



"Of all horrible religions the most horrible is the worship of the god within."

—G.K. Chesterton

29-Oct-21

## High Places Left Standing

When [God](#) brought the children of Israel to the Jordan River, the land they were about to invade contained high places for pagan worship. Through [Moses](#), God told the people to destroy all the pagans' sacred sites, most of which had been built on hilltops. Notice [Deuteronomy 12:1-4](#):

These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images [*Asherim*] with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things.

God commanded His people *not* to worship Him in the same ways that the nations they were dispossessing worshipped their gods. He wanted them to worship Him as He instructed, telling them to be careful to observe *all* His commandments when they entered the Promised Land.

Today, in a similar way, many [Christians](#) believe that they have received Christ in their hearts, not realizing that there is far more to God's way of life. By tolerating influences from the traditions and practices of this world, they still harbor "high places" in their hearts and minds. These worldly, unbiblical ideas and behaviors compete with how God wants them to live.

What about us, those whom God has called? From God, we have received revealed knowledge and [faith](#) and committed to following our Savior [Jesus Christ](#) and keeping His commands. Over the years, we have heard many messages about evaluating ourselves, auditing our lives and our commitment to God. So, after all this time, have we left high places standing?

Our high places could be just about anything: money, sex, anger issues, [gossip](#), accolades from others, sarcasm, or putting others down to feel superior. These issues stop us from living a more abundant life in Christ ( [John 10:10](#)). They are sins we must overcome and destroy! We need to commit to the struggle to tear down the high places that hold our Creator and our brethren at arm's length. Left to stand, these high places will ultimately cut us off from God, and we may lose out on all the blessings God wants to give His people.

Human nature desires to do what *it* believes is right. Since the Garden of Eden, humans have taken it upon themselves to determine right from wrong, a pattern of life that [the world](#) teaches exclusively. Most, going through difficult times in their lives, will resort to getting counsel from family, friends, attorneys, doctors, and psychologists, but they rarely consult God or His Word because they are by nature hostile to the things of God ([Romans 8: 7](#)). Instead, each person learns to do what he or she thinks is right, situation by situation. In doing this, they blindly follow the path [Satan](#) has set them on, doing what they see as right, not realizing that they are heading down the path to destruction.

But how are *we* supposed to live? Moses writes in [Deuteronomy 12:8](#), "You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes." To members of God's church, the world's way is off-limits. He wants us to follow all His commandments, to seek His counsel on our decisions by consulting His Word. If we have allowed an untoppled high place to remain, still linking us to the world's way of thinking, we will find these godly expectations impossible to fulfill. As high places are among Satan's devices ([II Corinthians 2:11](#)), the Devil heartily promotes overlooking them, tricking us into cooperating with his evil work?

Scripture contains stories, proverbs, illustrations, and instructions that cover just about any situation, providing us a pattern, a blueprint, of how we are to live, act, and overcome the difficulties in life. Paul writes in [II Timothy 3:16-17](#), "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." God's Word is not just for [Sabbath](#) reading. The Scriptures are instructions for all of life.

Once we accept Christ, we have no right to do whatever we want. Having been bought with our Savior's priceless blood, we have become His property ([I Corinthians 6:19-20](#)). We cannot make excuses like, "This is how I have lived all my life" or "This is just the way I am." Our problem may be coarse jesting, drunkenness, or hair-trigger fury. Whatever our hidden high place, God allows us no excuses for failing to tear it down and change the way we live.

God has called us to be holy as He is holy ([I Peter 1:16](#)). He has set us apart for His use, to do what He wants us to do. Over time, our character is supposed to begin matching His. How are we doing? Are any facets of our old life still standing? Anything not in accord with His perfect character must be taken down, destroyed, eliminated! Paul writes in [Romans 13:11-14](#):

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness,

not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.

It is now time to take a hard look at our lives, getting rid of any high place. Let us call it what it is: an idol. We may say, "No harm, no foul," but idolatry always hurts us and the ones we [love](#). Our carnal nature is selfish and does not want to change. But we need to follow the apostle Paul's example in [I Corinthians 9:27](#): "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." Our actions, words, and demeanor are preaching to those around us. They see and hear what we do and say, and by these things, they form their opinions of us. We need to make sure they see the image of Christ.

God has given us His Spirit, the gift He provides to help us overcome. By using God's Spirit, we can put to death the deeds of the flesh ([Colossians 3:5](#)), whatever they happen to be. Any high place that prevents us from becoming closer to God and our brethren must go! What part of a body is not affected by another part (see [I Corinthians 12:12-27](#))? Each member of the church, the Body of those the Almighty has called to Christ, is affected by other parts of the Body. It behooves us to do all we can to pull down every high place for our and the whole church's good.

What remains in our lives that we know needs to go? What traits in our characters must be changed? How much do we love Jesus Christ, and how far will we go to prove that we love Him? Are not Jesus Christ and all His work for us worth tearing down those long-standing high places? God seeks children who have been well-trained in His ways, who follow His commandments, who have developed holy, righteous character—children who are like Him—to enter His Kingdom. We need to do our part and destroy the high places that separate us from Him and prevent us from completing our training.

- Gary Montgomery

---

**From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

## **[Do You Have a Golden Calf?](#)**

by Mike Ford

The American Civil War had inordinately high casualties, far more extensive than all of the other wars combined. It compares to the devastation to another civil war between Judah and Israel, recorded in 1 Kings 14 and II Chronicles 11, a tragic war where more than 500,000 soldiers lost their lives because the leadership turned away from God, embracing disgusting forms of idolatry. After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam, after seeking unwise counsel, provoked a split or secession of the northern tribes of Israel under the leadership of Jeroboam, who promoted the worship of golden calves in a counterfeit Feast of Tabernacles in Bethel and Dan and appointing his own unscrupulous priests to administer the pagan services, which promoted sodomy and male temple prostitutes. When King Abijah earnestly appealed to God at the beginning of a devastating siege, repenting of the foolish God-rejecting policies of his father's administration, God heard his intercessory prayer; Rehoboam's army was soundly routed, suffering 500,000 casualties, and Judah basked in a short-lived peace. Abijah had three good years but was suddenly cut off because the victory went to his head, and he didn't move forward, removing the idols and outlawing the disgusting pagan religious practices. One successful act of faith is only something to build on, not merely a motivation to rest on laurels. We need to make sure that we move forward in our spiritual battles, extirpating any idol that comes into our lives, separating us from God.

---

## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Searching for Israel \(Part Six\): Israel Is Fallen, Is Fallen](#)**

by Charles Whitaker

The northern tribes of Israel, having rejected Davidic rule, chose Jeroboam as their king, and he soon led the Northern Kingdom into apostasy. Charles Whitaker shows that after just over 200 years, Israel fell to Assyria, and its people were taken captive and transported to Media. Judah lasted about a century and a half longer, falling to Babylon in 585 BC.

---

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).

---