven, being permitted to spread, should leaven the whole mass. (5) The testimony of a good conscience is the most effectual support against the heaviest accusations.

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### **Guzik - We should respond to misunderstanding in the same manner, according to these same principles**

- a. Respond with a concern for God's holiness.
  - b. Respond with the courage to confront in love.
  - c. Respond with an attempt to reconcile before you fight.
  - d. Determine that you are willing to sacrifice to help them; don't confront unless you are willing to help.
  - e. Determine that you will see the situation from the perspective of the other person.
  - f. Determine that you will believe the best of one another.
- 

### **Joshua 22:34 Flawed Impressions**

It is a witness between us that the LORD is God. — Joshua 22:34

Today's Scripture: Joshua 22:10-34

Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* is the story of an upper-middle-class Englishwoman named Lizzy Bennet who is pursued by Mr. Darcy, a brooding and complex man of great wealth. Lizzy's first impression of Mr. Darcy was that he was arrogant, introverted, and self-serving. So when he declares his love for her, she rejects him. Later, when she learns of his many secret acts of kindness for others, Lizzy admits that she had been wrong about Mr. Darcy and agrees to marry him.

Joshua 22 records another instance of flawed first impressions. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh had built an altar near the Jordan. When the other tribes learned about this, they were enraged (vv.9-12) because God had commanded that He alone be worshiped and that sacrifices be performed only in the tabernacle (Ex. 20:3; Lev. 17:8-9). They saw the building of this altar as an act of apostasy. Fortunately, Phinehas the priest led a delegation to find out why they had built the altar (Josh. 22:13-33). They were told that it was a memorial of unity for all the tribes under the one God of Israel (v.34).

Often our first impressions can be wrong. Open communication, however, can correct misunderstandings that are created by our own pride and prejudice. By: Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Don't judge too quickly what you see;  
Treat lightly first impression;  
Misunderstandings multiply  
Without communication.  
—Sper

First impressions often lead to wrong conclusions.

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**Cyril Barber** - From this chapter we glean several important truths, foremost of which is the danger of basing our actions on hearsay.

In classical literature we come across a race of women warriors called [Amazons](#) who lived near the Black Sea. They were more than a figment of storytellers' imagination, for history records their invasion of Lycia, attack on Phrygia, and defeat by Theseus, king of Attica, in the Battle of Thermopylae. Of the many stories told about these women one explained the absence of men in their society. According to this tradition, when their husbands were away fighting in a war, a messenger came bringing news of their victory. Among the spoils of war were beautiful women, and each of the soldiers supposedly took one or more of them in marriage.<sup>8</sup> This was only a rumor, but it was believed by their wives. When their husbands came home, their wives arranged for them to be murdered.

A similar story became the basis for Shakespeare's tragedy [Othello](#). The Bard showed how dangerous misinformation can be. As a result of cunningly contrived slander Othello murdered his wife Desdemona for her supposed infidelity. Too late he realized what he

had done. When he was told that he must be tried for murder, he killed himself.

Slander involves bearing false witness against your neighbor out of malignity or vanity so as to prejudice his fame, safety or welfare. As such it is condemned in Scripture (cf. Exodus 20:16). The principal kinds of slander are: (1) charging others with acts they are not guilty of having committed; (2) affixing odious motives to the actions of individuals; (3) maligning a person's actions by implying that they proceed from evil principles; (4) perverting a man's words or actions disadvantageously; (5) a partial or lame representation of men's discourse or practice, suppressing some part of the truth or concealing some circumstances which ought to be explained; (6) resorting to cunningly contrived suggestions which create prejudice in the minds of hearers; (7) magnifying and aggravating the faults of others; and (8) imputing to a person's practice, judgment, or profession evil consequences which have no foundation in truth.

Those who engage in such acts are guilty of character assassination and inflict untold hurt on the guiltless. In Othello people who were innocent died along with the guilty. It is no wonder that Scripture exhorts us to banish from our lives all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander, along with all malice, and to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven us (cf. Ephesians 4:31–32; see also Mark 7:20–22; Colossians 3:8; 1 Peter 2:1). ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

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**J Vernon McGee** - On the surface, the building of this altar sounds like a good idea, and many commentators have placed their seal of approval upon it. However, let's take more than a cursory look at this altar called "Ed." In the tabernacle was the brazen altar for sacrifices. There was to be no other. Deuteronomy 12:27 says, "And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh." Israel was told to destroy all other altars. "But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves" (Ex 34:13). There was to be but one exception, in Deuteronomy 27:4–8, where Israel is told to take twelve stones out of the Jordan River and put them up as a memorial. The two and one-half tribes never crossed over Jordan, and the river actually divided them from their brethren. This altar recognized that division. This altar was prima facie evidence that they were divided. It made way for the division later on. Right now Israel is divided east and west. It is nine and one-half tribes versus two and one-half tribes at this point, but later on it will be a north and south division with ten tribes in the north against two tribes in the south.

