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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Joshua 22.

(2015)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Joshua 22.

Topics.

- Reubenites, Gadites and half-tribe of Manasseh kept all Moses commanded.
- Joshua blesses the half tribe of Manasseh with great wealth and livestock.
- Reuben Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh return home from Shiloh.
- Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh build an altar.
- The heads of Israel confront Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
- Israel exhorts the eastern tribes to take a possession of land in Canaan.
- Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answer the heads of Israel.
- Phinehas and the chiefs, return from the land of Gilead to Israel in Canaan.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: the first five books of Moses anticipated the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham concerning the Promised Land. Moses is now dead. Joshua crosses the River Jordan (about 1400 B.C.) and after a string of military victories apportioned the land according to the twelve tribes. These battles shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that God fights for His people when they are faithful and courageous and put their full trust in Him. (Josh. 1:6-9).

At the close of the book Joshua says that he and all his house will serve the LORD and invites the people to choose whether they will serve the gods of their fathers or the gods in whose land they dwell or the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. The people choose to serve their God. (Josh. 24:15). Although anonymous the book appears to contain eyewitness testimony, some of which may have been written by Joshua himself.

Reubenites, Gadites and Half-Tribe of Manasseh Kept all Moses commanded.

Joshua 22:1-3 ----- ¹At that time Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, ²and said to them, "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you and have obeyed my voice in all that I have commanded you. ³You have not forsaken your brothers these many days, down to this day, but have been careful to keep the charge of the LORD your God.

The events of this chapter are recorded in their proper historical order. The supporting forces of the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh were not sent away immediately after the campaigns against the Canaanites were over. They were sent from Shiloh (Josh 22:9) after the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant had been moved there (Josh. 18:1) and after the other tribes were settled in their possessions in Canaan and the cities of refuge were appointed and after pasturelands and cities had been given to the Levites.

Prior to crossing the River Jordan Moses gave the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh the land on the eastern side of the river for an inheritance on the condition the men of war (twenty years and over) went with the rest of Israel to help them in their battles to drive out the Canaanites.

Once Israel had possessed the land of Canaan for their inheritance the men of the Reubenites the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh could return to their families.

Reubenites, Gadites and half-tribe of Manasseh can Return to their Land.

Joshua 22:4 ----- ⁴And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as he promised them. Therefore turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

The men of the Reubenites, Gadites and half-tribe of Manasseh went with their brothers (the nine and a half tribes) to support them in their battles to possess the land. Supporting, encouraging and helping those in God's Kingdom is the calling of all brothers and sisters who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a monumental moment in the history of Israel. The promise of God to Israel being fulfilled, the fierce battle of many a bloody field, were at an end and the land of Canaan was for the most part subdued. Israel had rest on all sides from their enemies, and the land divided among the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh and they settled in the quiet possession of their lots. A new life is beginning the mighty warrior is about to become a peaceful shepherd or farmer.

Joshua Sends the Reubenites, Gadites, the half-tribe of Manasseh Away.

Joshua 22:5-6 ----- ⁵Only 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." ⁶So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

Joshua warns the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh to do all they can to observe the Law of Moses and to love the LORD their God, and walk in all His ways. Those who love the commandments of God love them in vain if they do not do them. Those whose heart honestly loves the LORD will endeavour to walk in his ways whether they are walking up a mountain to the icy cold snow peaks or down the mountain to the lush green valleys filled with springs and gently flowing water brooks. At all times and in all conditions with purpose of heart they will set their heart and mind to live a lifestyle that honours God and brings a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.

Joshua blesses the Half Tribe of Manasseh with great Wealth and Livestock.

Joshua 22:7-8 ----- ⁷Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the other half Joshua had given a possession beside their brothers in the land west of the Jordan. And when Joshua sent them away to their homes and blessed them, ⁸he said to them, "Go back to your tents with much wealth and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and with much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers."

The tribe of Manasseh was split in two halves, one half inherited the land of Bashan on the eastern side of the River Jordan the other half on the western side in the land of Canaan. Joshua blesses the half tribe of Manasseh that dwelt on the east of the Jordan River and sends them home with the spoil of the cities Israel had taken possession of in the land of Canaan and the wars they had won. They were given great wealth, livestock, silver, gold, bronze, iron and clothing to take home with them to share amongst their people. Over the generations some have thought the conduct of the two and a half tribes in choosing their inheritance on the east of the River Jordan was an incorrect decision since it was not over the river in the land of Canaan. This idea is incorrect for the following reasons: -

1. Of all the tribes of Israel who followed Joshua, and remained with him the half-tribe of Manasseh is the only tribe mentioned as receiving a great blessing clearly showing God's favour was upon them.
2. God delivered the land of Sihon and Og on the eastern side of the river to Israel; someone must inherit it.

