

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA 22

The war with the Canaanites being ended, Joshua called to him the two tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, who came over Jordan with him to assist in it, and commended them for their obedience to Moses and to himself, and to God by them; and then dismissed them, with some instructions to keep the ways and worship of God, and with his blessing upon them, (~~4621~~Joshua 22:1-8); upon which they returned to their country, and when they came to the borders of it set up an altar by Jordan, (~~4621~~Joshua 22:9,10); which, when the children of Israel heard of, it gave them great offence, they fearing they were going to make a revolt from the pure worship of God, and therefore sent a deputation of princes to them, with the son of the high priest, to inquire into the matter, and expostulate with them about it, who did, (~~4621~~Joshua 22:11-20); and who received from them a very satisfactory answer, (~~4622~~Joshua 22:21-31); with which they returned and reported to the children of Israel, and which gave them pleasure, (~~4623~~Joshua 22:32-34).

Ver. 1. *Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh.*] The promise of God to Israel being fulfilled, the land of Canaan being for the most part subdued, the war at an end, and rest had on all sides from their enemies, and the land divided among the nine tribes and an half, and they settled in the quiet possession of their lots; Joshua sent for the two tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, who had, at their own request, their portion allotted them on the other side Jordan, and who came over that river with him to assist their brethren in their wars with the Canaanites, and addressed them in the following respectable manner.

Ver. 2. *And said unto them, ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you,* etc.] Which was, that they should leave their wives and children, and flocks, and herds, behind them in the land of Gilead, and pass over Jordan, with their brethren the children of Israel armed, and fight with them, and for them, until the Canaanites were subdued, and not return until their brethren were peaceably settled in the possession of their

inheritances; all which they had punctually observed, and inviolably kept, as they agreed to, (^{<6831>}Numbers 32:1-42);

and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you; as the generalissimo and commander in chief of the Israelitish forces; as what rank and position to be in, what part to take in an engagement, what attack to make, when and where, or on what expedition to go; wherever he ordered them to go, they went; and upon whatsoever and wheresoever he sent them, they readily and cheerfully obeyed, as they promised, (^{<6816>}Joshua 1:16,17); and approved themselves as good soldiers under him; for all which he commends them, and gives them military honour.

Ver. 3. *Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day*, etc.] For the space of fourteen years, which is the commonly received notion of the Jews ^{f511}; seven years according to them the land was subduing, and seven more spent in dividing it, and then these tribes were sent for and dismissed; all this time they stayed close by their brethren, and assisted them in their wars, and never offered to return to their wives and children, until they had an order from their general:

but have kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord your God; for what both Moses and Joshua commanded them was from the mouth of the Lord; so that, in obeying them, they obeyed him.

Ver. 4. *And now the Lord your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them*, etc.] As in (^{<6844>}Joshua 21:44); (see ^{<6829>}Deuteronomy 12:9, 10);

therefore now return ye, and get ye unto your tents; not their military tents in the army, from which they now came to Joshua, but their houses, as the Greek version, and their cities, as the Targum; they having been so long used to tents in the wilderness, and during the wars in Canaan, this was a familiar word for their dwellings:

[and] unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you, on the other side Jordan; before his death, on condition of doing what they now had done; even the land of Gilead and Bashan, beyond Jordan.

Ver. 5. *But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law*, etc.] The ten commandments, and all other laws, both ceremonial and civil:

which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you; in the name of the Lord, to keep and observe:

to love the Lord your God; of which keeping the commands of God is an evidence, and which is the true principle and motive of hearty, sincere, and cheerful obedience to them:

and to walk in all his ways; which he has prescribed, all his ways of worship, paths of duty, faith, truth, holiness, and righteousness:

and to keep his commandments; whether moral, ceremonial, or judicial: whether of natural and moral obligation, or of positive institution:

and to cleave unto him; and not depart from his ways, worship, word, and ordinances:

and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul: in the most strict and affectionate manner. This advice Joshua thought proper to give them, and inculcate into them, now they were about to leave their brethren, and go on the other side Jordan; where they would be at a distance from the tabernacle, altar, and service of God, and might be under temptation to relinquish it, and set up another form of worship elsewhere.

