**SERVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART**

Joshua 22:1-34

Key Verse 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 obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul”

**Introduction**



Today’s passage is about the crisis of the Israelites and how they resolved it. Today’s passage reminds us of the difference between perception and reality. **Perception** is defined as “a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression.” **Reality** is defined as “the world or the state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them.” But still perception can break the unity. As we study today’s passage, let us learn of godly wisdom to have true unity.

1. Read verses 1-8. How did Joshua admonish the Reubenites, the Gadites and the

half-tribe of Manasseh? (1-5) How did he bless them? (6-8)

1-1, Read verses 1-8.

Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh **2** and said to them, “You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. **3** For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you. **4** Now that the Lord your God has given them rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan. **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 obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.” **6** Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their homes. **7** (To the half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given land in Bashan, and to the other half of the tribe Joshua gave land on the west side of the Jordan along with their fellow Israelites.) When Joshua sent them home, he blessed them, **8** saying, “Return to your homes with your great wealth—with large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze and iron, and a great quantity of clothing—and divide the plunder from your enemies with your fellow Israelites.”

1-2, How did Joshua admonish the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh? (1-5)

***Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh 2 and said to them, “You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. 3 For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you. 4 Now that the Lord your God has given them rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan. 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 obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”***

* About 7 year conquest war was finally over and the Israelites divided the land. It was the time for the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh to return to their lands, east side of the Jordan.
* They joined the conquest war willingly in obedience to God and his servant Moses and in love for their brethren. They had left their families on the other side of the Jordan and engaged in the war for the 9 and ½ tribes in the Promised Land.
* During that time of the long war, they had not deserted to their families. Rather, they remained faithful to give their help to their brethren.
* And now Joshua sent them with an honorable discharge. As sending them home, Joshua also gave them the words of advice in verse 5.
* Joshua was like a loving father. He wanted them to have their priority in life that was to keep the commandment and the law, to love God and serve him with all their heart and soul.
* We can understand why Joshua gave these words to them. They would be separated from their brethren in the Promised Land. They would be isolated.
* They would live among godless gentiles who could give them fatal godless influences.
* They would be far away from the tabernacle where they could worship God and have clear identity as God’s people.

1-3, How did he bless them? (6-8)

***6 Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their homes. 7 (To the half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given land in Bashan, and to the other half of the tribe Joshua gave land on the west side of the Jordan along with their fellow Israelites.) When Joshua sent them home, he blessed them, 8 saying, “Return to your homes with your great wealth—with large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze and iron, and a great quantity of clothing—and divide the plunder from your enemies with your fellow Israelites.”***

2. Read verses 9-20. What kind of altar did the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the

half tribe of Manasseh build? (9-10) How did the Israelites respond and why?

(11-12) How did the representative of the Israelites who were sent appeal to

them? (13-20)

2-1, Read verses 9-20.

**9** So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land, which they had acquired in accordance with the command of the Lord through Moses. **10** When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan. **11** And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side,**12** the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them. **13** So the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. **14** With him they sent ten of the chief men, one from each of the tribes of Israel, each the head of a family division among the Israelite clans. **15** When they went to Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh—they said to them: **16** “The whole assembly of the Lord says: ‘How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the Lord and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now? **17** Was not the sin of Peor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a plague fell on the community of the Lord! **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. **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. **20** When Achan son of Zerah was unfaithful in regard to the devoted things,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua+22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-6447a)] did not wrath come on the whole community of Israel? He was not the only one who died for his sin.’”

2-2, What kind of altar did the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh build? (9-10)

***9 So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land, which they had acquired in accordance with the command of the Lord through Moses. 10 When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan.***

* The tribes left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead. But at Geliloth in the land of Canaan, they built an imposing altar there by the Jordan.

2-3, How did the Israelites respond and why? (11-12)

***11 And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side, 12 the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.***

* The Israelites heard it and gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them. But according to Deuteronomy 12:13-14, it was strictly forbidden.

**“**Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. **14** Offer them only at the place the Lord will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you.”

* God knew sinners’ tendency to worship idols. So God wanted them to worship in one place he chose so that they could keep religious purity and unity.
* Worship in one place could keep them from idolatry and division. According to the law of God, there should be only one altar, not two.
* So hearing the news that they built another altar, the Israelites were ready to go to war against them. Israel was on the verge of civil war.

2-4, How did the representative of the Israelites who were sent appeal to them? (13-20)?

***13 So the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. 14 With him they sent ten of the chief men, one from each of the tribes of Israel, each the head of a family division among the Israelite clans. 15 When they went to Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh—they said to them: 16 “The whole assembly of the Lord says: ‘How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the Lord and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now? 17 Was not the sin of Peor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a plague fell on the community of the Lord! 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. 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. 20 When Achan son of Zerah was unfaithful in regard to the devoted things, did not wrath come on the whole community of Israel? He was not the only one who died for his sin.’”***

* The Israelites sent Phinehas the priest and ten of the tribal leaders to them to investigate what was going on. On arriving there they asked many questions.
* The delegates told them that building another altar is to break faith with God and rebellion against him.
* Then they reminded them of the sin of Peor that some Israelites fell into idolatry and immorality with Moabite women, and God sent a plague. (Num 25).
* They also mentioned the sin of Achan who had hidden the “devoted things to God” in his tent and 36 soldiers died during the battle against Ai as a consequence.
* The whole Israelites were afraid of God’s judgment because of their rebellion and idolatry. So these delegates spoke to them directly pointing out their wicked act.
* They also showed their love for them by offering to share their own land. They were willing to share their one bedroom apartment with them if that would help the eastern tribes turn their hearts back to the one true God and serve him only.
* They were willing to sacrifice themselves to accommodate their fellow brethren of the Eastern tribes. That’s genuine and costly love.