3. The true eastern boundary of Palestine is not the Jordan River, but the mountain range of Gilead, which parts it from the desert that lies beyond.
4. The people of Reuben, the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh were as much in Palestine as all other tribes.

Though women and children and the men under twenty years old immediately inherited the land the men of war (those over twenty) would receive nothing until they followed Joshua the Captain of the LORD'S army who ultimately gives rest to all. In the same way that the true Captain of the LORD'S army will bring rest to those who loyally follow him when he returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to gather the faithful to himself and establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

Reuben Gad and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh Return Home from Shiloh.

Joshua 22:9 ----- ⁹So the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home, parting from the people of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, their own land of which they had possessed themselves by command of the LORD through Moses.

It is interesting to notice the many repetitions of Joshua's farewell this is characteristic of very ancient writers and of Hebrew writers as much to give completeness and finish to each section of their story. Jewish historians rarely quote or reminds, but they do repeat as much as may be necessary to make the account of what they are saying fully intelligible by itself and sometimes to imprint what they are saying upon the mind and heart. The following statement, "Moses gave no inheritance to the Levites," is a typical example of such repetitions: -

- To the tribe of *Levi alone Moses gave no inheritance*. The offerings by fire to the LORD God of Israel are their inheritance, as he said to him. (Josh. 13:14).
- To the tribe of *Levi Moses gave no inheritance*; the LORD God of Israel is their inheritance, just as he said to them. (Josh. 13:33).
- Moses had given an inheritance to the two and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan, but to the *Levites he gave no inheritance*. (Josh. 14:3).
- The *Levites have no portion among you*, for the priesthood of the LORD is their heritage. And Gad and Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan eastward, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them. (Josh. 18:7).

Reuben and Gad and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh Build an Altar.

Joshua 22:10 ----- ¹⁰And when they came to the region (borders in KJV) of the Jordan that is in the land of Canaan, the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by the Jordan, an altar of imposing size.

Amongst Bible theologians some place the altar on the eastern side of the River Jordan while others place it on the western side in the land of Canaan this is because the language gives no exact time or place. Much of this confusion is because in verse eleven of the English Standard Bible it says, "the people of Israel heard that the people of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built the altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region about the Jordan, on the side that belongs to the people of Israel," which seems to imply it was built on the river bank of Canaan.

But in verse eleven of the King James Bible it says, "the people of Israel heard that the children of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had built an altar (over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel." Here it appears that the nine and a half tribes in the land of Canaan thought this altar was built as a monument against them which would mean it was built on the eastern side of the river otherwise the tribes of Canaan would simply have destroyed it. Added to this the words, "over against," carry the idea that it is not in the land of Canaan and the verse also says, "it was built in the borders of

Jordan,” which is on the eastern side of the River Jordan. The only basis for concluding that the altar was built on the western side of the River Jordan is that the King James Bible says, “they came to the borders of the Jordan that is in the land of Canaan and the people of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by the Jordan,” so it is reasoned that the verse is to be understood in the following way: “before they went any farther, while they were still on the bank of the Jordan River in the land of Canaan they erected the altar on the border of the nine and a half tribes in the land of Canaan.”

Based upon this verse along this would seem to be a reasonable conclusion, but good Bible study does not base a thing upon one verse alone, but will take into account all other Scriptures that speak of the same topic. Holding this principal uppermost in mind as we travel through the remainder of the chapter we discover many good reasons why the altar would have been built on the eastern side of the River Jordan in the land of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. Following are some of these reasons: -

