

Baal

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Study by W.D. Frazee—March 19,

Elijah is on Mount Carmel. The entire nation of Israel is gathered there to hear the challenge of Elijah the prophet:

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word” 1 Kings 18:21.

The choice is between Jehovah and Baal. Baal's prophets were given the opportunity to make good their claims of contact with the fire god, but they didn't get a spark. Then Elijah, in simple faith, knelt down by the altar he had erected and prayed the God of heaven to answer by fire. And He did.

We have studied the aftermath of this in God's commission to Elijah to anoint Hazael king of Syria, Jehu king of Israel, and Elisha to be prophet in Elijah's place. All of these men had to do with dealing with the Baal problems.

Who is Baal? What is Baal worship? Why did God warn about it, and bring judgments upon His people because they engaged in it? What lessons are there in it for us today?

Baal was the great sun god. Paul gives us a vivid description of the progression downward from knowledge to folly, from religion to paganism that came about in the Gentile world:

“For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 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. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things” Romans 1:20-27.

Even nature speaks of the Creator, so the heathen are without excuse for turning away. Because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, they turned from the Creator to the creature. They turned from looking at the One who had

made all things to the things which they mortal eyes could see—the created things—and began to worship them. See the inevitable result:

“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves” Romans 1:24.

A lack of true worship leads inevitably to impurity. Why? Man was made in the image of God. The Devil's purpose is to destroy man's concept of the Creator's purpose in His creation, and men turn away from the true knowledge of the true God. They have no barrier against temptations.

Then Paul paints in clear language the terrible vices of the Greek and Roman period which are being reproduced on a worldwide scale today as the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah are multiplied:

“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet” Romans 1:26-27.

This all came about through Baal worship. Baal was the leader in the Canaanite god family. He had a wife as gods had in the heathen world. Baal worship is essentially nature worship, the worship of the powers of reproduction, the worship of nature in all its varying forms.

“Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” Romans 1:25.

Notice the margin on “more than the Creator.” It says rather than the Creator. Heathen worship did not begin by turning the back on God and saying, No, we will have nothing to do with the Creator God. It was not a hundred and eighty degree turn. It began by small deviations, tiny changes, until finally the mind was turned away from God entirely and centered upon the creature.

Many heathen looked upon the various representations they had not as gods themselves, but to remind them of it. It is just as the great organization which calls itself the Christian church gives people images to bow down to not to worship, but to remind them of the ones they are bringing their request to. But inevitably, as the mind looks upon those objects, it loses all consciousness of the great Creator God, and the attention is fixed upon the symbols, the representations in humanity, and those things that human beings can make.

Now let's take a look at Baal worship back in the days of Moses. Chapters 22, 23, and 24 of Numbers tell the interesting story of Balaam who had been a prophet of God, but who loved the wages of unrighteousness. He was sent by the

king of Moab to curse Israel. God turned his curses into blessings. But Balaam knew enough about the things of God to recognize that the reason he couldn't curse Israel was because God saw that His people were loyal to him.

So with the Devil's help a plan was hatched up that would bring a real curse upon Israel. He said to Balak, I haven't been able to help you like you wanted me to. But I have a plan now that will work.

The plan was a combination of fun and frolic and idolatry and immorality. The children of Israel were invited to be sociable with their Midian and Moab neighbors. They were invited to come over and watch the festivities. They went. As they listened to the music and joined in the festivities they were led into immorality by the Midian and Moab women, and under the influence of wine and intoxication of undue feasting and fornication they were led to bow down before the heathen idols of Baal.

Isn't that a terrible thing? The Bible says:

“And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel” Numbers 25:1-3.

Even some of the princes of Israel were caught in the net. You can read the story in *Patriarchs and Prophets* in the chapter, *Apostasy at the Jordan*. Before that terrible apostasy was over twenty-four thousand people were dead. But that apostasy and the resulting purging took the remnant of the host that had left Egypt forty years before. When the apostasy had done its work, and the purging was complete, the only men over twenty years of age who had left Egypt were Caleb and Joshua. They were ready to go over into the Promised Land.

Baal worship must be purged from our people before we can enter the promised land.

Baal worship is not all fun and feasting. It is not all bowing down before idols. I want to give a picture of another side of Baal worship:

“And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them” 1 Kings 18:26-28.

These are the priests of Baal. They are cutting themselves. The blood is gushing out. So between Numbers 25 and 1 Kings 18 you get the picture of the terrible extremes of Baal worship—self-indulgence and fun, frivolity, fornication, and

terrible self torture. Baal is not noted for moderation or temperance. Baal is either plunging his worshipers into the intoxications of foolishness and festivities and fun, or else he is putting them into the torture of self infliction.

