

## High Places

“... there is a sacrifice of the people today in the high place.” 1 Samuel 9:12

High places are elevated plots of land. Long before God ordained tabernacle-worship high places were one of many locations important for man’s worship of God. An early biblical mention of worship is of Cain and Abel making offerings unto the Lord. Noah offered burnt offerings on an altar he built near the Ark in the mountains of Ararat. Abraham, after leaving his father’s house in Haran, built altars in the land of Canaan and on a mountain east of Bethel. Upon returning to Canaan after spending some years in Egypt to avoid famine, Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba and later built an altar on a mountain in the land of Moriah where he was willing to sacrifice Isaac. Jacob erected a stone pillar where he had dreamed of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, while Joshua set up twelve stones after coming up from the dry Jordan riverbed into the Promised Land. The prophet Samuel, in our text, seems to have regularly visited high places as well. As can be seen, the Bible does not allude to these early worship places and objects as being unacceptable to God.

Yet, God warns us about high places. Why? It is because man is predisposed to reject God, *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened”* (Romans 1:21). Pagan worship, which began in the full knowledge of God, drifted into darkness. Even before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Moses instructed the people not to become involved with pagan worship and to remove it from their new land, *“ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves”* (Exodus 34:13). But these false teachings proved so seductive that the Israelites began practicing idolatry themselves, *“For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree”* (1 Kings 14:23). If man had fully trusted and obeyed the Word, which today is still found only in the Bible, none of this may have happened.

To preserve faith, God directed Moses to build a tabernacle in which the spirit of God would always dwell,

*“And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them”* (Exodus 25:8). Although the tabernacle is very exact in its various parts, precious metals, particular colors, given dimensions and preferred orientation, the purpose of the tabernacle is probably best described as a picture of Christ’s relationship to his church. Because all people are separated from God by sin, the tabernacle was, foremost, the place where sins could be forgiven and where man and God could be reconciled—it was not so much a meeting place for believers as one for sinners. After all, the reason Jesus came to die was to *“save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). At the door of the tabernacle was where a sin-troubled soul could freely confess his sin before a priest and shed the blood of an animal, and where the priest would sprinkle the blood of forgiveness, *“... he (penitent soul) shall offer it of his own voluntary will ... And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering ... And he shall kill the bullock ... and the priests, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation* (Leviticus 1:3-5). Now, if one were to conduct this worship in any other manner or anywhere else, except at the door of the tabernacle, God says that that person would remain bound to his sin, *“What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD; blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people”* (Leviticus 17:3-4).

Today, the spirit of God still dwells within tabernacles which is in the hearts of believers, *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you...”* (1 Corinthians 6:19). And instead of the blood of animals, it is the blood of Jesus that cleanses the stain of sin, *“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself*

*without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:12-14). Jesus gave each of his believers (tabernacles) on earth the authority to preach the forgiveness of sins to penitent souls, "... Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:22-23). He that hears this gospel and believes it is loosed from all past sins.*

In dealing with today's versions of high places which tempt us to depart from the truth we, like the Israelites, are advised not to go elsewhere to seek forgiveness but to go to the door of the tabernacle.

God's Peace, Charles Korhonen

**Online Broadcasts**

From our webpage: <http://www.tapiolachurch.org/> you will see the mixlr live audio – we will be 'on the air' during our church services.

**Winter Schedule**

Sunday Service 11:00am. Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9:45am

Wednesday night Bible Study 7pm

Apr 3	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
Apr 10	Charles Korhonen	
Apr 17	Ken Storm	
Apr 24	Nathan Ruonavaara	Potluck meal following

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