General Church Education

Eastern Tribes Return Home

Joshua 22:1-16, 20-34

Lesson 16

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

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Eastern Tribes Return Home

Joshua 22:1-16,20-34

For Parents and Teachers

Joshua told the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh that they could return to their land east of the Jordan once they had fulfilled their promise to help with the conquest of the land of Canaan. He sent them there with livestock, silver, gold, bronze, iron and clothing to divide among their tribes. As they returned, they built an impressive large altar by the Jordan, before crossing the river. When some of the children of Israel heard about the altar, they gathered everyone at Shiloh to make war against them, believing they had violated the law (Deuteronomy 12:13,14) by setting up a new place to worship, which was forbidden. They sent Phinehas, the son of the high priest, and representatives from each tribe to talk to Gad, Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh. The tribes said they had made the altar so their descendants would continue to know and fear the Lord. It was to be a witness between those in Canaan and those outside its borders that they worshiped the same God, the One God of Israel. Phineas brought back word of their good intentions in building the altar, and talk of war ended.

This story is a warning about being too ready to judge others on outward appearances. The Writings explain that people who do not have charity only see what is evil in their neighbors, and if they see anything good, they put an evil interpretation on it. Those who are in charity scarcely see the evils of another person, and put a good interpretation on what is evil and false. See *Arcana Coelestia* 1079, below.

Ideas for Children

- Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh fulfilled their promises to fight and went home.
- The Lord warns us about being too ready to judge others by outward appearance.
- The Lord wants us to talk with others when we are having problems with them.

From the Writings

Everything that a person does from their inner will is done purposefully, since whatever that will intends to do it purposes to itself. And everything that a person does from their intellect is done deliberately, since the intellect deliberates. It follows in consequence of this that everyone has imputed to them evil or good in accordance with the nature of their will in these and in accordance with the nature of their understanding regarding them. See *Conjugial Love* 372.

Where charity does not exist, people see in the neighbor only what is evil and if they see anything good they either perceive it as nothing or else put a bad interpretation on it. Those who have charity hardly notice the evil in another person, but instead notice all the goods and truths and put a good interpretation on what is evil and false. Of such a nature are all angels, it being something they have from the Lord, who bends everything evil into good. See *Arcana Coelestia* 1079.

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Eastern Tribes Return Home

Joshua 22:1-16,20-24

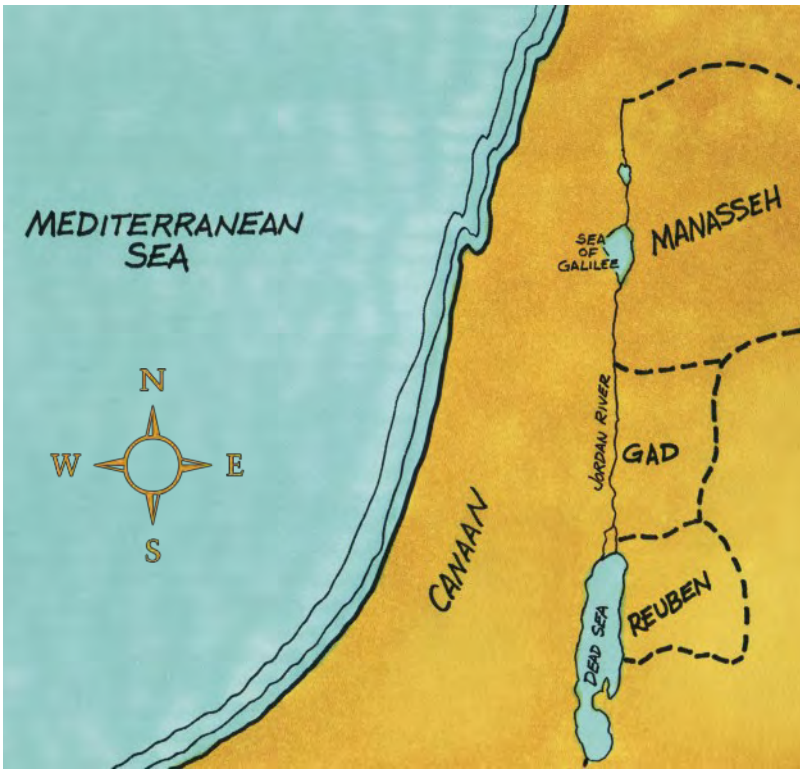
Vocabulary

spoil—treasures taken in battle
treachery—deception, betrayal of trust
descendants—people born from the same ancestor
cease—stop
witness—to give evidence of

After seventeen years of fighting, the land of Canaan—which the Lord had promised to Abram—was conquered. All of the fighting men could finally return to their families and land and settle in their homes.