The brazen altar in the tabernacle, typifying the redemptive work of Christ, was a place of unity. And friend, I can meet with any man who will exalt Jesus Christ. In John 17:20–21 Jesus prayed, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." There is an organic unity of those who are in Christ. The altar speaks of the death of Christ as a sacrifice.

As the two and one-half tribes built a bloodless altar which had divided Israel, today those who are liberal in their theology have divided the church. They have accused fundamentalists of being schismatic, but it is liberalism that has departed from the cross and the deity of Christ. They do not like an altar with blood. They have put up an "Ed," if you please. They worship at an altar where no sacrifice is to be offered. They have a "bloodless" Christ. Like the two and one-half tribes, their conduct reveals that they have departed from the truth. Our Lord said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits ..." (Matt. 7:16). Several hundred years later the Lord Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee and came to the country of the Gadarenes. The people living there were from the tribe of Gad, and they were still living on the wrong side of the Jordan River. Our Lord came upon a demon-possessed man dwelling in the tombs, and He cast the demons out of the man and gave them permission to enter a herd of pigs nearby. The Gadarenes were in the pig business! Can you imagine an Orthodox Jew in the pig business? They had failed to follow the commandments of God. They were on the wrong side of Jordan. Liberalism has indeed divided the church. It has erected a beautiful altar, a "bloodless" Christ, one who never actually lived, one without deity, one without ability to save humanity. My friend, have you crossed over Jordan? Have you entered into the rest of redemption which Christ offers?

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**Sidlow Baxter** has an interesting observation - How many there are who, like these two and a half tribes, want to feel quite sure that they have their part with God's Israel, yet are content to live just outside the land! No doubt this altar "Ed" (HEBREW WORD FOR WITNESS) was well meant; but was it not needless if the Divine command were obeyed that three times each year all the males of Israel should appear before the Lord, in Shiloh? Was it not also presumptuous? No pattern for its shape had been given of God, and no direction for its construction. Nor, apparently, had the counsel of the Lord been as much as thought of!

Now here is a noteworthy lesson concerning the unity of faith. Had Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh settled west of the Jordan with the other tribes, in the promised place of blessing, no such artificial monument of their oneness with Israel would have been required. True unity is not outward but inward. It is not achieved, nor even preserved, by external memorials. It consists in a oneness of inward and spiritual experience. The trend among the various denominations in the organised Church of today is to seek an imposing outward union by the formulation of a common creed and the inclusion of all sections in some single visible body with

impressive proportions and social prestige. This is the building of a modern "altar Ed." It is the confusing of unity with mere uniformity.

The only true unity is that of a common inward life, a common spiritual experience, and a common heart-loyalty. Those who are really living "in the land," in the enjoyment of that spiritual Canaan which is in Christ, are conscious of their spiritual oneness with all the elect of God in Christ, whatever outward denominational differentiations may exist between them.

Speaking of this true unity, the late Dr. F.B. Meyer, in a fine passage, says: "Coming from all points of the compass, fired by the same hopes, suppliants at the same meeting-place, reliant upon the same blood, the common attraction establishes an organic unity like that of the tree, the multiplicity of whose parts is subsidiary to the one life-force; or like that of the body, the variety of whose members is subordinate to the one animating soul. "The nearer we get to Christ, the more clearly we discern our unity with all who belong to Him. We learn to think less of points of divergence, and more about those of agreement. We find that the idiosyncrasies by which each believer is fitted for his specific work do not materially affect those depths of the inner life which in all saints abut on the nature of the living Saviour. As the scattered sheep browse their way up towards a common summit, they converge on each other, and there is one flock, as there is one Shepherd. "It is the supreme vision of the Bible, granted to the most eminent saints, that though the new Jerusalem comprehends the names of the tribes of Israel and of the Apostles of the Lamb, is garnished by jewels of many hues, and has gates facing in an directions, it yet is one, 'the Bride, the Lamb's wife.' What wonder, then, that the world, and sometimes the professing Church, supposes that the Lord's prayer is not fulfilled, and that the unity has yet to be made? The unity is made; but only the spiritual with spiritual discernment can detect its symmetry."

