

## Sabbath School Lesson #11 – Living in the Land – 6-12 Dec 2025

**C**hrist would have us learn a better way of living in the land. It behoves us to consider the words of wisdom, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). David said, “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11). This is the secret of Christian living. Where this is not done, there will be failure. Thus, the wise man says, “A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.” If those who are quick-tempered would only hide God’s tender words in their hearts, and so have them ready for use when tempted, many heart-aches and sad memories would be saved. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

**Sunday: Commitment** – Read Joshua 22:1-8; what do these verses tell us about the commitment of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh? These tribes had chosen their possession on the other side of Jordan, but, having attained their desire, they did not settle down to enjoy themselves, and leave their brethren to fight unaided in gaining their inheritance. Moses had declared that if they would indeed go armed for their brethren’s sake until they too had acquired their possession, then they might return to their homes and be guiltless before the Lord. This is a very significant statement, inferring that those who are content to enjoy their possessions without thought or effort for others, are not held guiltless before God. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” For about seven years the warriors of these tribes had fought the battles of their brethren, bearing their burdens, rejoicing in victories gained in their behalf. But God had given rest to Israel, and they are now to receive an honourable discharge from an honourable service. Joshua bids them “return,” and get to their tents, and to the land of their possession. Their inheritance was separated from inheritance of Israel, and Joshua realised their danger of becoming cold in the service of God, as they would be isolated from their brethren, and could participate in the privileges of the tabernacle only with great inconvenience. Joshua exhorted them to “take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, ... to love the Lord your God, ... to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.” Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away.

One-half the tribe of Manasseh had been given a portion in Bashan. “And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and... divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.” Their brethren had shared in the conflict both by actual service and by staying with the stuff, and they were to share in the spoil. Service to God is service to one another. No place for selfishness in the religion of Christ. In every commandment that God has given denoting our duty to Him and to our fellow-men, there is nothing required but that which will ennoble the doer, benefit the world, and glorify the Creator. The humble worker who toils in obscurity, aiding the cause of God, is not forgotten before Him and will not be overlooked in the day when the spoils are divided, and the reward is given.

**Monday: Accusations** – Read Joshua 22:9-20; what accusations do the West Jordan tribes level against the East Jordan tribes? To what extent were these accusations well founded? The East Jordan tribes (Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh) had parted from Shiloh to be separated from their brethren by Jordan, and scattered amid the wide tracts, in which their nomadic pastoral life would bring them into frequent and dangerous contact with heathen neighbours. They were still united to their brethren (the West Jordan tribes); they had fought by their side; would this union continue? Just before crossing Jordan the two and a half tribes had built an altar that could be seen far and wide, and then departed without leaving any explanation of their conduct. At first sight this would have seemed in direct contravention of one of the first principles of Israel’s worship. Place, time, and manner of worship were all God-ordained and full of meaning, and any departure therefrom, even in the slightest particular, destroyed the meaning, and with it the value of all.

More especially would this appear an infringement of the express commands against another altar and other worship (Leviticus 17:8, 9; Deuteronomy 12:5-7), to which the terrible punishment of extermination attached (Deuteronomy 13:12-18). And yet there was something so strange in rearing this altar on the western side of the Jordan, and not on the eastern, and in their own possession, that their conduct, however blameworthy, might

possibly bear another explanation than that of the great crime of apostasy. It was an anxious time when the whole congregation of West Jordan tribes gathered, by their representatives, at Shiloh, not to worship, but to consider the question of going to war with their own brethren.

**Tuesday: Haunted by the Past** – Read Joshua 22:13-15 again, but now in the light of Numbers 25; why do the Israelites choose Phinehas as the head of the delegation to the two-and-a-half tribes? At their head was Phinehas, to whose zeal, which had once stayed the plague of Peor, the direction might safely be left. Phinehas could scarcely help assuming that they had “committed unfaithfulness towards the God of Israel.” He now urged upon the two and half tribes the remembrance, yet fresh in their minds, of the consequences of the sin of Peor, and which had, alas! still left its bitter roots among the people. If, on account of their uncleanness, they felt as if they needed nearer proximity to the altar, rather than build another altar, he invited them back to the western side of the Jordan where the other tribes would make room for them. But if they persisted in their sin, he reminded them how the sin of the one individual, Achan, had brought wrath on all the congregation. If so, then the rest of Israel must take action, so as to clear themselves of complicity in their “rebellion.”

**Wednesday: A Gentle Answer** – Read Joshua 22:21-29 in light of Proverbs 15:1; what can we learn from the answer of the eastern tribes? The answer given by the two and a half tribes was accepted. In reply, the accused tribes protested, in language of the most earnest expostulation, that their conduct had been wholly misunderstood. So far from wishing to separate from the tabernacle and worship of Jehovah, this great altar had been reared as a witness to all ages that they formed an integral part of Israel, lest in the future they might be debarred from the service of Jehovah. That, and that alone, had been their meaning, however ill expressed. The explanation thus offered was cause of deep thankfulness to the deputies and to all Israel. Thus, in the good providence of God, this cloud also passed away.

**Thursday: Conflict Resolution** – Read Joshua 22:30-34; how does this teach us conflict resolution in church? By Christ, Ellen White says, “The difficulties and misunderstandings that still arise among the people of God are often similar in their nature and results to those that threatened to prove so disastrous to Israel. The ten tribes were filled with fear lest the people whom God had accepted as his own, should become divided in interest and worship, hence their promptness in rebuking at once the supposed defection of their brethren. Yet in that very effort to maintain the honor of God and the purity of Israel, we see what serious and even fatal results might have followed from a simple misunderstanding” {ST May 12, 1881, par. 15}. “Men who were honestly seeking to promote the cause of true religion were misjudged and severely reprimanded. The wisdom manifested in their course under these trying circumstances is worthy of imitation. What great evils might be averted if such a course were followed by the members of all our churches. An individual may be unjustly suspected or censured by his brethren, but he should not for this reason yield to anger, or cherish a desire for retaliation. Such an occasion furnishes an opportunity for the development of the precious grace of meekness and forbearance” {par. 16}. “Care should be exercised by all Christians, to shun the two extremes, of laxness in dealing with sin on the one hand, and harsh judgment and groundless suspicion on the other. The Israelites who manifested so much zeal against the men of Gad and Reuben remembered how, in Achan’s case, God had rebuked the lack of vigilance to discover the sins existing among them. Then they resolved to act promptly and earnestly in the future; but in seeking to do this they went to the opposite extreme. Instead of meeting their brethren with censure, they should first have made courteous inquiry to learn all the facts in the case” {par. 17}. “There are still many who are called to endure false accusation. Like the men of Israel, they can afford to be calm and considerate, because they are in the right. They should remember with gratitude that God is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misinterpreted by men, and they may safely leave all in his hands. He will as surely vindicate the cause of those who put their trust in him, as he searched out the hidden guilt of Achan” {par. 18}. “How much of evil would be averted, if all, when falsely accused, would avoid recrimination, and in its stead employ mild, conciliating words. And at the same time, those who in their zeal to oppose sin have indulged unjust suspicions, should ever seek to take the most favorable view of their brethren, and should rejoice when they are found guiltless” {ST May 12, 1881, par. 19}.