- The altar was built as a copy of the altar of the LORD that stands before the tabernacle at Shiloh which was built for sacrifices. The nine and a half tribes believed this altar was erected for burnt offering, grain offering and sacrifices and for an altar to serve such a purpose it would have been in the land of the people offering the sacrifices (v28-29) and amongst the people who are going to offer sacrifices on it and not on the other side of a river that could not be crossed during certain seasons and when it floods. If it was built in the land of Canaan there would be no reason for the nine and a half tribes to think they had built it for sacrifices since it would be far too inconvenient to access compared to having it in their own land.
- In verse eleven of the King James Bible it is said to have been built over against the land of Canaan the words over against carry the idea of it not being within it.
- The whole motive of the eastern Israelites in erecting the altar was to prevent their future brothers in Canaan ever saying in time to come, “What have you to do with the LORD God of Israel? For the LORD has made Jordan a border between us and you.” (Josh. 22:24, 25). By having an altar that was made as a copy of the one at Shiloh within their own land it would act as a witness that they acknowledged the same God and practised the same rites of worship as their brothers in Canaan so all such taunts would be prevented.
- The altar was intended to enforce the fact that both borders of Jordan are part of the Promised Land and to achieve this it would need to be built on the eastern side.
- No one who owns land builds anything on their neighbour's land nor do they have the right to. Everyone builds on their own land so it is hardly likely that they would have erected the altar in the territory of the other tribes.
- In verse nineteen the nine and a half tribes accuses Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh of making the land of their possession unclean by building for themselves an altar. For the eastern tribes to make their land unclean the altar would have to be built on their own land.

So which side was the altar built on? Based on the fact that sometime the whole country on both sides of Jordan is referred to as Canaan and upon the evidence my conclusion is on the eastern banks of the River Jordan in the land of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. It should be highlighted here that the primary focus of importance is not the side of the river, but the purpose for which the altar was built, which was as a monument to show that the River Jordan did not separate them, but that they remained one people with those in Canaan. This same principle can be applied to the global body of Christ in that oceans and nations do not separate us we are all spiritually one people in Christ.

An altar of imposing size: a very noticeable altar made clearly visible by its height that it might be seen at a great distance. This altar was probably an immense pile of stones fixed together by clay and earth. The words, “Behold, the copy (the pattern in KJV) of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made (v28) show that

this altar that Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built was made in the likeness of the altar that was built at Shiloh before the Tabernacle. The reason for building this altar was driven by the fear that the Israelites in Canaan would say to their children that the LORD has made Jordan a border between those on the east and those on the west of the river. The altar was to serve as a witness that the people dwelling on the east served the same God and practised the same way of worship that their brothers did that lived in Canaan.

The Nine and a Half Tribes Hear that an Altar has been built on their Land.

Joshua 22:11-12 ----- ¹¹And the people of Israel heard it said, "Behold, the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built the altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region about the Jordan, on the side that belongs to the people of Israel." ¹²And when the people of Israel heard of it, the whole assembly of the people of Israel gathered at Shiloh to make war against them.

The Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant rested in Gilgal seven years and then by God's order it was moved to Shiloh and became the main worship centre of the Israelites during the united monarchy. It was in the heart of the country and most conveniently placed because it was north, south, east, and west, to the tribes. The Tabernacle with its contents continued at Shiloh during the whole period of the Judges, for more than three hundred years until the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:3) and its capture by the Philistines. It was at Shiloh that Joshua divided the land among the twelve tribes.

News quickly spread to the tribes of Israel in the land of Canaan that Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built an altar. They thought the altar had been built to offer burnt offerings, grain offerings and peace offerings on it (v23) in rebellion to the following command of the LORD their God: -

- You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way. ⁵But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, ⁶and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices. (Deut. 12:4-6).
- When you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety, ¹¹then to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices to the LORD. (Deut. 12:10-11).
- Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, ¹⁴but at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you. (Deut. 12:13-14).

At this time the place the LORD had chosen to set his name upon was Shiloh and not on the banks of the River Jordan so the nine and a half tribes gathered together at the Tabernacle at Shiloh with the intention of going to war against Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

The Heads of Israel Confront Reuben, Gad, and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh

Joshua 22:13-14 ----- ¹³Then the people of Israel sent to the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, ¹⁴and with him ten chiefs, one from each of the tribal families of Israel, every one of them the head of a family among the clans of Israel.

After the tribes had gathered at Shiloh it seems they calmed down from their anger and presumptive belief that Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had built an altar to offer sacrifices on so instead of rushing into war they obeyed the principal contained in the following command of Moses: -

- If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to dwell there, that certain worthless fellows have gone out among you and have drawn away the

inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known, ¹⁴then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently. And behold, if it be true and certain that such an abomination has been done among you, ¹⁵you shall surely put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, devoting it to destruction, all who are in it and its cattle, with the edge of the sword. (Deut. 13:12-15).

