

Joshua 22:1-34 –No Communication Causes Altercations!

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Have you ever **jumped** to a conclusion? Everyone will say: “Guilty.” Jumping is an attempt to reach some place without using the normal methods. Jumping” is not normal. You should make conclusions based on facts. “Today you will hear about a horrible jumping to conclusion that threatened the existence of Israel – even hampering (妨碍, 阻碍) the line of promise. But you will see how it was resolved.

Our headings are: **The 2 ½ tribes Joyfully Returned Home. The 2 ½ tribes Ignorantly Threatened. The 2 ½ tribes Gracefully preserved**

Our goals are: **That for the orderly running of the household of God that you learn to give the benefit of the doubt to your Christian brothers, and that you learn how to resolve a conflict with brothers if you encounter one.**

The 2 ½ Tribes Joyfully Returned Home

1 Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, 2 and 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 commanded you. 3 "You have not left your brethren these many days, up to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. 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.

1. Reuben, Gad, and ½ of Manasseh fulfilled their duties to help secure the land of Canaan for the 9 ½ tribes then the 40,000 troops prepared to return to their home east of the Jordan. Canaan was at peace. What love the 2 ½ tribes had! Look how they did not dare to abandon their posts (岗位) until Joshua instructed them.

Isn't it wonderful when brothers live together in unity-not just by presence, but also by action? Would you risk your life for a sister in Christ? Would you die for Christ's people or do you prefer your “flowery beds of ease?” (喻安舒的生活) Would you take time off from your job and pay off for your house later for the good of the church?

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.**"

2. But before the 2 ½ tribes left for home Joshua reminded them of their Christian duty. He knew they would face pressures when they returned home. They had fields to tend. They had wives and children to help. **Can you imagine the length of those honey-do lists?** But that is why Joshua's instruction was so important. In the midst of their busy-ness, they had to make sure that God's law stood in front of their eyes...all his laws – the moral laws (10 commands) (道德律, 十诫), the ceremonial laws (礼仪法) (that pictured Jesus) and the national laws (民法).

When you are busy, do you act like a Christian? Are you impatient with your wife and children? Do you drop the reading of God's Word for entertainment? When you feel the pressure of the job, do you act like a Christian?

6 So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

3. Joshua blessed the 2 ½ tribes. This was not a prayer. This was more. Joshua was like the prophet (先知), priest (祭司), and king of Israel. He was a picture of Christ. He had the ability to pronounce God's blessings upon his people.

Numbers 6:23 "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: 24 "The LORD bless you and keep you; 25 The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; 26 The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.'" (26 愿耶和华向你仰脸, 赐你平安。)

As ministers (牧师), we too have been given the command to bless the congregation. When the minister pronounces God's blessings, it truly is a blessing. This is why it is such a shame that some are careless about worship.

Luke 24:50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

7 Now to half the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the other half of it Joshua gave a possession among their brethren on this side of the Jordan, westward. And indeed, when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them, 8 and spoke to them, saying, "**Return with much riches to your tents**, with very much **livestock**, with **silver, with gold, with bronze, with iron**, and with **very much clothing**. Divide the spoil (掠物) of your enemies with your brethren." 9 So the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, which they had obtained according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

4. The 2 ½ tribes returned home with God's promises and presence and with much material blessings as well. The workman was worthy of his hire. They had livestock, silver, gold, bronze, and iron. They had clothing ...in a time when weaving (织布) was a hard and precious skill. And they had clothing of value, clothing that may have come from kings and other important people of Canaan. So Joshua warned them to **share of the spoils that they had with their brothers**. Not all the men of the 2 ½ tribes went over to fight. Some had to remain because of illness, or to provide food, or for the defense of the women and children. So they were rewarded as well.

1Samuel 30:24 "For who will heed you in this matter? But as his part *is* who goes down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike." (这事谁肯依从你们呢? 上阵的得多少, 看守器具的也得多少, 应当大家平分。)

The child who comforts his little sister when his father is out to war deserves a share in the rewards!

10 And when they came to the **region of the Jordan** which is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan—a great, impressive altar.