Ver. 6. *So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away*, etc.] Dismissed them from his presence with a blessing, in order to go to their own country; this he did by wishing them well, praying to God for a blessing on them, their persons, and families, who had been so useful in assisting their brethren to get possession of the land of Canaan. Some think this blessing includes gifts and presents he bestowed on them:

and they went unto their tents; here the word means their military tents in the camp of Israel, to which they returned, in order to take with them their goods, their substance and riches, their part of the spoil of the enemy, which of right belonged to them.

Ver. 7. *Now to the [one] half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given [possession] in Bashan*, etc.] The kingdom of Og, (see ^{<RB>}Deuteronomy 3:13);

but unto the [other] half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward: of which an account is given, and the border of their lot described, (^{<RB>}Joshua 17:1-18);

and when Joshua sent them also unto their tents, then he blessed them; it seems as if this half tribe was separately dismissed and blessed, they being more nearly related to Joshua, who was of the tribe of Ephraim, and so had a more particular dismissal and blessing; and he took his leave of them in a different and affectionate manner. Kimchi makes mention of a Derash, or Exposition of theirs, which says, that after they had taken leave they stayed two days, and returned and took leave a second time, and which he understands of them all, and not of the half tribe only; but it is plainly the half tribe that is only spoken of.

Ver. 8. *And he spake unto them*, etc.] To the half tribe of Manasseh only, though some think also to the other ten tribes:

saying, return with much riches unto your tents; that is, return to their own land, and habitations there, with whatsoever riches they had got from the spoil of the enemy:

and with very much cattle; they had taken from them, and fell to their share, and for which they had good pasturage in Gilead and Bashan, and therefore very proper to take with them,

with silver and with gold, and with brass, and with iron; whether in massive pieces, or wrought up into vessels, which they found in the houses of the Canaanites when they plundered them:

and with very much raiment; some no doubt very rich and costly, such as their kings, princes, nobles, and great personages among them wore:

divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren; according to Jarchi and Kimchi, this is spoken to the half tribe of Manasseh, to divide their spoil with the tribes of Reuben and Gad; but it rather means the dividing the above spoil, when they came to their own country with their brethren they left behind; who as they were employed in guarding and defending their cities, their wives and children, herds and flocks, in their absence, they had a right to part of the spoil; and as in other instances it appears to be a common case for those that stayed at home to share in the spoil with them that went to war, (see ^{<0817>}Numbers 31:27 ^{<0801>}1 Samuel 30:24,25 ^{<0682>}Psalms 68:12); though the notion of Abarbinel pleases me best, that by “their brethren” are meant the other half tribe of Manasseh that remained in Canaan, and were settled there: when the spoil of the Canaanites was divided among all the tribes, the whole tribe of Manasseh had its share; and whereas now half of it were going to their own country on the other side

Jordan, it was but reasonable they should have their part of the spoil to carry with them; and this seems to be the true reason of their being separately addressed, and dismissed and blessed.

Ver. 9. *And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, returned,* etc.] First to the camp to take their substance, and then set forward to their own land:

and departed from the children of Israel; from the rest of them, for otherwise they were children of Israel also:

out of Shiloh, which [is] in the land of Canaan; for here the camp of Israel was, as well as the tabernacle:

to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed; Gilead is put for the whole country on the other side Jordan, as the land of Jazer, and the kingdom of Bashan, which the two tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, were possessed of:

according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses; for when they moved to have that country, Moses, it seems, consulted the Lord about it, who declared it to be his will they should have it, on performing what they promised, (see ^{<031>}Numbers 32:1-42).

Ver. 10. *And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that [are] in the land of Canaan,* etc.] To the banks of it, or the sand heaps, some take the word to signify, which were thrown up to restrain the waters from overflowing; some by Geliloth understand a place so called; and Jerom ^{f512} says it was near Jordan in the tribe of Benjamin: but rather the word signifies the meanders, windings, and turnings, of the river ^{f513}; and such circuits and compasses it fetched near Jericho, as the same writer ^{f514} observes, where we may suppose these tribes went over, and at a place where the river jetted out into the land of Canaan:

the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, built there an altar by Jordan; or “then”; that is, when they had passed over the river into their own country, for which Josephus is express ^{f515}; and certain it is, that the altar was built not on the Canaan side of Jordan, but on the opposite side, as is clear from (^{<021>}Joshua 22:11): and indeed they had no right to build on any other ground than their own; and they pitched upon a spot where the river jetted out into the land of Canaan, as most proper to erect it on, to be

a witness, that though separated from the rest of the Israelites by the river Jordan, yet were a part of them, and had a right to join them in the service of God, and bring their sacrifices to the altar of God in the tabernacle, as more fully appears in some after verses:

a great altar to see to; built up very high, so that it might be seen at a great distance.