We cannot make spiritual unity. The unity of the sanctified in Christ is a spiritual reality wrought by the Holy Spirit Himself. The secret, of Christian unity lies in our being west of Jordan - with the baptismal burial, of that Jordan flood passed through, and the experience of the Spirit's fulness entered into. Give us back that Canaan experience of spiritual fulness which came at Pentecost, and then the overflowing consciousness of spiritual unity among Christ's own will submerge all artificial barriers. Israel's true unity lay in a common life and a common experience of God which found concentrated expression in that one altar of sacrifice at Shiloh. Even so, the true unity of the Lord's own today lies in - and is only realized according to their common experience of life in Christ, finding its vital centre in the Cross and person of the Redeemer. Let this twenty-second chapter of Joshua, then, speak to us its message on the true unity of faith. ([Explore the Book - pdf](#))

## MORE NOTES ON CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

These are notes from multiple sources that speak in some way about the meaning of circumcision of the heart.

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**Steven Lawson on Deuteronomy 30:6** - Moses presented God's sovereign work of grace as a spiritual circumcision, a cutting away of the foreskin of the unbelieving heart. It is a penetrating work of grace that removes man's inability to believe and replaces it with true repentance and faith. Regeneration is open-heart surgery, a soul-reviving work of the Spirit that probes to the deepest level of a person's being. Concerning this work of regeneration, Anthony Hoekema writes, "*What does the Bible teach about regeneration? Already in the Old Testament we are taught that only God can bring about the radical change which is necessary to enable fallen human beings again to do what is pleasing in His sight. In Deuteronomy 30:6 we find our spiritual renewal figuratively described as a circumcision of the heart.... Since the heart is the inner core of the person, the passage teaches that God must cleanse us within before we can truly love Him.*" Explaining the irresistible nature of this divine work, Craigie writes, "*It is seen rather to be an act of God and thus indicates the new covenant, when God would in His grace deal with man's basic spiritual problem. When God 'operated' on the heart, then indeed the people would be able to love the Lord and live.*" (Foundations of Grace)

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**Life Application Commentary** - Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law. NRSV Circumcision was fundamental to the Jews-it symbolized the covenant between God and Abraham's descendants (Genesis 17:9-14). It was the expression of Israel's national identity and was a requirement for all Jewish men. Circumcision was a physical reminder to Jews of their national heritage and privilege. Many were confident that it sealed their position with God. But just as having the law did not make a person right before God, neither was circumcision in itself a cause for confidence. To be circumcised was only worthwhile if God's law was followed (see Galatians 5:3). To be circumcised and yet break God's law was no better than not being circumcised at all. What God desires is a pure and obedient heart. The futility of substituting the symbol for the reality it represents was clear even in the Old Testament. Moses knew that obedience was much more than submitting to the ceremonial law. He wrote, "Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer" (Deuteronomy 10:16 NIV). Jeremiah echoed the same concern: "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem" (Jeremiah 4:4 NIV).

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**Jack Deere on Deuteronomy 10:16** - The proper response to their election by the sovereign Lord was to circumcise their hearts (cf. 30:6). An uncircumcised heart means a will that is hardened against God's commands. It is another way of saying the person is stiff-necked or stubborn (cf. 9:6, 13; 31:27). Thus the command to circumcise their hearts assumes that human hearts are naturally rebellious and need correction. Though human hearts are slow to change, Moses warned the nation that no bribe or anything less than an inward transformation could satisfy the LORD, who is the great God. ([Bible knowledge commentary](#))

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### **Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask**

**PROBLEM:** According to this verse, “**the Lord your God will circumcise your heart**” However, earlier in the same book Moses called on Israel to “**circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer**” (Deut. 10:16). But how can we have it both ways?

