

High Places In The Bible

HIGH-LEVEL STUDY GUIDE

Finding the Ancient Path

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bnXKZjSSSI&t=193s

Designed to align with the companion presentation and the supplied teaching transcript.

Teaching Summary

This Teaching studies the biblical high places as a picture of idolatry, syncretism, and incomplete repentance. It begins by defining high places as centers of pagan worship and then traces how Israel adopted surrounding worship practices, sometimes blending devotion to Yahovah with customs associated with other gods. The Teaching's central application is that a high place can become a useful spiritual picture for customs, beliefs, memories, or practices that a believer remains emotionally attached to even while seeking to follow Yahovah. Sentimentality is therefore a recurring theme. The speaker contrasts kings who did what was right yet left the high places standing with Hezekiah, who removed them and even destroyed the bronze serpent when it had become an object of worship. The Teaching asks listeners to examine whether inherited religious ideas or worldly customs have become similar anchors in their own faith and encourages a gradual, humble process of comparing beliefs with Scripture, repenting where needed, and removing what competes with complete devotion to Yahovah. The group discussion emphasizes humility and love toward family members and others who are at different points in that process.

Key Scriptures

Exodus 20:3-5 - No other gods and no carved images; foundational to the Teaching's discussion of exclusive worship.

Leviticus 26:27-30 - Warns that Yahovah would destroy Israel's high places as part of covenant judgment.

1 Kings 12:26-33 - Jeroboam establishes alternative worship centers, calves, high places, and non-Levitical priests.

2 Kings 17:7-12 - Describes Israel adopting the statutes of the nations, building high places, pillars, and images.

Jeremiah 7:30-31 - Judah brings abominations into Yahovah's house and builds the high places of Topheth.

Genesis 31:19 - Rachel steals her father's household idols; used in the Teaching's discussion of attachment and sentimentality.

Matthew 24:17-18 - Used as a comparison for the impulse to return for valued possessions when fleeing.

1 Kings 15:11-14 - Asa removes idols but the high places are not removed; his heart is nevertheless described as loyal.

1 Kings 22:41-43 - Jehoshaphat does what is right, yet the high places remain.

2 Chronicles 20:32-33 - The high places remain because the people had not yet directed their hearts to the God of their fathers.

2 Kings 14:1-4 - Amaziah does what is right, yet the high places are not taken away.

2 Kings 15:1-4, 32-35 - Azariah/Uzziah and Jotham do what is right while high places remain.

2 Kings 18:1-7 - Hezekiah removes high places, destroys images, breaks the bronze serpent, holds fast to Yahovah, and keeps His commandments.

Numbers 21:4-9 - Background for the bronze serpent later destroyed by Hezekiah after it became an object of incense.

1 Corinthians 10:14 - Paul's direct instruction: flee from idolatry.

1 John 5:21 - Keep yourselves from idols.

Psalms 51:10 - Raised in discussion as a prayer for a clean heart and right spirit.

Ephesians 5:13-16 - Raised in the closing discussion in connection with awakening, light, and careful living.

Key Takeaways

- High places in the biblical narrative are presented as sites of pagan worship and as centers of idolatry and syncretism.

- Syncretism is a major theme: the Teaching describes it as blending distinct forms of worship rather than submitting wholly to Yahovah.
- The Teaching uses Disney World as an illustration of an intentionally ordered environment that can cultivate emotional attachment; this is an analogy, not a claim that visiting Disney is itself idolatry.
- Sentimentality is presented as one reason people can cling to inherited customs and practices even after their beliefs begin to change.
- The speaker uses a provocative “Greek Jesus versus Hebrew Yeshua” contrast to challenge inherited portrayals of Messiah. This should be presented as the Teaching’s theological framing rather than as a neutral historical conclusion.
- The speaker explicitly says he would not accuse an uninformed Christian of intentionally worshipping an idol and emphasizes that Yahovah knows the heart.
- Israel’s high places are used as a historical example of how surrounding religious practices can become fused with worship of Yahovah.
- Jeroboam’s alternative worship system is presented as a major example of worship being reshaped for convenience and human preference.
- The repeated phrase that righteous kings did right “but the high places were not removed” becomes the Teaching’s picture of incomplete repentance.
- 2 Chronicles 20:33 is central to the application: the high places remained because the people had not fully directed their hearts to the God of their fathers.
- Hezekiah is presented as the contrast: he removes the high places and even destroys a God-given bronze serpent once people begin treating it as an idol.
- The bronze serpent example shows that even something with a legitimate biblical origin can become spiritually dangerous if it becomes an object of worship.
- The modern application is self-examination: what beliefs, practices, traditions, or attachments might function like “high places” in a believer’s life?
- The Teaching calls listeners to compare inherited beliefs and practices with Scripture rather than change everything impulsively or from fear.
- The speaker describes unlearning as a process that can take years and encourages “baby steps” rather than becoming overwhelmed.
- The closing discussion emphasizes humility, love, and avoiding condemnation of family members or others who are at a different point in the process.
- Participant comments about Christmas, Easter, cultural nostalgia, and family practice are personal testimonies and should remain attributed to those participants.
- The Teaching ends with a prayer for continuing growth in Scripture, deeper knowledge of Yahovah’s character, and hearts that remain open to correction.