Ver. 11. *And the children of Israel heard say*, etc.] Those that dwelt in the land of Canaan, for otherwise, as before observed, the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan were Israelites also; and this is a further proof that the altar was built on their side, or those in the land of Canaan would have known of the building of it, and have seen them at it, and not come at the knowledge of it by hearsay only, as it seems they did, it being reported to them by some who had been in those parts, and had seen the structure:

behold, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, have built an altar over against the land of Canaan; which clearly shows it was on the other side Jordan, though Noldius, who places it in the land of Canaan, renders the words, “in the neighbourhood of” it ^{f516}; which will not much help him, since it might be in the neighbourhood of it, and yet not in it:

in the borders of Jordan; on the banks of it, or in one of the meanders and windings of it, at a place where it ran out and fetched a compass in the land of Canaan:

at the passage of the children of Israel; where they passed over when they first came into Canaan, and where those tribes also passed over at their return; supposed to be the Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing, (~~John~~ John 1:28).

Ver. 12. *And when the children of Israel heard [of it]*, etc.] Of the building the altar in the above place, namely, the nine tribes and a half settled in the land of Canaan:

the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh; where the tabernacle and altar of the Lord were, whose cause they undertook to avenge, being injured as they imagined by the altar the other tribes had built, and where they could consult the Lord by Urim and Thummim, if needful; hither they repaired from the several places

around, where their tribes were settled; not the whole body of the people, but their heads and representatives:

to go up to war against them; to consult about it, and to prepare for it, which they were obliged to do by the law of God, as in the case of a city, so of a tribe drawn aside to idolatry; and which they imagined was the case of these tribes, or at least what they had done had a tendency to apostasy from the true worship of God, which they were zealous to defend at the hazard of their lives, and though it should issue in an extirpation of one or more of their tribes; (see ⁽⁻¹⁵¹²⁾Deuteronomy 13:12-16).

Ver. 13. *And the children of Israel*, etc.] In the land of Canaan:

sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead; they were possessed of, and had now returned unto and dwelt in; hither they sent an embassy to them, to inquire into the truth of what they had heard, and the reason of it, before they went to war with them, or proclaimed it, or took any further steps towards it; and which they were obliged to do by the above law, when there was any suspicion of idolatry, and any good ground and reason for it, (⁽⁻¹⁵¹⁴⁾Deuteronomy 13:14); and at the head of this deputation was

Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest; a man zealous for the Lord of hosts, and his glory, of which there is an instance in (⁽⁻⁰²⁵⁷⁾Numbers 25:7,11,13); and so a fit person to be employed in this affair, who would be faithful, bold, and zealous, as well as capable of giving advice and counsel to both parties, if needful.

Ver. 14. *And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince, throughout all the tribes of Israel*, etc.] The nine tribes and a half, so that the half tribe of Manasseh sent a prince, as well as the whole tribes:

and each one [was] an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel; that is, among the rulers of the thousands of Israel; and so the Greek version calls them Chiliarchs, rulers of thousands; for the people were divided into tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands, over whom there were distinct rulers, (⁽⁻⁰²⁸⁵⁾Exodus 18:25). Now these were among the chief of them, of the highest rank and authority; they were the chief princes, heads of several tribes; a very honourable deputation this! the son of the high priest, and ten princes, the heads of the tribes; these were chosen and sent, partly in honour to their brethren beyond Jordan, and

partly that they might carry the greater authority with them, and prevail upon them to hearken to them.