You may say, Brother Frazee, this happened nearly three thousand years ago. Why are you studying it?

I am studying it because Baal worship is as old as sin. It is still with us.

“The apostasy prevailing today is similar to that which in the prophet's day overspread Israel. In the exaltation of the human above the divine, in the praise of popular leaders, in the worship of mammon, and in the placing of the teachings of science above the truths of revelation, multitudes today are following after Baal” *Prophets and Kings*, page 170.

Write down in your notes those four things that are Baal worship today. First is the exaltation of the human above the divine. Second is the praise of popular leaders. Third is the worship of mammon. Fourth is placing the teachings of science above the truths of revelation.

“Doubt and unbelief are exercising their baleful influence over the mind and heart, and many are substituting for the oracles of God the theories of men” *Ibid*.

What does oracle mean? It is the voice speaking for God; the Spirit of prophecy. Is the Bible an oracle of God? Is the Spirit of Prophecy the testimony of Jesus? So whenever we see human theories—science, philosophy, theology, or call it what you will—substituted for the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, we have the worship of who? Baal.

Our opening text says to choose which you will follow. Choose which you will obey. If Jehovah be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him. Just as in Elijah's day the question is: “Where is the voice of God?” Baal had some prophets that spoke for him. Hundreds of them. But Elijah stood alone on Mount Carmel.

Someone has well observed that a man is not half a prophet. He is either a prophet or he isn't. Was Elijah a prophet? Did he speak for God? When he gave a message, was it the oracle of God? Has God given the remnant church the Spirit of Prophecy? Is it the testimony of Jesus? Then when so-called science or research or theology of any kind attempts in any way to lessen the impact of divine revelation, that is Baal worship. The more insidious it is the more dangerous it is.

Back in the 1880's and 1890's God sent His people His special message on righteousness by faith. I read:

“The prejudices and opinions that prevailed at Minneapolis are not dead by any means; the seeds sown there in some hearts are ready to spring into life and bear

a like harvest. The tops have been cut down, but the roots have never been eradicated...

"With many the cry of the heart has been, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' Baal, Baal, is the choice"
Testimonies to Ministers, pages 467.

I wouldn't dare say that, friends. But I must read it. This is talking about members of the remnant church; people claiming to be getting ready for the coming of Jesus. Yet the testimony of the True Witness is that they are worshipping who? Baal. Is that a good reason for you and me to study it? Yes.

"The religion of many among us will be the religion of apostate Israel, because they love their own way, and forsake the way of the Lord." *Ibid*.

The basic reason for choosing Baal rather than Jehovah is wanting our own way. Selfishness, in other words.

I want to call your attention to the two extremes—the extremes of self-indulgence and self torture. I want you to see how they are both rooted in selfishness. It is easy to see how yielding to the clamors of the flesh and engaging in overeating and drunkenness and fornication might be a manifestation of selfishness. But how could the work of those priests as they tore their hair and cut themselves with knives until blood gushed out be selfishness?

Heathenism is all the way through a religion of human works based on selfishness. The best way I know how to sum it up is in *Great Controversy*. It talks about the great Christian system which calls itself the church, but is in reality a mixture of paganism. I read:

"The papacy is well adapted to meet the wants of all these. It is prepared for two classes of mankind, embracing nearly the whole world—those who would be saved by their merits, and those who would be saved in their sins" *Great Controversy*, page 572.

Notice the two classes. One class wants to be saved by their merits. That is why the heathen were cutting themselves. They thought that the more they hurt themselves the more possible it was for them to get the favor of Baal, and he would do something for them.

I wonder if it would be possible for us to serve our God in that way?

"When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou go to possess them, and thou succeeds them, and dwells in their land; Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these

nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shall not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which He hates, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shall not add thereto, nor diminish from it" Deuteronomy 12:29-32.

Do not find out how those nations serve their gods and think you can bring that into My tabernacle and worship Me that way. I won't take it.

Oh, I wish the purging and cleansing could sweep through every one of God's communities and sweep out the Baal worship that has crept in in the name of Jehovah. I wish we could stop watching what this place and that place is doing, and think about bringing in their music, education, medical work, amusements, recreation, social life, and all the rest. Baal worship is going on. God says do not think you can look around you at the nations and find out how they are worshiping their gods and mingle it with the worship of Jehovah. This is the way Israel was led into apostasy.