5. The 2 ½ tribes returned home, not with splurging (挥霍, 摆阔) from their new gained wealth, but with worship on their minds and they built an altar to the Lord on the border of their

territory, just as they crossed over the Jordan River. The word “region” literally means “border” or “circuit”（外围，边界）。They did not wait. Worship was too important. It was most likely the place where John the Baptist（施洗约翰）worked. They built the altar to show they were part of Israel. And they wanted to show unity and communion with their brothers west of the Jordan. **It is that one blood of Jesus Christ that unites us.** Isn't it true that those who are cut off from the ordinances of the church（教会的圣餐）often starve...and sometimes lose their faith? It is possible for some to only have the form but lose the purpose of worship, but without the form, worship is missing. **The altar was great, magnificent, and beautiful altar. It might have been wise to consult Eleazar about how to properly remember God's work and to express unity with their fellow believers,** but excitement got the better of them. No one is perfect.

The 2 ½ tribes Ignorantly Threatened

11 Now the children of Israel **heard someone say**, "Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan—on the children of Israel's side." 12 And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of **Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war** against them.

1. Because the 9 ½ tribes had spent much time with the 2 ½ tribes – years - it would have been normal to develop strong friendships. **War friendships usually last a lifetime.** They should have trusted each other. But it did not take long for the 9 ½ tribes to assume the worse and were ready to kill their Christian comrades. They concluded that the 2 ½ tribes were idolaters（拜偶像者）who deserved to die. In their minds there was prima facie evidence（初步证据，表面证据）。They jumped to conclusions. They assumed the worst. They saw these 2 ½ tribes as gangrene（坏蛆）that needed to be amputated（截肢）。What was the evidence: “Someone said.” **So many characters have been destroyed by that phrase “someone said.”**

2. Israel then gathered at Shiloh, with the Ark of the Covenant, under the cover of religion and as a noble duty to exact justice upon these perceived wrong doers. They did not consult the Urim and Thummim（乌明和土明），asking God for knowledge. Now **if they were right in their conclusions, they had ground to fight.** God's worship is to be protected at all costs（不惜代价地）。God is very jealous about his worship. Failure to act, especially when a false god is substituted, is a heinous sin（令人憎恶的罪）。There could only be 1 altar for sacrifices to God. There was only 1 cross and 1 Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It is always worth the fight to maintain pure worship.

Deuteronomy 13:12 "If you hear someone in one of your cities... saying, 13 `Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods" --which you have not known--14 **"then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently.** And *if it is* indeed true *and certain that* such an abomination was committed among you, 15 "you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword..."

The 9 ½ tribes thought of themselves as better and assumed the worst about the 2/12 tribes. But... **Philippians 2:3** Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.（凡事不可结党，不可贪图虚浮的荣耀；只要存心谦卑，各人看别人比自己强。

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1Corinthians 13:4 Love...7 believes all things...

“Believes all things” means to see the bright side of every Christian, to believe what they say, and to assume that they are doing what is right. You may not be suspicious without clear evidence. How easily trouble comes when we are not as charitable (仁慈的, 宽厚的) and assume the worse.

The 2 ½ tribes Gracefully Preserved

13 Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, 14 and with him ten rulers, one ruler each from the chief house of every tribe of Israel; and each one was the head of the house of his father among the divisions of Israel. 15 Then they came to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them, saying,

1. Instead of attacking the brothers whom they thought were erring, some cooler heads prevailed, and the 9 ½ tribes resorted to diplomacy (外交). They sent Phinehas there along with rulers from the 9 ½ tribes. They started acting like grown-ups (成人). They grew up and spoke up. Who was Phinehas? He was a man who loved truth (See Numbers 25) who worked to stop a plague on Israel by punishing the wicked. So he was a serious man who was fit to examine the facts.

Isn't this what the Lord said that you should do if you see a fault in your brother?

Matthew 18:15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

16 "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD: 'What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the LORD? 17 'Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD, 18 'but that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? And it shall be, if you rebel today against the LORD, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. 19 'Nevertheless, **if the land of your possession is unclean, then cross over to the land of the possession of the LORD**, where the LORD'S tabernacle (会幕) stands, and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the LORD our God. 20 'Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.'"