The Eastern Tribes

"Home" for some of the tribes was to the east of the river Jordan, just outside Canaan. Do you remember which tribes asked for land before the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan? It was the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. The women, children and animals had not crossed the river Jordan but stayed on the east side. The men promised to do something before they could settle on their land. What did they promise to do?



A Promise

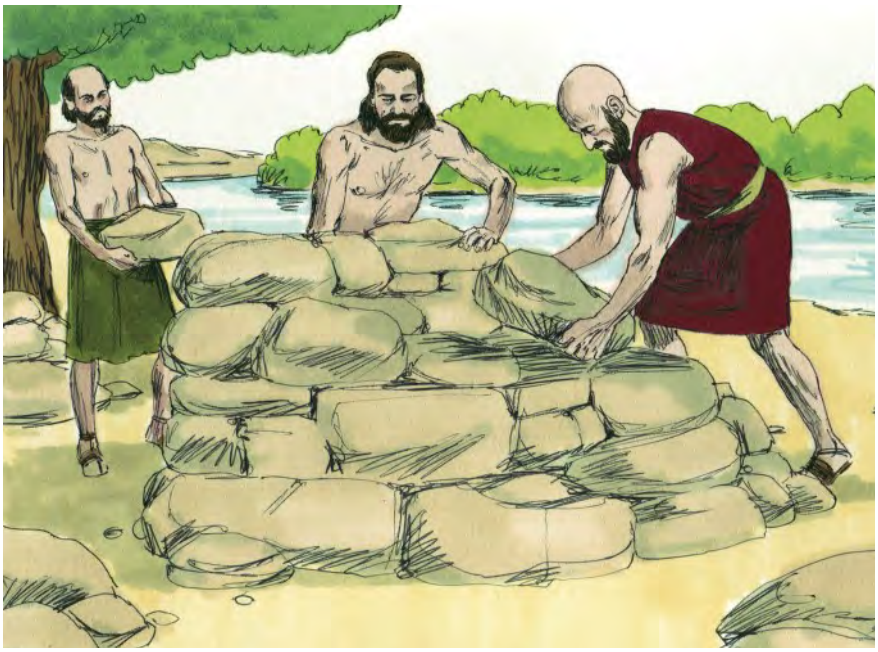
The tribes promised Moses that their soldiers would cross the river Jordan with the other tribes and fight with them until the land of Canaan was conquered. They promised:

We will not return to our homes until every one of the children of Israel has received his inheritance. (Numbers 32:18)

The tribes kept their promise. With the land conquered, it was time for the soldiers to go to their homes across the Jordan. Joshua reminded them to obey and serve the Lord. He gave them a blessing and sent them away.

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Read Joshua 22:1-9.



A Great, Impressive Altar

On the journey home the men stopped at the Jordan and built a great altar by the river. When the other nine and a half tribes heard about the altar, they were very angry. They went to Shiloh intending to fight them.

Do you remember what was in Shiloh? Why might the people have gathered in Shiloh, and not another place? What might have made them angry? The tribes felt that the people of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had turned away from the Lord. They were so angry they wanted to fight them. They did not know why they had built the altar and guessed it was for making sacrifices to the Lord. To understand why they felt this way we need to look back at a law the Lord gave the children of Israel when the tabernacle was first built. They were never to offer sacrifices on any altar except the altar of burnt offering in the tabernacle. So it looked as if they had set up an altar outside the tabernacle.

Read Joshua 22:10-16.

Phinehas Questions the Two and a Half Tribes

Before going to fight, the tribes living west of the Jordan sent Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, and ten princes, to look into what had happened. They asked:

> What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the Lord, in that you have built for yourselves an altar…? (Joshua 22:16)

And the people on the east side of Jordan explained. They hadn't built an altar for *sacrifices.* They had built an altar for a *memorial*. The nine and a half tribes thought they had wrong intentions. They thought they had committed a sin, when they were really trying to remember the Lord!

