

# THE LAND THAT REUBEN AND GAD CHOSE

**BIBLE TEXT** Numbers 32:1-32; Judges 5:16, 17

LESSON 112 - SENIOR COURSE

**MEMORY VERSE:** "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD" (Psalm 84:1, 2).

## Bible Text in King James Version:

### **Numbers 32:1-32 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place *was* a place for cattle;

<sup>2</sup> The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, <sup>3</sup> Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon,

<sup>4</sup> *Even* the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, *is* a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle:

<sup>5</sup> Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, *and* bring us not over Jordan.

<sup>6</sup> And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?

<sup>7</sup> And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?

<sup>8</sup> Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadeshbarnea to see the land.

<sup>9</sup> For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them.

<sup>10</sup> And the LORD'S anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying,

<sup>11</sup> Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me:

<sup>12</sup> Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD.

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **I Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh's Choice of Inheritance**

1 Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, because of their many cattle, desired to possess Gilead and Bashan, which were not in the Land of Canaan, Numbers 32:1-5, 32, 33;

#### **Deuteronomy 3:1-13 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then we turned, and went up the way to Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei.

<sup>2</sup> And the LORD said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.

<sup>3</sup> So the LORD our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining.

<sup>4</sup> And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

<sup>5</sup> All these cities *were* fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwalled towns a great many.

<sup>6</sup> And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of every city.

<sup>7</sup> But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves.

<sup>8</sup> And we took at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites the land that *was* on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto mount Hermon;

<sup>9</sup> (*Which* Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it Shenir;)

<sup>10</sup> All the cities of the plain, and all Gilead, and all Bashan, unto Salchah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

<sup>11</sup> For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead *was* a bedstead of iron; *is* it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits *was* the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.

<sup>12</sup> And this land, *which* we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which *is* by the river Arnon, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, gave I unto the Reubenites and to the Gadites.

<sup>13</sup> And the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, *being* the kingdom of Og, gave I unto the half tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants.

2 Moses reprimanded the two and a half tribes for their seeming selfish desire and reluctance to help their brethren conquer the Promised Land, Numbers 32:6-15

3 These tribes agreed to send fighting men with the other tribes of Israel to help conquer the land, Numbers 32:16-31;

#### **Joshua 4:12-13 (KJV)**

<sup>12</sup> And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them:

<sup>13</sup> About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.

4 Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh left more than half of their fighting men to protect their possessions while they were with their brethren in Canaan Land, Numbers 26:7, 18, 34;

#### **Joshua 4:12-13 (KJV)**

<sup>12</sup> And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them:

<sup>13</sup> About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.

5 Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh's receiving of the land of Gilead and Bashan was a conditional grant, Numbers 32:20-24, 28-30;

#### **Joshua 1:12-15 (KJV)**

<sup>12</sup> And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh,

<sup>13</sup> And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed.

<sup>14</sup> And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel.

<sup>15</sup> For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.

<sup>16</sup> And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones:

<sup>17</sup> But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land.

<sup>18</sup> We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.

<sup>19</sup> For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward.

<sup>20</sup> And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war,

<sup>21</sup> And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him,

<sup>22</sup> And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD.

<sup>23</sup> But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

<sup>24</sup> Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth.

<sup>25</sup> And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth.

<sup>26</sup> Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead:

<sup>27</sup> But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to

spake Joshua, saying,

<sup>13</sup> Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.

<sup>14</sup> Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them;

<sup>15</sup> Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as *he hath given* you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD'S servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.

#### **Joshua 22:1-6 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh,

<sup>2</sup> And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you:

<sup>3</sup> Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God.

<sup>4</sup> And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, *and* unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan.

<sup>5</sup> But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

<sup>6</sup> So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents.

## **II Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh's Received Inheritance**

1 The two and a half tribes set up an altar of remembrance, which caused a great controversy among the remaining tribes of Israel, Judges 5:15-17;

#### **Joshua 22:10-34 (KJV)**

<sup>10</sup> And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that *are* in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to.

<sup>11</sup> And the children of Israel heard say, 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, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel.

<sup>12</sup> And when the children of Israel heard *of it*, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them.

<sup>13</sup> And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest,

<sup>14</sup> And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one *was* an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel.