Ver. 15. *And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, etc.]* The deputation came thither; they either sent for the chiefs among the two tribes and a half, to meet them at some place, or they, having a notion of their coming, assembled together to receive them, and hear what they had to say to them:

and they spake with them, saying; as follows; very probably Phinehas was the mouth of the whole, for there could be but one speaker.

Ver. 16. *Thus saith the whole congregation of the Lord, etc.]* By whom they were sent, and whom they represented; and they do not call them the congregation of Israel, but of the Lord, because it was not on a civil but religious account they were come, and not to plead their own cause, but the cause of God; and not so much to show a concern for their own honour and interest as for the glory of God:

what trespass [is] this that ye have committed against the God of Israel; they took it for granted that they had committed a sin, and that so great, they were not able to express the greatness of it in all its aggravated circumstances, and plainly suggest it was idolatry; which was too premature, when as yet they had not inquired into it; but their zeal for God, and his honour, hurried them into this hasty step:

to turn away this day from following the Lord; they intimate, that they had begun a revolt from the worship of God, which is aggravated by their falling into it so soon, having received so many favours from God, and had so lately seen such wonderful appearances of his power and goodness, and had just had such excellent instructions, exhortations, and cautions given them by Joshua, when he dismissed them:

in that ye have built you an altar; which they supposed was to offer sacrifices upon; whereas there was to be but one altar, and that in the place which the Lord should choose to put his name in, and which he had now chosen, where all sacrifices were to be brought and offered up; (see ^{<12714>}Exodus 20:24 ^{<1877>}Leviticus 17:3,4 ^{<5175>}Deuteronomy 12:5,6);

that ye might rebel this day against the Lord? against the commandment of the Lord expressed in the places referred to, which they charge with

rebellion against himself, a very high and heavy charge indeed! but they should first have inquired whether they were guilty of the trespass, or with what view they had built the altar, whether for sacrifice, or for some other use; but they took it for granted it was for sacrifice.

Ver. 17. [*Is*] *the iniquity of Peor too little for us*, etc.] The worshipping of that idol, when in the plains of Moab; the history of which, see in (⁽⁴²⁵⁾Numbers 25:2,3), was that so small a sin, that another must be added to it, or a greater committed? since building an altar seemed designed not for a single action of idolatrous worship, but for the continuance of it, whereas the sin of Peor was only committed at one time, and not continued in:

from which we are not cleansed until this day; not cleared from the shame and disgrace of it, or the guilt of it expiated or removed; but it might be expected, as in the case of the golden calf, that God would still at times punish for it, when provoked by new crimes; or the sense is, that there were those among them that were infected with the same contagion, and whose inclinations were to commit the same, or like sin of idolatry:

although there was a plague in congregation of the Lord; of which twenty four thousand died, (⁽⁴²⁶⁾Numbers 25:9).

Ver. 18. *But that you must turn away this day from following the Lord?* etc.] From the worship of the Lord, as the Targum, and so on (⁽⁴²⁷⁾Joshua 22:16); not content with the former transgression, but must add this revolt unto it, and at a time which sadly aggravates it:

and it will be, that [seeing] ye rebel to, day against the Lord; against the Word of the Lord, as the Targum, and so on (⁽⁴²⁸⁾Joshua 22:16);

that tomorrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel; or, in a little time, if a stop is not put to this revolt, the whole body of the people will suffer for it: here they express a concern for the whole nation of Israel, as well as for the glory of God; for sometimes the whole congregation has been charged with the sins of individuals, and punished for it, as a case after mentioned shows; (see ⁽⁴²⁹⁾Joshua 7:1,5).

Ver. 19. *Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession [be] unclean*, etc.] That is, if it was judged to be so by them, because not cleansed from the sins of the former inhabitants of it by sacrifice, or because there was no altar in it to offer up sacrifice for the expiation of sin:

[then] pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the Lord, wherein the Lord's tabernacle dwelleth; if you repent of the choice you have made of a country to dwell in, quit it, and come over into the land of Canaan, which the Lord has taken possession of, and residence in, and where his tabernacle is fixed, the place of his presence and worship, and where an altar is erected to sacrifice upon:

and take possession among us; they were willing to quit possession of their own, and make room for them in each of their tribes, and even though they straitened themselves, and parted with much of their estates, rather than they should make a schism, or go into idolatrous practices; which was a brave, noble, spirit indeed, and showed their great concern for the honour and glory of God, and his worship, and their love to their brethren, and affectionate regard for their spiritual welfare, above their own private, personal, and temporal good:

but rebel not against the Lord: the Word of the Lord, as the Targum, either Christ the essential Word, the Angel of Jehovah's presence, or his word of command:

nor rebel against us; by breaking off from us, and setting up another religion or form of worship:

in building you an altar beside the altar of the Lord our God: which ought to be common to both, and no other to be set up against it, or used beside it.