They Called the Altar "Witness"

Since their homes were not in Canaan, but across the Jordan, the western tribes were worried people might forget that they were part of the children of Israel. The altar was to be a witness that they worshiped the same God and were part of the children of Israel, even though their homes were outside the land of Canaan.

Phinehas and the ten princes went back to Shiloh. Joshua and the people were pleased with their report. Now they understood that the altar was not made to turn away from the Lord. It was to re-

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mind the people about their covenant with Him. And so there was no more talk of fighting and all went home in peace.

Read Joshua 22:20-31.

This story shows how easy it is to misunderstand others. It also shows a good way to stop a quarrel. Do we sometimes think that what someone is doing is wrong? Sometimes, we get upset and complain before talking to them and finding out what they are thinking. Even among good friends, misunderstandings can be cleared up by talking about what is going on.

Discussion Questions

- Which tribes received land to the east of the Jordan River before the children of Israel crossed over into Canaan?
- What did these tribes promise Moses? What did they have to do before they could live in their land?
- Did you notice that Moses was called "the servant of the Lord" (Joshua 22:2)? He listened to the Lord and taught people the Lord's laws. Emanuel Swedenborg is also called "the servant of the Lord". Why is this?
- Why were the western tribes angry?
- What kinds of things cause misunderstandings between friends?
- How did the tribes solve their problem? What ideas does this give for solving problems with others?
- What does "gossip" mean? Who "gossiped" in this story? Why is gossip harmful? What might you say to someone who gossips?
- How does the way we look at others make a difference? In what ways does thinking the best of someone help us to see their actions in positive ways. What if we were to look for their faults instead?
- How would the impressive altar help the children of Israel in the future?

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Activity Overview | Eastern Tribes Return Home

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23,24

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- What's the Motive? (activity and discussion)
- Create and Decorate an Acrostic Poem on Angel
- Picture to color—Eleazar, son of Aaron, the Priest (Joshua 24)

Additional Activity Ideas

- Read Joshua 22 to fill in the blanks to answer review questions for the Eastern Tribes Return Home. This activity is available online at https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-the-eastern-tribes-return-home-review-questions-joshua22.pdf.

Activity 1 | What's the Motive?

When the land of Canaan was conquered Joshua sent the Eastern Tribes home. On the way they built an impressive altar by the Jordan River. When other tribes heard about it they became angry and gathered for war, because they thought that the Eastern Tribers were disobeying the Lord. When Phineas the priest investigated he found the altar was not built to disobey the Lord, but to be a covenant witness. When the tribes in the land heard this, they blessed God and returned to their homes.

Place markers on a chart comparing the tribes' feelings about the altar. Discuss your choices. Use *What's the Motive? Discussion*, below, to look at examples of situations in which misunderstandings have happened when a person thought they knew another's motives. Think of similar situations, and discuss the importance of thinking before assuming others' motives.

Materials

Altar Markers
Feelings about the Altar
What's the Motive? Discussion
scissors or paper cutter