3. Read verses 21-34. How did Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh reply

to the heads of the clans of Israel (21-29)? How was it resolved (30-34)? What

does this show about all the tribes of Israel?

3-1, Read verses 21-34.

Then Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the clans of Israel: **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. **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. **24** “No! We did it for fear that someday your descendants might say to ours, ‘What do you have to do with the Lord, the God of Israel? **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. **26** “That is why we said, ‘Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.’**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.’ **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 ancestors built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.’ **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.” **30** When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community—the heads of the clans of the Israelites—heard what Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had to say, they were pleased. **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 been unfaithful to the Lord in this matter. Now you have rescued the Israelites from the Lord’s hand.” **32** Then Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, and the leaders returned to Canaan from their meeting with the Reubenites and Gadites in Gilead and reported to the Israelites. **33** They were glad to hear the report and praised God. And they talked no more about going to war against them to devastate the country where the Reubenites and the Gadites lived. **34** And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name: A Witness Between Us—that the Lord is God.

3-2, How did Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh reply to the heads of the clans of Israel (21-29)?

***Then Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the clans of Israel: 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. 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.***

***24 “No! We did it for fear that someday your descendants might say to ours, ‘What do you have to do with the Lord, the God of Israel? 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.***

***26 “That is why we said, ‘Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.’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.’***

***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 ancestors built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.’***

***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.”***

* They could say, “Mind your own business and back off.” Or “How dare you judge us who had been shedding our sweat and blood for you guys.”
* Instead they calmly explained about the altar. Firstly they made a confession of faith in God, saying, “The Mighty One, God, the Lord!” twice.
* Then they said, “If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the Lord, do not spare us this day. 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” (22-23).
* In their confession, we can see clearly that they agreed with the delegates’ stand that that they cannot worship God in a different altar.
* They explained why they built an altar there. Let’s listen to them in verses 24-29. According to their explanation, they built the altar because they feared someday the descendants of 9 ½ tribes in the Promised Land would say to the descendants of the Eastern tribes that they had nothing to do with the God of Israel and have no share in the Lord.
* And as a result their own descendants would fear God no longer and live like godless gentiles. So they build it as a witness between the descendants of the Western tribes and Eastern tribes.

3-3, How was it resolved (30-34)?

***When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community—the heads of the clans of the Israelites—heard what Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had to say, they were pleased. 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 been unfaithful to the Lord in this matter. Now you have rescued the Israelites from the Lord’s hand.”***

***32 Then Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, and the leaders returned to Canaan from their meeting with the Reubenites and Gadites in Gilead and reported to the Israelites. 33 They were glad to hear the report and praised God. And they talked no more about going to war against them to devastate the country where the Reubenites and the Gadites lived.***

***34 And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name: A Witness Between Us—that the Lord is God.***

* After hearing their explanation, Phinehas and the leaders from the Western tribes were pleased because the Eastern tribes built it to plant clear identity to their descendants.
* So instead of being condemned and punished, they should have honored and praised from all the Israelites. So the delegates returned to Canaan and reported to the Israelites who dropped the weapons and praised God.

3-4, What does this show about all the tribes of Israel?

* Both the Western tribes and the Eastern tribes struggle hard to love God and to live as God’s chosen people, together with their children and their children’s children by obeying God’s commands and serving Him with all their heart and soul.
* The 12 tribes’ commitment to the truth of God was beautiful and praiseworthy. They all agreed on what the commandments of God demanded. They all took God’s words seriously and genuinely. Literally they were in the same page!
* Otherwise, they probably ended up in a horrible civil war. We should learn their total commitment to God and His commands which glue his people together.
* Our prayer topics this year is to keep the unity. How can it be possible? Each one of us first commit ourselves to God and his words.
* Otherwise, the unity is very weak and easily broken. Let us be God’s people who cling to truth in this secular generation and have true unity and harmony in the body of Christ.
* Let us take Joshua’s words to heart: Keep the commandments, love the Lord your God, walk in obedience to him, hold fast to him and serve him with all your heart and soul.

* But having truth alone is not enough. We also should have a commitment to love. In love, Joshua praised the 2 ½ tribes’ faithfulness in carrying out their mission from God and brotherly love for the Western tribes.
* Joshua gave great gifts to them so that they could share them with their families. In love, the delegates were sent to them to know what was really going on.
* In love these delegates asked them to come to Canaan to share the land. In love, they were willing to listen to what they explained.
* In love the Eastern tribes kindly answered to the leaders who in turn carefully listened to them. Someone said, “Love listens.”
* No doubt, both parties made mistakes. The Eastern tribes built an altar without giving notice to the Western tribes.
* The Western tribes heard the rumor and prepared themselves for a civil war. But love covered all their mistakes and they finished the meeting with praising God and commitment to one another.

**Conclusion**

Jesus was on the cross as God of truth and love. According to the truth, Jesus was to be there to pay for our sins because sin demands death. In love he offered himself to pay the price for us. Under Christ’s cross on the basis of both truth and love, we can truly have unity in the body of Christ.

**One word: Love God with all our hearts!**