**SOLUTION:** The truth is that there is both an active and passive role for humans in salvation. We are active in receiving the gift, but we were not active in the giving of the gift. We actively submit our hearts to God, but we are not active in saving our own hearts. In short, while we are active in receiving or accepting salvation, we had absolutely nothing to do with providing or accomplishing salvation. Even though the one rescued is active in receiving the lifeline, nonetheless, he is passive in being rescued by the rescuer who pulls in the rope. Likewise, we actively submit to the life-saving operation, but we are passive in receiving the physician's skillful surgery that saves our life. The situation can be summarized as follows:

#### OUR ACTIVE ROLE IN SALVATION

- Reception of the gift
- Submitting to salvation
- Believing
- Accepting salvation

#### OUR PASSIVE ROLE IN SALVATION

- Giving of the gift
  - Being saved
  - Being redeemed
  - Accomplishing salvation
- 

### **Kendall Easley - Circumcision**

And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while still uncircumcised. This was to make him the father of all who believe but are not circumcised, so that righteousness may be credited to them also. Romans 4:11-12

**DEFINITION:** Physical circumcision refers to the act of cutting off the foreskin of a male's reproductive organ. Spiritual circumcision refers to the inner change by which a person is enabled to trust, love, and obey God wholeheartedly.

In recent times, circumcision has been widely practiced in the Western world as a medical procedure, done for its supposed health benefit later in life for the male and for his sexual partner(s). This practice should be kept entirely separate from the discussion of circumcision as a religious ritual.

In the Bible, circumcision was first a ritual symbolizing the covenant God made with Abraham, and which his male descendants were supposed to practice (Gn 17:14). Later on, circumcision on the eighth day of an Israelite boy's life became mandatory (Lv 12:3). By Paul's time, circumcision was often interpreted by Jews to mean that every circumcised person was automatically right with God. This triggered an early Christian controversy about whether non-Jews who came into a right relationship with God by faith should be circumcised (Ac 15). Was circumcision a good work that contributed to one's standing before God? Paul answered with an emphatic no (Gl 5:1-12; 6:12-15; Rm 2:25-29; 4:10-12).

The Old Testament emphasized the importance of bodily circumcision, yet a few texts pointed to the truth that Israelite circumcision should be considered a sign that one had experienced the inner spiritual cleansing that comes by faith (Dt 10:16; Jr 4:4). Most remarkable is the promise of Deuteronomy 30:6: “The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, and you will love Him with all your heart and all your soul, so that you will live.”

This provided the basis for Paul's argument in Romans 2:25-28 that circumcised persons who misbehave are worse off than uncircumcised men who do the right thing. This climaxed in his amazing announcement that "a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, and true circumcision is not something visible in the flesh" (Rm 2:28). Following Paul's lead, Christianity has rejected circumcision as a ritual to be practiced by churches: "Circumcision does not matter and uncircumcision does not matter, but keeping God's commandments does" (1 Co 7:19). By commandments, Paul obviously meant God's moral commands rather than ceremonial rules, because circumcision was in fact commanded for all Jews (Lv 12:3). It is of some interest that of the New Testament epistles, circumcision is mentioned only in Paul's letters. Thus, the meaning of circumcision for Christians is found in Paul's advice to the Philippians: "We are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh" (Php 3:3; see Col 2:11).

REFLECTION: Why have Gentile Christians rejected circumcision as a religious ritual? How would you explain the difference between physical circumcision and spiritual circumcision?

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**Bob Utley - "God will circumcise your heart"** This is a metaphor for an open and accessible hearing of God's word. The opposite is stated in v. 17. In 10:16 and Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26, the Israelite is called upon to perform this spiritual act (cf. Rom. 2:28-29), yet here God must do it. This same tension between God's sovereignty and human action is seen in Ezekiel 18:31 vs. Ezekiel 36:26. Here circumcision is a metaphor for a proper spiritual attitude.

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**ESV Study Bible - Deuteronomy 10:16** - This verse explicitly recognizes Israel's need to change its heart (cf. Dt. 29:4; see also Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26; Ro. 2:25-29). Here, circumcision symbolizes removing the stubbornness that prevents the heart from properly loving God (cf. Ex. 6:12, where "uncircumcised lips" do not speak well; Jer. 6:10, where "uncircumcised ears" do not hear clearly). This is a command beyond any human's competence to fulfill (see Deut. 30:6). **Circumcision of the heart** comes from renewal through the Spirit of Christ (Ro 8:9-13; Col. 2:11; Heb. 8:8-13).

**Deuteronomy 30:6 circumcise your heart.** This is a key promise in Deuteronomy, looking forward to genuine covenant participation (see Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:26-27; Rom. 2:25-29; Col. 2:11). **so that you will love.** God's changing of the heart enables obedience (Dt 6:5).