2. Notice the wisdom of the 11 men who went to the 2 ½ tribes. They did not go with a sledgehammer (大锤). Instead, they assured the 2 ½ tribes of their willingness to even give up their own lands and share with the 2 ½ tribes **to save them from sin**. Do you see how much they were willing to give up for the honor of God?

Application: If something is clearly wrong in your brother- **are you willing to challenge your children if he strays, so that he will come back into the right way?** If your children are drawn away by worldly lusts, by worldly dress, by obsession with possessions – things that drag them away from the worship of God, do you have the courage and the grace to call them out? Of you do want to be their “friend” and not offend them...or are you afraid that they might leave the

church altogether? What about churches that abandon truth? Do you feel comfortable there calling out those who want to hide in those easy churches? **On the other hand, suppose it is not clear, but you only think someone is doing something wrong, would you take the time to ask questions or would you jump to conclusions?**

21 Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel:

3. The 2 ½ tribes could have become arrogant and reject the false accusations and threats that came from the 10 tribes west of the Jordan, but they did not respond that way. (Who likes to be

falsely accused?) They had to be nice to nasty people. Instead, considering their brothers feelings, they made an impassioned plea (慷慨激昂的抗辩) to state their innocence. How?

22 "The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knows, and let Israel itself know—if it is in rebellion, or if in treachery against the LORD, do not save us this day. 23 "If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer on it burnt offerings (燔祭) or grain offerings (素祭), or if to offer peace offerings (平安祭) on it, let the LORD Himself require an account.

They called God to witness. Taking an oath showed they were serious about what they were saying. Taking an oath meant that they wanted God to punish them if they did not speak the truth. So they could be trusted.

24 "But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, "What have you to do with the LORD God of Israel? 25 "For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between you and us, you children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no part in the LORD." So your descendants would make our descendants cease fearing the LORD.' 26 "Therefore we said, 'Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, 27 'but that it may be a witness between you and us and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, "You have no part in the LORD.'"

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.' 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."

They explained why they built the altar. Because they were God's children and part of the covenant, they did not want to be left out of the covenant (被排除在盟约之外) of the symbols. In other words, the altar by the Jordan was not to be a functional altar for sacrifices (献祭), but a memorial (纪念碑) or reminder of the altar at Shiloh. The altar further showed their unity (联合) with the 10 tribes.

While these men did not let the personal insult get to them personally, do you? You see, your cause in life is much bigger than you are, so if you are insulted for the cause of Christ, buck-up! Expect more. Take it like a man. Man-up. Take whatever trite expression (老生常谈) will work. It is about the kingdom.

30 Now when Phinehas the priest and the rulers of the congregation, the heads of the divisions of Israel who were with him, heard the words that the children of

Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh spoke, **it pleased them**. 31 Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, "This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD. Now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD." 32 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the rulers, returned from the children of Reuben and the children of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought back word to them. 33 So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and **the children of Israel blessed God**; they spoke no more of going against them in battle, to destroy the land where the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. 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."

4. Finally, the foolishness of the false conclusions became apparent to the 10 tribes and they were satisfied.

5. They then worshipped God together. That is what brothers do. It is that one blood of Jesus Christ that unites us.

1Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

They changed their talk from war to worship.

Conclusion:

The spiritually and materially blessed covenant children of God set about to build a symbol of unity between the people of God and God himself – putting that work before their own. They also showed by this symbol the unity they enjoyed with each other. But some assumed the worst and prepared to execute those who had built the symbolic altar.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: 1. **Pray that God will instil in you the desire to maintain and support pure worship.** 2. **Pray that you will be charitable to your brothers, to your spouse, to your bosses...and not assume the worse.** If you assume the worse...you are less likely to come alongside them help to bear their burdens. (Galatians 6:1.) 3. **Instead, if you see someone doing something you think is wrong, why not ask questions?** Why not seek the elders' wisdom? Why not be patient? 4. **And if someone falsely accuses you of sin, be patient. Expect more accusations.** You see, you belong to the Lord Jesus and he expects his children to reflect his love to kingdom people.

Finally, there is only one true sacrifice that can save you from death- the sacrifice of the 1 Christ on the 1 cross. If you believe that Jesus was your sacrifice, you will be saved. If you don't, you will have to die for your own sins.