



LANDER, WYOMING *church of Christ*

Jumping to conclusions

In the Old Testament when God gave Israel the Promised Land, most of the tribes settled to the west side of the Jordan River. Two-and-a-half tribes were however given land on the eastern side. There were therefore western tribes and eastern tribes separated by the Jordan.

In Joshua 22, Joshua met with the eastern tribes to thank them for their faithfulness and then encouraged them to continue. He blessed them and they returned to their homes on the far side of the Jordan and then did something very strange: they built a huge altar on their side of the Jordan.

The western tribes were very upset about this and prepared to go to war [vs.12.] The reason was sacrifices were only meant to be done by priests upon the altar set up by Moses. Any other altar would be a challenge to God and His priests. The western tribes were fearful because in the past when Israel had rebelled against God like this, they had been punished [vs.15-18.]

Before the west set off to fight the east however, they made a very wise decision: They sent a delegation to ask the eastern tribes why they had built a false altar. The delegation soon discovered that the eastern tribes had too been motivated by fear: They feared that in the future the western tribes would not consider them part Israel because of the Jordan division, and the eastern tribes' descendants would leave the Lord [vs.24,25.] They had therefore built the giant altar – which was a replica of the one Moses had made – as a reminder that they too belonged to the God of Israel. It was not to be used for sacrifice. It was a memorial; a witness. Their intention had been to make sure their children never left the Lord. Beautiful!

As the western delegation listened so they understood. All were on the same side. None were enemies. They had peace.

Do you sometimes jump to conclusions and prepare for war? We do, and shouldn't. May we learn from these wise leaders. Let's talk, seek to understand and hopefully find peace.

-- Triston Jacobsohn 2011