<sup>15</sup> 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, and they spake with them, saying,

<sup>16</sup> Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass *is* this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the LORD?

<sup>17</sup> *Is* the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD,

<sup>18</sup> But that ye must turn away this day from following the LORD? and it will be, *seeing* ye rebel to day against the LORD, that to morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel.

<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession *be* unclean, *then* pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the LORD, wherein the LORD'S tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the LORD, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the LORD our God.

<sup>20</sup> 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 perished not alone in his iniquity.

<sup>21</sup> Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel,

<sup>22</sup> The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; *if it be* in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day,)

<sup>23</sup> That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer

battle, as my lord saith.

<sup>28</sup> So concerning them Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel:

<sup>29</sup> And Moses said unto them, If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over Jordan, every man armed to battle, before the LORD, and the land shall be subdued before you; then ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession:

<sup>30</sup> But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.

<sup>31</sup> And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying, As the LORD hath said unto thy servants, so will we do.

<sup>32</sup> We will pass over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan *may be* ours.

### **Judges 5:16-17 (KJV)**

<sup>16</sup> Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart.

<sup>17</sup> Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches.

thereon burnt offering or meat offering, or if to offer peace offerings thereon, let the LORD himself require *it*;

<sup>24</sup> And if we have not *rather* done it for fear of *this* thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the LORD God of Israel?

<sup>25</sup> For the LORD hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the LORD: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the LORD.

<sup>26</sup> Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice:

<sup>27</sup> But *that it may be* a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD.

<sup>28</sup> Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should *so* say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say *again*, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it *is* a witness between us and you.

<sup>29</sup> God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the LORD our God that *is* before his tabernacle.

<sup>30</sup> And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel which *were* with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them.

<sup>31</sup> And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD *is* among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD.

<sup>32</sup> And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again.

<sup>33</sup> And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.

<sup>34</sup> And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar *Ed*: for it *shall be* a witness between us that the LORD *is* God.

## 2 The departure of the two and a half tribes from the rest of Israel separated them from the Tabernacle of God which was at Shiloh, in the Promised Land,

### **Joshua 22:9 (KJV)**

<sup>9</sup> And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

### **Joshua 22:29 (KJV)**

<sup>29</sup> God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the LORD our God that *is* before his tabernacle.

### **Joshua 18:1-2 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.

<sup>2</sup> And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance.

## 3 The explicit command of God was that all the tribes of Israel make their offerings at the place where God would choose,

### **Deuteronomy 12:5-6 (KJV)**

<sup>5</sup> But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

<sup>6</sup> And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

### **Deuteronomy 12:11-14 (KJV)**

<sup>11</sup> Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause

his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:

<sup>12</sup> And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

<sup>13</sup> Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:

<sup>14</sup> But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.

**Deuteronomy 12:26-27 (KJV)**

<sup>26</sup> Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose:

<sup>27</sup> And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh.

**Deuteronomy 15:19-20 (KJV)**

<sup>19</sup> All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep.

<sup>20</sup> Thou shalt eat *it* before the LORD thy God year by year in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household.

### III The Final Result of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh's Choice

1 The prophetic utterances of the Old Testament prophets revealed the state of spirituality of the half tribe of Manasseh,

**Deuteronomy 3:13 (KJV)**

<sup>13</sup> And the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, *being* the kingdom of Og, gave I unto the half tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants.

**Ezekiel 39:18 (KJV)**

<sup>18</sup> Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan.

**Amos 4:1 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that *are* in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.

**Isaiah 2:13 (KJV)**

<sup>13</sup> And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, *that are* high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,

**Zechariah 11:1-3 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.

<sup>2</sup> Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.

<sup>3</sup> *There is* a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

2 The land of Gilead, occupied by Reuben and Gad, received severe criticism from the later prophets as they preached to Israel,

**Deuteronomy 3:12 (KJV)**

<sup>12</sup> And this land, *which* we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which *is* by the river Arnon, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, gave I unto the Reubenites and to the Gadites.

**Jeremiah 22:18-22 (KJV)**

<sup>18</sup> Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory!

<sup>19</sup> He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

<sup>20</sup> Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed.

<sup>21</sup> I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; *but* thou saidst, I will not hear. This *hath been* thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.