Directions

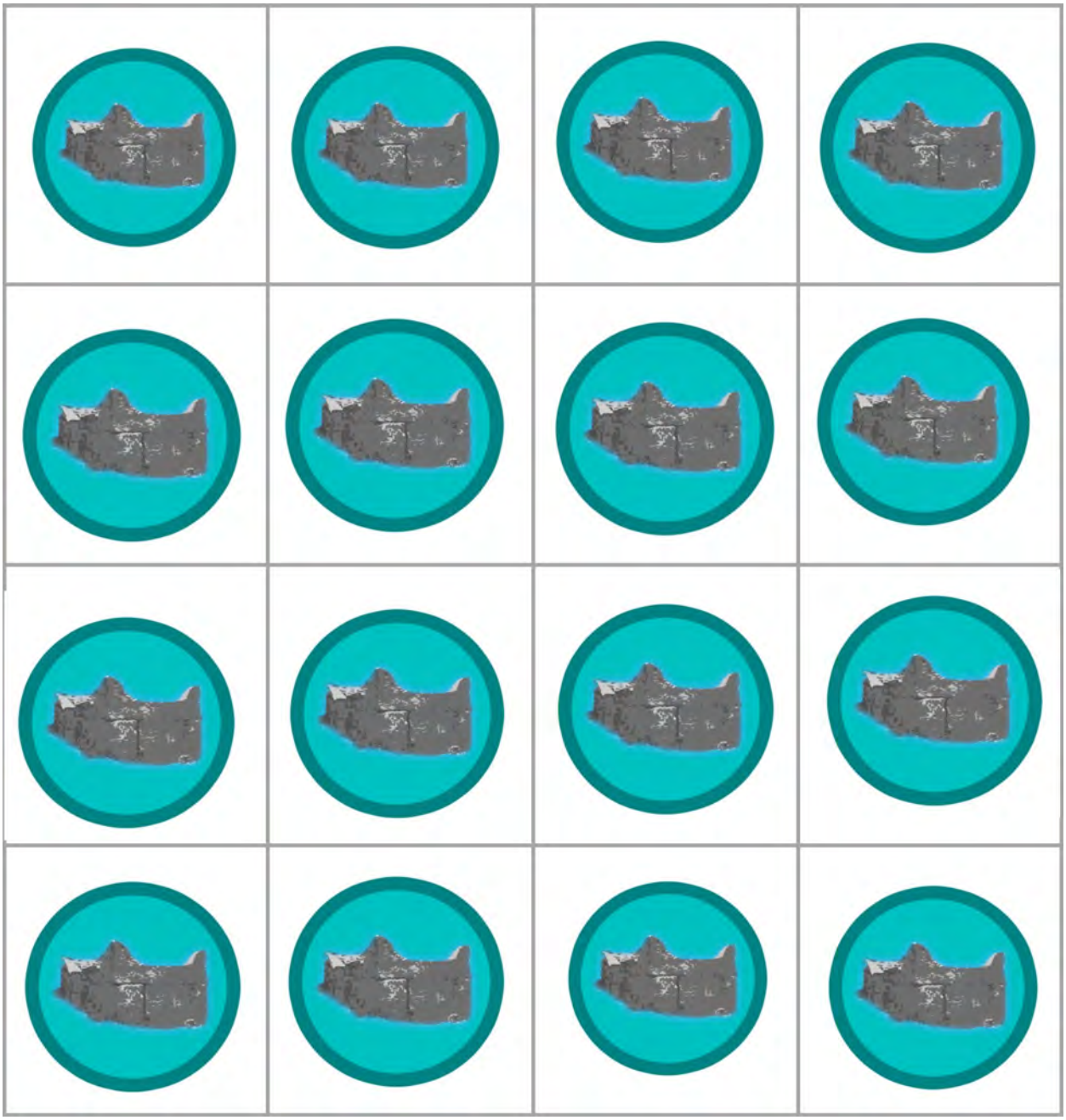
1. Cut apart a the *Altar Markers* on the lines. (Use a paper cutter for faster results.)
2. Arrange the *Altar Markers* on *Feelings about the Altar* chart to show feelings reflecting the two groups. If both groups felt the same way, place two markers on a feeling. Think about the feelings through the end of the story. Discuss your choices.

What's the Motive? Discussion

1. Read a situation, below:
   - Someone pokes the person sitting next to them.
   - A person cuts in front of someone as they're walking.
   - Someone helps themselves to a snack another person has been saving.
   - A person borrows someone's favorite clothing without asking.