Ver. 20. *Did not Achan the son of Zerah,* etc.] One that descended from Zerah the son of Judah, (^{CH17B}Joshua 7:18);

commit a trespass in the accursed thing; in taking what was devoted to sacred uses:

and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and which was what was feared now; and this instance is brought to show that such fears were not groundless:

and that man perished not alone in his iniquity: which seems to confirm the notion of those who think that his children suffered with him; though it may be observed, that it was through his sin that thirty six men were slain by the men of Ai, (^{CH17B}Joshua 7:5).

Ver. 21. *Then the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, answered,* etc.] By some person whom they appointed to deliver the answer in their name:

and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel; who were over those that were rulers of the thousands of Israel, persons of greater authority than they, being princes of the respective tribes to which they belonged.

Ver. 22. *The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods,* etc.] They first set out in their answer with asserting their firm belief of Jehovah, the God of Israel, being the supreme God, God over all; over all that are called gods, whether angels, of whom Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret it; or civil magistrates and judges of the earth, who bare the same name; nor are the gods of the Gentiles to be spoken of with Jehovah, the God of Israel, who is the supreme Being, self-existent, the Being of beings, eternal and immutable, all which is contained in his name Jehovah; now this is repeated by them for the confirmation of their faith in this great article of it, and shows the steadiness of it, and to express their earnest and vehement affection for this truth, and to clear themselves from any imputation of idolatry, or thought of it, or doing anything that might have a tendency to it:

he knoweth; he is the omniscient God, the searcher of the hearts and the trier of the reins of the children of men; he knows our cordial belief of this truth, the integrity of our hearts, the intention of our minds, that we never had a thought in us of departing from his worship, and of setting up an altar beside his in opposition to it:

and Israel he shall know; our brethren the Israelites that dwell in the land of Canaan, whose representatives you are, shall know, not only by our present declaration, but by our future conduct, and strict adherence to the pure worship of God in time to come, that it was never our view by what we have done to depart from it:

if [it be] in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord; with a design to rebel against his word, and transgress his command:

save us not this day; this is said with respect to God, and as an apostrophe to him, as Jarchi, Kimchi, and Abarbinel observe; as expressing their desire to have no mercy shown them by him, but that vengeance might be taken on them by him, to whom all things were naked and open, and who full well knew whether they were guilty or not; or else the address is to

Phinehas, and the princes, that they would rise up and put them to death by sword, if this appeared to be the case; or that all the other tribes would rise up, and make war against them, and cut them off with the edge of the sword, and not spare them.

Ver. 23. *That we have built us an altar, to turn from following the Lord,* etc.] That is, we desire, as we deserve, to be cut to pieces, and not saved, if it should appear to be our view, in building this altar, to revolt from the pure worship of God:

or if to offer thereon burnt offering, or meat offering, or if to offer peace offerings; even to the Lord himself: they declare that as they had no design to apostatize from God, and worship idols, so it was not their intention to offer any kind of sacrifice on the altar they had built, even to the Lord himself; and they take notice of every kind of offering, to remove every charge of this sort from them, and to purge themselves of every imputation of this nature: then

let the Lord himself require [it]; seek it out, who is the omniscient God, and revenge it, who is the Lord God Almighty, just and true.