**Jeremiah 4:4** Changing the image, God tells the people of Judah to circumcise themselves to the LORD by removing the foreskin of their hearts (Deut. 10:16). **The heart symbolizes the totality of one's will and emotions. Loving God with all one's heart is the essence of faith** (Deut. 6:4-9; Mark 12:28-32). True circumcision is of the heart, not simply the flesh (Gen. 17:10-14), and makes the Israelites **followers of God** (Ro 2:28-29 articulates this OT principle). The lack of a changed heart leads to disobedience, which leads to God's wrath burning like unquenchable fire (Isa. 1:31; Jer. 7:20; 17:27; 21:12; Amos 5:6).

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**Bible Knowledge Commentary - Dt 10:16-18.** The proper response to their election by the sovereign Lord was to circumcise their hearts (cf. 30:6). An uncircumcised heart means a will that is hardened against God's commands. It is another way of saying the person is stiff-necked or stubborn (cf. 9:6, 13; 31:27). Thus the command to circumcise their hearts assumes that human hearts are naturally rebellious and need correction.

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**MacArthur Study Bible - Deuteronomy 30:6 the LORD ... will circumcise your heart.** Cf. 10:16. This work of God in the innermost being of the individual is the true salvation that grants a new will to obey Him in place of the former spiritual insensitivity and stubbornness (cf. Jer 4:4; 9:25; Ro 2:28, 29). This new heart will allow the Israelite to love the Lord wholeheartedly, and is the essential feature of the New Covenant (see 29:4, 18; 30:10, 17; Jer 31:31-34; 32:37-42; Eze 11:19; 36:26).

**Deuteronomy 10:16** So circumcise your heart. Moses called the Israelites to cut away all the sin in their hearts, as the circumcision surgery cut away the skin. This would leave them with a clean relationship to God (cf. Dt 30:6; Lv 26:40, 41; Jer 4:4; 9:25; Ro 2:29).

**Jeremiah 4:4 - Circumcise.** This surgery (Ge 17:10-14) was to cut away flesh that could hold disease in its folds and could pass the disease on to wives. It was important for the preservation of God's people physically. But it was also a symbol of the need for the heart to be cleansed from sin's deadly disease. The really essential surgery needed to happen on the inside, where God calls for taking away fleshly things that keep the heart from being spiritually devoted to Him and from true faith in Him and His will. Jeremiah later expanded on this theme (Jer 31:31-34; cf. Dt 10:16; 30:6; Ro 2:29). God selected the reproductive organ as the location of the symbol for man's need of cleansing for sin, because it is the instrument most indicative of his depravity, since by it he reproduces generations of sinners.

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**Derek Thomas** - As B. B. Warfield says, 'The re-creative activity of the Spirit of God is even made the crowning Messianic blessing ...' But this, too, was not unknown under the old covenant administration. **What is patent in the new is latent in the old**

'Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked' (Deut. 10:16; cf. 30:6). **No one can reasonably draw the conclusion that folk like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, Naomi or Ruth were not regenerate!** (God Strengthens)

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**John McKay** comments on Ezekiel 18:31 and relates it to "circumcise your hearts" - "Make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek 18:31) sets out the measure not of mankind's ability but of mankind's need, so there was no suggestion that Ezekiel's audience was capable of moral and spiritual self-transformation. All mankind are naturally 'dead in trespasses and sins' (Eph. 2:1) and require divine intervention and renewal to respond appropriately. God's command to repent did not express what he expected to happen, but what he required should happen. The same tension as regards spiritual renewal is also observable in Deuteronomy where the people were commanded to 'circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn' (Deut. 10:16) as well as being told that 'the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live' (Deut. 30:6). **The command that change occur was not unfair because the incapacity to react was part of fallen sinfulness. By making the people aware of their need and their lack of ability to remedy their situation, God was calling them to accept his gracious invitation and receive the remedy he alone could impart.** (Ezekiel - Mentor Commentary)

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**Thomas Oden - A related metaphor of new birth is circumcision**—complicated but worth understanding. The promise was made to the covenant people that, when they take possession of the land of promise, "the Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and life" (Deut. 30:6). The circumcised heart was set apart, consecrated wholly to God. (Life in the Spirit)

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**KJV Study Bible - Dt 10:12–22.** God's requirement of Israel was Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. An uncircumcised heart is one that is closed and impervious to God's incoming, just as an uncircumcised ear (Jer. 6:10) is one that hears imperfectly, being covered over; and uncircumcised lips (Ex. 6:12, 30) are lips that speak incoherently because they are sealed wholly or in part. If that which hinders is cut away, there will be a submission to the will of God and the end of stubbornness. **Certainly the Old Testament went beyond the physical to the spiritual**(cf. Rom. 2:29; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11) in the same sense as the New Testament.