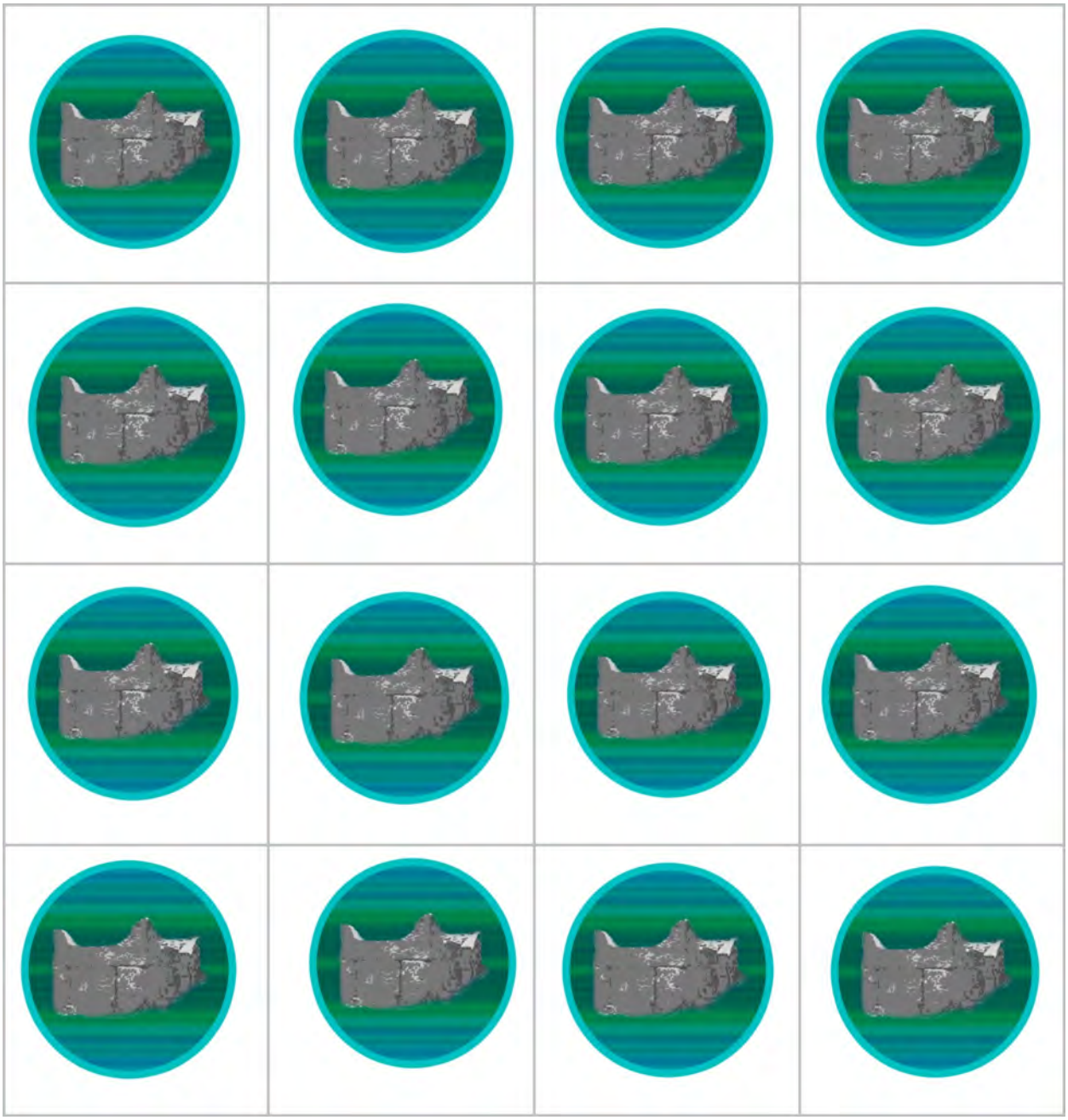
   What good motives might lie behind the person's actions? What selfish motivations might lie behind their actions? Can you know, for sure, why someone does something? What might help?
2. Share a time when you thought someone had done something for a selfish reason, when they intended to do something good. Discuss what made you feel that way, and why you changed your mind.
3. Did you notice that the priest in the story was able to help people discuss a misunderstanding that could have ended in disaster? What might help us see another person's motives or point of view?

Altar Markers for the Nine and a Half Tribes



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Altar Markers for the Two and a Half Tribes



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Feelings about the Altar

Place altar markers for the Nine and a Half Tribes and the Two and a Half Tribes on each square that describes the way the tribes felt. Some squares may have more than one marker on them. Think of all parts of the story—from when the tribes discover the altar, to when the problem is solved.

Happy	Worried	Angry	Afraid
Sad	Afraid to hurt the Lord	Threatened	Relieved
Pleased	Hostile	Afraid of being forgotten	Shocked
Afraid of the Lord's Anger	Destructive	Wanting to serve the Lord	Afraid of Disobeying

Activity 2 | Create and Decorate an Acrostic Poem on Angel

Angels in heaven see others' true motives. Use the letters of the word "angel" to create an acrostic po-em. Decorate the poem if you choose.

A_____

N_____

G_____

E_____

L_____