<sup>22</sup> The wind shall eat up all thy pastors, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness.

**Hosea 6:8 (KJV)**

<sup>8</sup> Gilead *is* a city of them that work iniquity, *and is* polluted with blood.

**Hosea 12:11 (KJV)**

<sup>11</sup> *Is there* iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars *are* as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

3 The two and a half tribes followed God for a season but soon departed to idolatrous worship,

**1 Chronicles 5:18-26 (KJV)**

<sup>18</sup> The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, *were* four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war.

<sup>19</sup> And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab.

<sup>20</sup> And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that *were* with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him.

<sup>21</sup> And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men an hundred thousand.

<sup>22</sup> For there fell down many slain, because the war *was* of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity.

<sup>23</sup> And the children of the half tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land: they increased from Bashan unto Baalhermon and Senir, and unto mount Hermon.

<sup>24</sup> And these *were* the heads of the house of their fathers, even Epher, and Ishi, and Eliel, and Azriel, and Jeremiah, and Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, mighty men of valour, famous men, *and* heads of the house of their fathers.

<sup>25</sup> And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them.

<sup>26</sup> And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilseser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

**NOTES:**

**The Land that God Chose**

The story of the Israelites and their journey from Egypt to Canaan Land is a type of the walk of the Christian. It is a type of his leaving the life of sin and bondage, and journeying to the land of promise, the land that God has promised.

The land of Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey. It was not the land that man chose for himself, but the land that God in His goodness and mercy chose for him. The Bible says that in this land which God gave them there were "great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not" (Deuteronomy 6:10, 11).

Canaan Land was not a drab, barren, desert land but a land of abundance wherein grew bunches of grapes which took two grown men to carry. It was not such an impoverished land that no one else could see its worth. On the contrary, the heathen nations saw its worth and were well entrenched in the country. This was the land that the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh did not want.

**The Land that Reuben and Gad Chose**

It is a sad thought that the two and a half tribes of Israel could not see the value of the land that God had chosen for them. That Israel was a nation of people was due to the direct providence of God. It was God who blessed the family of Jacob until they became a great multitude. Now Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, because they had much cattle, desired the regions of Gilead and Bashan.

Even the fact that they owned cattle was through the goodness and mercy of God; yet even this did not seem to deter them from their decision. The lands of Gilead and Bashan were good for cattle, but were not the land that God wanted them to have. There was plenty of evidence that Canaan was as fruitful a land as God had said it *was*, and very good for all their needs. Yet they could not be turned from their decision. The tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh received their choice; but we learn from the Bible that it was a poor choice; and it was to the

detriment of their own souls that they occupied Gilead and Bashan.

### **Christ the Giver of Good Gifts**

When someone is presented with a gift of great value it is usually accepted with the understanding that the giver is giving it with a motive of love; that it is presented as a material manifestation of the love that the giver has toward the receiver. God had given many precious things to Israel to show His love toward them. The wealth that Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh possessed was one of these. Yet it seemed that when they had received the material blessings of God they became lost in selfish desires for the temporal things and could not see the Giver of those gifts at all, who in reality was God. We read in James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." We see these several tribes taken up with the "loaves and fishes" of material things, and not even desiring to press on into the fuller blessings that might have been theirs in Canaan.

Christ, in His day, found people with the same conception of the value of spiritual things. They had eyes for the material good that Christ could do for them, yet they could not see His immeasurable worth as the Savior of their souls. Many came to eat of the fishes and bread He so miraculously provided on two occasions, yet were deaf to the profound truths of life He taught.

Upon one occasion He commanded ten lepers to go and show themselves to the priests. As they obeyed, they were cleansed of their leprosy. One of them came back to Jesus to worship Him with praise and thanksgiving for the wonderful thing that Jesus had done for him. Jesus said: "Where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger" (Luke 17:11-19).

The great God of Heaven has more in His plan of salvation than some material blessings such as healing for the body, or alone the needs of Reuben and Gad's cattle, or the wealth of the world, or, perhaps, some talent for worldly pursuits. God does not want us to become so occupied with these things that we can no longer see God, or the truth God is trying to present to us. Many people today do not desire God's best. God gives material things to encourage our hearts and to make us realize that He is Ruler and Master of all in Heaven and earth, and is well able to heal our bodies and save our souls.