After taking counsel together the tribes concluded to first send Phinehas the son of the high priest and ten chief men from each tribe to inquire into the rumoured rebellion against God (Deut. 13:13-15) and to search out what needed to be done to preserve the purity of their faith and worship throughout Israel.

The Tribes of Israel go to Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

Joshua 22:15-16 ----- ¹⁵And they came to the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, and they said to them, ¹⁶"Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this breach of faith that you have committed against the God of Israel in turning away this day from following the LORD by building yourselves an altar this day in rebellion against the LORD?'"

The heads of the ten tribes of Canaan express astonishment at the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh since they supposed that they had rebelled against the LORD their God and turned away from following Him.

Israel exhorts the Eastern Tribes to take a Possession of Land in Canaan.

Joshua 22:17-20 ----- ¹⁷Have we not had enough of the sin at Peor from which even yet we have not cleansed ourselves, and for which there came a plague upon the congregation of the LORD, ¹⁸that 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. ¹⁹But 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. ²⁰Did not Achan the son of Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity."

The sin at Peor: (v17) Peor Judah was a town allotted to Judah (Josh 15:59), it was a high point in Moab where Balak took Balaam to curse Israel (Num. 23:28). Balaam knew, if he could turn Israel from God and bring about their fall, king Balak would give him the reward he had promised, but God only allowed Balaam to speak blessing to Israel.

Later Balaam for greed of money advised the Moabite king to use the Moabite woman to seduce the men of Israel. (Num. 31:15-16). This eventually lead too much of Israel worshipping Baal of Peor. (Num. 25:3) (Num. 18:31-16) (Deut. 4:3) (Psalm 106:28).

The sin of Achan: (v20) Joshua had devoted the metals to God, but everything else was to be destroyed (Josh. 6:17-19). Achan stole for himself a beautiful garment, 200 shekels of silver and 200 shekels of gold, part of the spoil of Jericho that was devoted to the LORD and should have gone into the treasury of the Sanctuary, because of his disobedience Israel was defeated at Ai.

God (by a process of elimination) revealed Achan's sin to Joshua. Achan confessed and he and his family, with their possessions were brought down to a valley and the people of Israel stoned them. After they had stoned them they burned them with fire and raised over Achor a great heap of stones and the name of that place was called, the valley of Achor. (Josh. 7:25-26).

Phinehas and the ten heads of Israel remind their eastern brothers of the plague that came upon Israel at Peor and God's wrath that came upon all the family of Achan and exhort them to leave their unclean land and take for themselves a possession of land for their inheritance amongst their brothers in the land of Canaan. (Joshua 22:15-20).

Reuben, Gad, and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh Answer the Heads of Israel.

Joshua 22:21-25 ----- ²¹Then the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh said in answer to the heads of the families of Israel, 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 ²³for 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. ²⁴No, 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? ²⁵For 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.

The words, "Mighty One, God, the LORD do not spare us today" (v22) are a direct appeal to God to either send fire from heaven and consume them or open the earth to swallow them if they are guilty of the sin they have been accused of.

This alone shines a brilliant spotlight upon the purity of their hearts, since it is almost certain God would have answered their prayer had they been guilty of such a horrendous transgression. It also shows that if they did sin they would not want their innocent brothers to suffer for their wrongdoings.

Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh took the rebuke of their brothers with a good and humble spirit. They were entirely innocent of any wrong-doing yet their brothers laid a capital crime against them and despite being accused of such an horrendous sin there is no hint of a word of anger or malice toward their brothers.

They were content to state their valid reasons to vindicate themselves of any wrongdoing and reject the false accusations their brothers had falsely accused them of and to explain their real motives and purposes for building the altar.

They repudiated in the strongest terms the alleged crime, and explained that their object of erecting the altar was not to offer sacrifices on, but to perpetuate the memory of their alliance with Israel and their adherence to the worship of Israel's God.

They explain that they feared that in the generations to come the children of the west will say to their children, "You are aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel and live in a foreign land and not in the land of Canaan. You are separated from us by the river Jordan and are a different people from us having nothing to do with the Tabernacle of the LORD and the service of it, or with the Altar of the LORD and the sacrifice offered upon it."