Ver. 24. *And if we have not [rather] done it for fear of [this] thing,* etc.] So far they suggest were they from doing this, in order to turn from the pure worship of God, and introduce idolatrous worship, that it was to guard against everything of that kind for the future; and through fear of it, and anxiety and distress of mind, lest some time or another there should be any temptation to it in their posterity, had they built this altar:

saying, in time to come your children might speak unto our children; or “tomorrow”^{f517}, in a short time after your heads, and ours, are laid in the grave, your posterity will accost us:

saying, what have you to do with the Lord God of Israel? you are aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, live in a foreign land, and not in the land, of Canaan; are separated from us by the river Jordan, are a different people from us, and have nothing to do with the tabernacle of the Lord, and the service of it, or with the altar of the Lord, to offer sacrifice on it. Now as they returned to their own country, or when got there, such anxious thoughts and fears rose up in their minds, which they communicated to one another, and thought of this expedient to prevent what would be so fatal to their posterity. The Targum is,

“you have no part in the Word of the Lord God of Israel;”

(see ^{<4118>}John 13:8).

Ver. 25. *For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you,* etc.] And by it separated them from them, as if they were a distinct people; not that this was really the case, but so they feared it would be represented in time to come; for though Jordan was the border of the land of Canaan, strictly so called, eastward, (^{<0642>}Numbers 34:12); yet it did not exclude the land of the two tribes and a half from being part of the land of promise; for the Amorites, which before inhabited it, and were driven out of it, were Canaanites, and were one part of the people, whose land the Lord promised to Abraham, (^{<0158>}Genesis 15:18-21);

ye children of Reuben, and children of Gad, have no part in the Lord; in his covenant and promises, in his worship, word, and ordinances; these are things you have nothing to do with, being separated from us his peculiar people; or “have no part in the Word of the Lord”, as the Targum, the promised Messiah, being without, or separated from him, as the Gentiles are said to be, (^{<4122>}Ephesians 2:12);

so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord; from worshipping the Lord, the fear of the Lord being often put for the whole worship of God, external and internal, (^{<2123>}Ecclesiastes 12:13); by behaving in the above manner towards them, they would be the cause and occasion of their apostasy from the true God, and it would be in effect to say to them, “go, serve other gods”, (^{<0269>}1 Samuel 26:19).

Ver. 26. *Therefore we said,* etc.] One to another, in order to prevent the apostasy of our children from God, their departure from his worship, and going into idolatry:

let us now prepare to build us an altar; get materials ready, and set about it instantly, without any delay, while the thing dwells upon our minds:

not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice; not for offerings of any kind required by the law, neither for sin offerings nor trespass offerings, nor any other not named.

Ver. 27. *But [that] it [may be] a witness between us and you, and our generations after us,* etc.] That we are one people, worship one God, and

serve at one altar, of which this built was a resemblance, and would put them in mind of it:

that we might do the service of the Lord before him; in the tabernacle, and at the altar, in the place where he had chosen to put his name and dwell:

with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; to be brought at stated times, or as occasion required:

that your children may not say to our children, in time to come, ye have no part in the Lord; nor right to his altar, and so forbid them offering their sacrifices on it; or

“have no part in the Word of the Lord,”

as the Targum; the Messiah, whose sacrifice was typified by the sacrifices of the legal dispensation, and all such, who offered theirs in the faith of that, had a part in it, and their sins were expiated by it.

Ver. 28. *Therefore said we*, etc.] To prevent any such usage of our children, and that they might have a ready answer to give:

that it shall be, when they should [so] say unto us, or to our generations, in time to come; as above suggested, that they were a separate people from them, and had no interest in the Lord, nor right to his altar, nor concern in his worship:

that we may say [again]; in reply, that is, our posterity:

behold the pattern of the altar of the Lord, which our fathers made; which exactly agrees with the Mosaic altar, and which they could never have framed in so exact a manner if they had not seen it, and served at it; wherefore this was a plain proof of their being originally worshippers of the same God, partakers of the same altar, and were in the faith, fellowship, and communion of Israel. According to Gussetius ^{f518}, this was not the altar the Reubenites, etc. built, which the children of Israel would be bid to behold, but the Mosaic altar at the tabernacle or temple, which was the archetype and exemplar, according to which that of the Reubenites was formed; and therefore say not, come and behold, but behold the altar present before them, that of Moses, and acknowledge that to be a type and exemplar, which they had related, and so confess it to be a testimony of their mutual fellowship: and what they had made in imitation of it, which exactly answered to it, was

not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; of any sort, that was not the intention of erecting it:

but it [is] a witness between us and you; that we worship the same God, and are of the same faith and fellowship.