### **Leaving the Brethren and the House of God**

God had Moses set up the Tabernacle and inaugurate its form of worship. It was the plan of God to lead these people and make them representatives of the Gospel to all the rest of the world. He brought Israel out of Egypt with a high and mighty hand, that He might sanctify His great name in Israel and that the heathen nations might see and know that He was God and that there was no other. Because of the intense and universal idolatry among the heathen nations surrounding Israel, the tabernacle worship was necessary to keep ever before them the remembrance of the God whom they were serving. The Law was very strict and demanded an absolute obedience to its precepts. The tabernacle service was the portrayal of Christ who was to come. The people were expressly commanded that they must present themselves and their holy sacrifices to God at the spot where God chose to place His name and meet with them. (**Deuteronomy 12:5-11** <sup>5</sup> But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: <sup>6</sup> And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: <sup>7</sup> And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee. <sup>8</sup> Ye shall not do after all *the things* that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. <sup>9</sup>

For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you. <sup>10</sup> But *when* ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and *when* he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; <sup>11</sup> Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: **Deuteronomy 14:23** <sup>23</sup> And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithes of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. **Deuteronomy 15:20** <sup>20</sup> Thou shalt eat *it* before the LORD thy God year by year in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household)

The choice of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh to stay on the other side of Jordan, separated from their brethren, was in itself a serious matter. But more serious was the fact that they were deliberately separating themselves from the place where the Tabernacle was eventually set up, at Shiloh, in Canaan.

Since it was at the Tabernacle that God had commanded the tribes of Israel to worship, the removing of the two and a half tribes away from the place of worship made it very difficult for them to worship God in the proper manner. God is never pleased with a slipshod manner of worship. There is a right way, and we are expected to worship God in the proper manner as behooves the honor due Him.

A sad record of their departure is recorded in Joshua 22:9: "And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses."

#### **Great Searchings of Heart**

We read in Judges 5:15-17: "For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan...." When people who profess to be serving God leave the house of God, to dwell afar off from their brethren and the worship of God, because of the welfare of their material possessions (which God Himself has given them), there is something wrong. It grieved the hearts of the remaining tribes of Israel when the two and a half tribes left their fellowship. Similar circumstances have grieved every true Christian ever since.

How insidious is the disease of selfishness. It is a road of destruction, strewn with the wreckage of human souls who have left God and the service of God to serve their own selfish desires. The calling of the Christian, which is to tell the story of Jesus and His love, is the grandest work there is in life. It is a sad day when anyone renounces that work for a selfish work of his own.

#### **The Fruit of Bashan and of Gilead**

It is not a strange matter that Moses, seeing the choice of the two and a half tribes, rebuked them for their decision. The words he uttered were prophetic truth. How much it must have grieved God to see them taking a road that He knew would lead them to a lukewarm worship of Him. It is one thing to be far away from God, lost in sin, and hopelessly defiled, knowing little about the saving grace of Christ; and it is quite another and more serious thing to have tasted of the good things of God in your soul and body, to have been a recipient of the miraculous powers of God, and to have seen and felt the wonderful glory of God, and then to turn away to the material things of the world.

Paul says of this matter, "For if I build again the things which I de-

stroyed, I make myself a transgressor" (Galatians 2:18). Peter tells us: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through **the** knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way **of** righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (II Peter 2:20-22).

### **QUESTIONS**

- 1 Was it the will of God that all twelve tribes of Israel have their inheritance in Canaan Land?
- 2 Where were the lands of Gilead and Bashan?
- 3 Why did Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh desire to live where they did?
- 4 What did Moses tell the two and a half tribes about their request?
- 5 Do you think the lands of Gilead and Bashan were equal to Canaan Land in richness and value?
- 6 Where was the Tabernacle, and why did God make specific commands about it?
- 7 Do you think the two and a half tribes attended the services at Shiloh very often?
- 8 Why did God desire every one to make holy sacrifices at the same place?
- 9 Why is it not possible to serve God wholeheartedly and live afar off from the Tabernacle of God?
- 10 What was the final result of the separation of the two and a half tribes from the rest of Israel?