I repeat, it was not that they simply quit talking about Jehovah and started to talk about Baal. It was a mingling.

In the days of King Ahab, the king of Judah was visiting over in Damascus. He saw a heathen altar, and it appealed to him. He liked it. He had a drawing made of it and sent it down to Jerusalem and told his workers in metal to make him an altar like that heathen altar, and he put it in the temple of Jehovah.

Do you think the Lord was pleased? You know He wasn't. The more artistic sin is the worse it is. The more appealing the music, the literature, and the amusements of this world become the more cultured and highly exalted they may be. If they came from Babylon they lead to Babylon. If they are a mingling of the true and the false they are like that mingling of the tree of knowledge that God said not to eat of.

Some of us will need to get down upon our knees and pray that our eyes may be anointed, and that we may be led to pray the prayer of David, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity."

I suppose some of you may be thinking about a screen with something that has pictures that shakes worse than my hands. Most of it is Baal worship. The amusements of the world, the sin of the world, the folly of the world, the drunkenness of the world, the drugs of the world, the troubles of the world, the sin of the world, the transgression of the world—all for people to see and hear hour after hour.

On the average of 6 hours a day those things are being poured into the eyes and ears and minds and hearts of the boys and girls and fathers and mothers of America.

God pity us, my friends. By beholding we become what? Changed.

How was Israel led into apostasy of Baalpeor? By beholding. So God says, Do not think that you can inquire how other people are serving their gods and bring that into My tabernacle and worship Me that way. I will not take it.

Jesus wants to cleanse His temple today as He cleansed the temple at Jerusalem.

“The papacy is well adapted to meet the wants of all these. It is prepared for two classes of mankind, embracing nearly the whole world—those who would be saved by their merits, and those who would be saved in their sins.” Some people want religion to be fun. If there is that they will go for it. That is one extreme.

Some people are looking for religion where they can torture themselves with guilt. That is the other extreme.

The Spirit of God is interested in saving us from the folly of Baal worship and from the gloom of Baal worship. God has not called us to torture ourselves either with knives or guilt. The good news is that there is cleansing in the blood of Jesus.

“And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shall call Me Ishi; and shall call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name” Hosea 2:16-17.

The margin says Ishi means my husband. Baal means my lord. God wants to deliver us from the fear of God that the worshipers of Baal had, and He wants to deliver us also from the idea of fun and frolic and festivity that was associated with the worship of Baal. He wants to call us into a loving fellowship, a close relationship represented by the union of husband and wife.

Jesus wants to be close to each soul. He is not calling us to torture or fun and frolic. He is calling us to the joy of fellowship with Him.

Has Jesus become that to you, my friend? He wants you to enter into it. So in the words of Elijah the Lord would speak to us, “if the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.”

If we are trying to find our satisfaction in the fleeting things of this world, or find our merit in torturing ourselves either physically or mentally or spiritually, that is Baal worship.

“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength” Isaiah 45:22-24.

To those who have been drunk with the wine of Babylon it is a precious experience to come into the harbor of rest and find peace and true satisfaction in the water of life. To those who have become weary with self torture of guilt and sorrow and disappointment and despair that Baal worship brings, Oh, what a wonderful message to hear from Jesus' lips, Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.

Our Father in heaven, we thank Thee with all our hearts that we don't have to worship Baal either as a heathen idol we can see with our eyes, or some philosophical idol of false science. In simple faith we can look to the One who made us by His creative word, and who redeemed us by His own blood. We thank Thee for Jesus, our Creator, our Redeemer, our sacrifice, our coming King.

We love Thee, Dear Lord. We are sorry that we have let ourselves be led astray by the fun and folly of Baal. We are sorry that we have ever lingered in his torture chamber and allowed ourselves to be tortured by the guilt and despair that he brings. But we thank Thee that we can turn from it all.

Here at Thy pierced feet we kneel and thank Thee for the love of Jesus. We thank Thee that we can come in our great need, that we are as close to Thee as any wife could be to her husband, as any son or daughter could be to a father or mother. So we know that Thou art seeking to have us feel a relationship closer than any human tie, a fellowship as near and dear as any human heart has ever known.

Dear Lord, I pray that Thou will bless every weary one, and bring rest and refreshment. I pray that Thou will bless every sinning one and deliver them from sin. I pray that Thou will bless every guilty heart, and may they hear the good word, Son, be of good cheer. Thy sins be forgiven thee. Daughter, be of good comfort. Thy faith has saved thee. God in peace.

Tonight we thank Thee for a Savior who loves us, and we trust that love in Jesus name, Amen.

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