An Altar of Witness and Reuben, Gad, the Half-Tribe of Manasseh and Israel.

Joshua 22:26-29 ----- ²⁶Therefore we said, 'Let us now build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice, ²⁷but 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." ' ²⁸And 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.' ²⁹Far 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!"

Reuben, Gad and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh vindicated themselves from the sin they were suspected to be guilty of and fully explained their true intent in building the altar. They answered their brothers by rebutting the alleged sin and explaining that: -

- They had no thought of offering sacrifices.

- Their only object was to perpetuate the memory of their alliance with Israel and their adherence to the worship of Israel's God.
- The altar was to act as a witness between those on the east and those on the west that they both serve one God so that when their future generations say, "What is that altar for?" Their fathers can say, "It is not for burnt offerings or sacrifices, but, for a witness between those dwelling in the land of Canaan and those dwelling in the land of Gilead that they are all of one faith and all serve the same God."

The building of this altar shines a brilliant spotlight upon how important the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh believed it was for Israel to remain as one people united in one faith.

Reuben, Gad and Manasseh have Not Acted against the LORD.

Joshua 22:30-31 ----- ³⁰When Phinehas the priest and the chiefs of the congregation, the heads of the families of Israel who were with him, heard the words that the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the people of Manasseh spoke, it was good in their eyes. ³¹And 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."

Phinehas the priest and the ten heads of the tribes were so satisfied with Reuben, Gad and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh reply that they not only tell them that the LORD is amongst them because they have not committed any trespass against the LORD, but also tell them that they have delivered the people of Israel from the hand of the LORD.

The LORD is in our midst: carries the following ideas: -

- Reuben, Gad and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh were innocent of all wrongdoing.
- The LORD'S favour was toward them and not against them.
- The LORD was smiling upon them by His gracious presence and peace.
- The LORD was cementing their hearts in love to one another and uniting them in the one faith.

The statement, "You have delivered the people of Israel from the hand of the LORD," carries the following two ideas: -

- By their good intent they have prevented the wrath of God falling upon the nation. Had they built the altar for sacrifices the wrath and dreadful judgments of God would have followed.
- By not sinning Reuben, Gad and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh avoided a most bloody war between them and their western brothers.

It is in this sense that Reuben, Gad and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh delivered Israel from the evils they feared (i.e., the wrath of God and going to war).

Phinehas and the Chiefs, Return from the Land of Gilead to Israel in Canaan.

Joshua 22:32-34 ----- ³²Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the chiefs, returned from the people of Reuben and the people of Gad in the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the people of Israel, and brought back word to them. ³³And the report was good in the eyes of the people of Israel. And the people of Israel blessed God and spoke no more of making war against them to destroy the land where the people of Reuben and the people of Gad were settled. ³⁴The 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."

The altar of witness was to: -

- Be a witness of their relationship to God and of the common faith that all Israel had with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob regardless of which side of the River Jordan they dwelt on.
- Act as a witness against Reuben, Gad and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh and their future generations if they should turn from following the LORD.

The land and tribes of Reuben, Gad and the Half-Tribe of Manasseh and the land of the nine and a half tribes dwelling in Canaan was at rest and peace.

The practical lesson: anyone who hears rumours about others that have no solid evidence or support should respond in the same way that the nine and a half tribes of Israel did. They did not act upon the rumour, but rather took counsel to search out the truth of the matter and by doing so saved themselves and the nation from war. If there is no concrete proof concerning the gossip take trusted and faithful men and woman and search out the matter in love and grace with the honest intention of discovering the truth before such rumours and stories run rampant like a toxic virus that brings destruction, hurt and harm.

How good would the face of Christ's Kingdom look if all who confess to believe copied their example and searched out a matter with humbleness and grace and a readiness to understand each other for the cause of unity and peace and the good name of Christ before accepting unfounded stories and rumours concerning others.

Those who pass unjust blame and spread malicious rumours should know that God in heaven knows He is perfectly aware of the thoughts and intents of the heart in everything we think, say and do. Today the Lord Jesus Christ is the great Altar that sanctifies every gift. The best evidence of our love toward him is the manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit (i.e., love, compassion, honesty, mercy kindness and such like things) dwelling in the heart and being outwardly shown toward others.

End.