Study Outline

1. Understanding High Places

- The Teaching introduces high places as a study of idolatry.
- It connects the subject with the broader idea of an ordered worldly system that can turn human loyalty away from the Creator.
- The main application is spiritual growth: entrenched attachments can hinder wholehearted devotion.

2. The Disney World Illustration

- Disney is used as an analogy for an intentionally curated environment designed to produce attachment and positive memory.
- The speaker says he and his family have enjoyed Disney; the point is the power of emotional attachment, not a blanket condemnation of a park.

- The analogy prepares for the Teaching's focus on sentimentality.

3. Defining Biblical High Places

- High places are described as sites of pagan worship, often on hills or mountains.
- They become associated with idolatry and syncretism in Israel.
- Syncretism is defined in the Teaching as fusing distinct beliefs or worship practices.

4. A Provocative Messiah Illustration

- The speaker contrasts what he calls a Greek portrayal of Jesus with the Hebrew Yeshua of Scripture.
- He asks whether retaining contradictory portrayals of Messiah can become a form of syncretism.
- He also stresses grace toward people who have not yet examined these distinctions and says Yahovah knows the heart.

5. Historical Syncretism in Israel

- The Teaching describes Israel becoming emotionally attached to surrounding religious customs.
- The speaker discusses names containing Baal elements as evidence within his historical argument.
- The core point is that Yahovah will not simply be one god among many.

6. High Places and Covenant Violation

- Leviticus 26 anticipates judgment on high places.
- Jeroboam's worship centers at Bethel and Dan illustrate alternative worship shaped by convenience and human authority.
- 2 Kings 17 and Jeremiah 7 show Israel and Judah adopting surrounding practices and bringing abominations into worship.

7. Generational Idolatry and Incomplete Reform

- Rachel's household idols and Yeshua's flee-without-returning instruction are compared through the Teaching's theme of sentimentality.
- Asa, Jehoshaphat, Amaziah, Azariah, and Jotham are used to show a repeated pattern: doing what is right while leaving high places intact.
- The speaker interprets the repetition as a warning that repentance and devotion can remain incomplete.

8. Hezekiah's Reformation

- Hezekiah removes the high places, pillars, images, and the bronze serpent that had become an object of incense.
- The Teaching presents this as a contrast with earlier incomplete reforms.
- The bronze serpent illustrates how even a once-legitimate object can become an idol.

9. Modern Application: Tear Down the High Places

- The Teaching asks listeners to identify lingering high places in their own faith.
- 1 Corinthians 10:14 and 1 John 5:21 show that idolatry remains relevant in the New Covenant writings.
- The speaker encourages steady scriptural re-evaluation rather than panic or instant perfection.

10. Humility, Awakening, and Love

- The group discusses family tension surrounding inherited holidays and traditions.
- Participants emphasize a clean heart, submission, humility, and allowing Yahovah to expose what needs to change.
- The speaker encourages love rather than judgment and closes in prayer.

Discussion & Reflection

1. What were biblical high places?

2. What is syncretism in this Teaching?

3. Why does the Teaching use Disney World as an illustration?

4. Does the Teaching say enjoying Disney is itself idolatry?

5. What role does sentimentality play in the Teaching?

6. How does the Teaching connect high places with spiritual growth?

7. Why does the Teaching contrast a “Greek Jesus” with Hebrew Yeshua?

8. Does the speaker condemn Christians who have not examined that contrast?

9. What concern does the speaker raise once a believer recognizes conflicting portrayals of Messiah?

10. Which commandment is central to the discussion of exclusive worship?

11. How does Jeroboam illustrate corrupted worship?

12. What does 2 Kings 17 show about Israel’s high places?

13. Why does the Teaching mention strange fire?

14. What does Jeremiah 7 contribute to the Teaching?

15. How are Rachel's household idols used in the Teaching?

16. Why is Matthew 24:17 compared with Rachel's idols?

17. What does Asa's reign teach in this study?

18. What does Jehoshaphat add to the pattern?

19. Why is 2 Chronicles 20:33 especially important to the Teaching?

20. Which other kings are used to show the repeated high-place pattern?