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**Reformation Study Bible - Therefore circumcise ... your heart.** This verse (along with Deut. 30:6 and Jer. 4:4) is an effective answer to those who imagine that the Old Testament teaches merely a religion of outward form. Circumcision was a symbol, a sacrament, an outward sign of an inward grace. Apart from this, as Paul indicates, circumcision was of no saving significance. True circumcision is "of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter" (Rom. 2:29)

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### **Spurgeon - Deuteronomy 30:6**

HERE we read of the true circumcision.

Note the author of it: "The Lord thy God." He alone can deal effectually with our hearts and take away their carnality and pollution. To make us love God with all our hearts and souls is a miracle of grace which only the Holy Ghost can work. We must look to the Lord alone for this and never be satisfied with anything short of it.

Note where this circumcision is wrought: it is not of the flesh, but of the spirit. It is the essential mark of the covenant of grace. Love to God is the indelible token of the chosen seed; by this secret seal, the election of grace is certified to the believer. We must see to it that we trust in no outward ritual, but are sealed in heart by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Note what the result is: "that thou mayest live." To be carnally minded is death. In the overcoming of the flesh we find life and peace. If we mind the things of the Spirit, we shall live. Oh, that Jehovah, our God, may complete His gracious work upon our inner natures, that in the fullest and highest sense we may live unto the Lord.

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### **John Piper - [When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy \(allows download\)](#) - Excerpt**

BACK TO THE TENSION BETWEEN FIGHTING AND REJOICING

Now back to the question we began with: Do fighting and joy go together? I've tried to address one issue, namely, that the stakes are so high we should not be surprised that we must fight. Our souls hang in the balance. So I hope it sounds more fitting and crucial now when the summons comes: Take up arms and fight for joy in God. A manual in that war is what this book aims to be.

But another thing that makes fighting and joy seem incompatible is that joy is spontaneous and fighting is planned. Joy happens in the heart spontaneously. You don't get up in the morning feeling blue and then immediately experience joy simply because you

decide to. If you are tired when you wake up, you can force yourself to throw your legs out of bed. But if you are gloomy and discouraged when you wake up, you cannot just start feeling happy. Joy is not in the power of the will the way physical motion is.

So how does the intentionality of the fight relate to the spontaneity of the joy? This is virtually the same question that I posed in the previous chapter and promised to try to answer here: How does the fact that joy is a free gift of God relate to our responsibility to have it? (ED: SEE [NOTE BELOW](#)) One of the reasons we experience joy in God as spontaneous is that it's a gift. And one of the reasons we must fight for it is that we are responsible to have it. So the questions are virtually the same: How do we fight for something that is spontaneous? And, what can we do to obtain a totally free gift?

**NOTE:** Lest it appear that we have created an artificial paradox here, take note that there are others like it in the Bible. This paradox is woven into the very fabric of biblical revelation: We are **responsible creatures** (and therefore God commands); and **God is sovereign** (and therefore he gives what he commands). Neither his sovereignty nor our responsibility cancels out the other. Consider these examples:

**Responsibility:** Deuteronomy 10:16, "Circumcise ... your heart."

**Gift:** Deuteronomy 30:6, "The Lord your God will circumcise your heart."

**Responsibility:** Ezekiel 18:31, "Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!"

**Gift:** Ezekiel 36:26, "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you."

**Responsibility:** Mark 11:22, "Have faith in God."

**Gift:** Ephesians 2:8 "You have been saved through faith ... it is the gift of God."

**Responsibility:** Acts 2:38, "Repent."

**Gift:** 2 Timothy 2:25, "God may perhaps grant them repentance."

**Responsibility:** John 3:7, "You must be born again."

**Gift:** John 3:8, "The wind blows where it wishes.... So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

This entire book is meant as an answer to that question, but here I will simply offer a broad summary answer in three parts.