Ver. 29. *God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord*, etc.] Against the command of the Lord, who ordered one altar to be made, to which all sacrifices were to be brought from the several parts of the land of Israel, and there to be offered on it; or

“against the Word of the Lord,”

as the Targum, Christ typified both by the altar and the sacrifices on it; and who is but one, one priest, one sacrifice, one altar, one Mediator and Saviour:

and turn this day from following the Lord; apostatize from him, and from his worship:

to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices; which was never our intention, or ever entered into our hearts to erect one for such a purpose:

besides the altar of the Lord our God, that [is] before his tabernacle; it standing in the court of the tabernacle before the holy place.

Ver. 30. *And when Phinehas the priest*, etc.] For he was, being the son of Eleazar the high priest, so the word “priest”, (⁴⁶²¹³Joshua 22:13); is to be joined, not to Eleazar but to Phinehas:

and the princes of the congregation; the ten princes, who were sent by the congregation of Israel, one out of each tribe:

and heads out of the thousands of Israel; these are the same with the princes, and this belongs to their title, who were heads of the Chiliarchs, or those who were rulers of thousands in Israel:

which [were] with him; with Phinehas, who were joined with him in the embassy, and now present with him:

heard the words that the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh; spake; in defence of themselves, explaining the meaning and design of the altar they had built:

it pleased them; they were not only satisfied with their answer, but highly delighted with what they had done, as tending to preserve the common faith and fellowship of Israel.

Ver. 31. *And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest*, etc.] As the mouth of the deputation, and in their name:

said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh; the representatives of them assembled together on this occasion:

this day we perceive that the Lord [is] among us; his Shechinah, as the Targum; his powerful Presence in preserving their brethren from committing a trespass, as they feared; his gracious Presence smiling upon them; and as the God of peace and order, and not of confusion, uniting and cementing their hearts in love to one another:

because ye have not committed this trespass against the Lord; which they were fearful and jealous of they had, but they found that the Lord had been good and gracious in preserving them from it:

now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord; into which they would have fallen, had that been the case, and would have felt the effects of the divine resentment, but now they were secure from them.

Ver. 32. *And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes*, etc.] Being fully satisfied with the relation of things that had been given them, and having taken their leave of the assembly:

returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad; the Greek version adds, “and from the half tribe of Manasseh”; which, though not in the Hebrew text, is undoubtedly meant:

out of the land of Gilead: which, though only a part of the country these tribes inhabited, is put for the whole, and it is not improbable that the assembly might be held in it:

unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel; the rest of the children of Israel who dwelt in the land of Canaan, properly so called:

and brought them word again; reported the whole affair, related all that had passed, and acquainted them with the intention and design of their

brethren erecting the altar, and what had been the issue of their embassy to them.

Ver. 33. *And the thing pleased the children of Israel*, etc.] They were quite satisfied with the account of things, and were pleased and delighted with what their brethren, the other two tribes, had done:

and the children of Israel blessed God: returned thanks to him, that there was no trespass committed against him, and no schism like to be made among them, nor any wrath to come upon them:

and did not intend to go up against them in battle; for though upon first hearing of their building an altar, which they supposed was for idolatry, they had intended to make war against them, but now understanding the design of that building, they laid aside all thoughts of that kind:

to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwell; which they judged by the law in (⁴⁵¹²Deuteronomy 13:12) they were obliged to do. The Greek version here adds also, “and the half tribe of Manasseh”, and renders the last clause, and “they dwelt in it”; continued to dwell in it undisturbed by their brethren.

Ver. 34. *And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, called the altar [Ed]*, etc.] Which signifies a “witness”; they caused such an inscription to be put upon it, or this word to be engraved on it, that so the intention of erecting it might be known in future time; that it was not for sacrifice, but to be a testimony of their being one with their brethren on the other side Jordan, in worship, faith, and fellowship:

for [it shall be] a witness between us that the Lord [is] God; is the one God, the God of them both, of all Israel, whether on the one or the other side of Jordan; to be worshipped by them in one and the same manner, and their sacrifices to be offered to him on his altar before the tabernacle.