#### THE FIGHT ITSELF IS A GIFT

First, we embrace the truth that not only our joy in God, but also **the fight for joy itself is a gift of God. In other words, God works in us to enable us to fight. Embracing this truth prevents us from thinking that the joy we fight for is ultimately our achievement. Joy remains a gift and continues to be spontaneous, even though we ourselves are engaged in its cause.**

The evidence for this point is found in numerous biblical texts. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul says, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." Paul worked hard. He did not say that God's grace made his work unnecessary. He said God's grace made his work possible. He worked, but "it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." So the fight for joy is our fight, and we are responsible to do it. But when we have fought for joy with all our might, we say with the apostle Paul, "it was not I, but the grace of God that was with me." It was a gift.

Philippians 2:12–13 describes how Christian work is enabled by the work of God within us. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." God's work in us does not eliminate our work; it enables it. We work because he is the one at work in us. Therefore, the fight for joy is possible because God is fighting for us and through us. All our efforts are owing to his deeper work in and through our willing and working. This is why I say our fight for joy is a gift of God.

The same thing could be shown from Hebrews 13:20–21: "Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good (**ED: GOD'S SOVEREIGN PROVISION**) that you may do his will (**ED: MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY**), working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." God works in us that which is pleasing in his sight. The fight for joy is owing to his working in us. When all is said and done, Paul says, "I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me" (Rom. 15:18). In this way the gift of joy remains a gift and remains spontaneous, even though we fight for it. All our fighting is a work of God, and when a work of God brings about joy in God, the joy is manifestly a gift.

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#### Werner H Franzmann - Bible History Commentary: Old Testament

What was the meaning of the rite of circumcision? It does not lie on the surface. It did not have merely a sanitary or health purpose. Rather, this rite represents a putting away of evil. It was a rite of purification. It symbolized the obligations which God lays upon those whom he has received into a covenant with himself. The chief of these obligations is to put away the sinful, inborn resistance

and hostility to God and his will. This view is borne out by the Scriptures. In Deuteronomy 10:16 we have these significant words of the Lord to Israel: "Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer." Jeremiah 4:4 is likewise helpful: "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts." **In the New Testament Stephen's words to the self-hardened Jews are illuminating:** "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! ... You always resist the Holy Spirit!" (The New English Bible has an excellent translation for the italicized words in Acts 7:51: "heathen still at heart and deaf to the truth.")

**Circumcision**—The symbolical meaning of this rite would readily be caught, since circumcision is performed on that organ which is the very source of life. Therefore it pointed to the necessity of purifying life at its very source. The rite could not bring about such purifying or cleansing. Abraham's offspring were to look to the promised Seed of the Woman (Genesis 3:15, Gal 3:8, 16). **Only by faith in Him (JESUS) could they find cleansing from all their sins.** (1 John 1:7).

However, circumcision was something more. It was a means of grace, since it was a seal, the strongest possible assurance or guarantee, to the circumcised believer that he had been taken into the covenant of God's grace and that all its blessings were his to enjoy. Again the New Testament helps us to understand the Old. In Romans 4:11 we read: "And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised." We call baptism a seal of God's pardoning grace. Circumcision was the same for the Old Testament believer. Therefore circumcision can rightly be called an Old Testament sacrament, as Lutheran theologians have done in their works on doctrine. In the case of Abraham the "seal of righteousness" was given to further strengthen his faith, that he might receive wholeheartedly and without question the promise of a son, which was about to be given.

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#### **Old Testament Restoration Prophecies regarding the Nation of Israel: Literal or Symbolic? by Benjamin L. Merkle (Southern Baptist Journal of Theology, Volume 14 -**

THE TRUE NATURE OF BIBLICAL RELIGION The Christian faith is a religion of the heart. It is not primarily external but internal. Mere outward, external religion is never the goal of our faith. God is primarily interested in the deeper, inner faith of His people. This is true not only for the New Testament but is also clearly seen in the Old Testament.

CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART Circumcision was a significant part of both the Abrahamic and Mosiac covenants. It was the outward sign that separated God's chosen people from the other nations. And yet, according to the Old Testament, true circumcision was not the outward, physical act but the inward circumcision of the heart:

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn (Deut 10:16).

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live (Deut 30:6).

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem (Jer 4:4a).

This emphasis on the inner circumcision of the heart is continued in the New Testament (Rom 2:25–29; 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15; Phil 3:2–3; Col 2:11).