

# Baal

#0695

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—March 19, 1982

[The audio of this message includes an entire church service, complete with song service, announcements, etc. We have only transcribed Elder Frazee's sermon from it.]

The text is 1 Kings the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter, the 21<sup>st</sup> verse. Elijah is on Mount Carmel. The entire nation of Israel is gathered there through its representatives to hear the challenge of Elijah the prophet:

“...How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD  
be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him...”  
1 Kings 18:21.

The choice is between Jehovah and Baal.

You remember what happened. Baal's prophets were given the opportunity to make good their claims of contact with the sun god, the fire god, but they didn't get a spark. And then, Elijah, in simple faith, knelt down by the altar that he had erected and prayed the God of heaven to answer by fire. And He did.

Now, last Friday night, we studied together about 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, each in a very different way, had to do with dealing with the Baal problem.

And so tonight, I want to study that Baal problem with you. Who is Baal? What is Baal worship? Why did God warn about it, and bring judgments upon His people because they engaged in it? And what lessons are there in it for us today?

Baal was the great sun god. In the first chapter of the book of Romans, if you'll turn to that, 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.

And he says in the 20<sup>th</sup> verse that even the heathen are without excuse because the invisible things of Him, that is, His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly revealed through the things that are made [a paraphrase of Romans 1:20].

In other words, even nature speaks of the Creator, so the heathen are without excuse for turning away.

Because notice in the 21<sup>st</sup> verse what happened:

“...When they knew God, they glorified him not as God,  
neither were thankful; but became vain in their...”  
Romans 1:21.

What?

“...imagination, 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  
four-footed beasts, and creeping things” Romans 1:21–  
23.

Notice the progression. 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; they turned to the things which their mortal eyes could see, the things of sense, the created things, and began to worship them.

Notice the inevitable result in the 24<sup>th</sup> verse:

“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 of the true Creator leads inevitably to impurity. Why? Man was made in what? The image of God [a paraphrase of Genesis 1:27].

The Devil’s purpose is to destroy man’s concept of the Creator’s purpose in His creation, and when men turn away from the true knowledge of the true God, they have no barrier against the physical temptations.

“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness...”  
Romans 1:24.

Impurity, immorality.

“...through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour  
their own bodies between themselves” Romans 1:24.

And in the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> verses, 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.

My point is this all came about through Baal worship, Baal worship. Baal was the leader in the Canaanite god family. He had a wife, of course, as the gods had in the heathen world. And Baal worship is essentially nature worship, the worship of the powers of reproduction, the worship of nature in all its varying forms, birds and beasts and four-footed things and creeping things [a paraphrase of Romans 1:23].

And so, the 25<sup>th</sup> verse says:

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

Now, will you notice the margin on “more than the Creator,” what does the margin say? “Rather than the Creator.”

Now, both are true. Heathen worship did not begin by turning the back on God and saying, “No, we’ll have nothing to do with the Creator God.”

It was not a 180-degree turn. If you study heathen worship, it begins by small deviations, small divergence, tiny changes, until finally the mind is turned away from God entirely Who made the heavens and the earth, and centered on the creature.

You see, many of the heathen, in the beginning, looked upon the various representations they had, not as the gods themselves but to remind them of it, just as a great organization which calls itself the Christian church gives people images to bow down before, not, they say, to worship but to remind them of the ones that they are giving their request to.

But inevitably, as the human mind looks upon those objects, it loses all consciousness of the great majesty of the Creator God, and the attention is fixed upon the symbols, the representations in humanity, and those things that human beings can make.

Now, I wish you’d go back to Numbers the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter. Let’s take a look at Baal worship back there in the days of Moses. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter.

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. Being sent for by the king of Moab to curse Israel, you remember God turned his curses into blessings. But Balaam knew enough about the things of God to recognize that the reason that he couldn’t really curse Israel was that God saw that His people were loyal to him.

And so, with the Devil’s help, a plan was hatched up that would bring a real curse upon Israel.

He said to Balak, “I have a plan. I haven’t been able to help you like you wanted me to. But I have a plan now, and it’ll work.”

What was the plan? It was a combination of fun, and frolic, and idolatry, and immorality. The children of Israel were invited to be sociable with their Midianitish and Moabitish neighbors. They had neighbors. They were invited to come over and watch the festivities. And to be sociable, they went.

And as they listened to the music and joined in the festivities, they were led into immorality by the Moabitish and Midianitish women (that was a part of the Baal

worship religion), and under the influence of wine and the intoxication of undue feasting and drunkenness and fornication, they were led to actually bow down before these heathen idols of Baal and his consort. Isn't that a terrible thing, friends?

The Bible says here in the first three verses of Numbers 25 that it was such a national apostasy that it's written in the third verse:

“And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor...” Numbers 25:3.

Terrible thing, terrible thing. Even some of the princes of Israel were caught in the terrible snare and the terrible net. Read the story in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* on “Apostasy at the Jordan” to get the full impact of it. Before that terrible apostasy was over 24,000 people were dead.

But that apostasy and the resulting purging took the remnant of that host that had left Egypt 40 years before and along in the desert had at various times murmured and complained, when that apostasy had done its work, and the purging was complete, the only men that had left Egypt over 20 years of age were Caleb and Joshua, and then they were ready to go over in the promised land.

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

Now, Baal worship is not all fun and feasting. It's not all bowing down before idols. Turn back to 1 Kings the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter, and the 28<sup>th</sup> verse. I want you to get a picture of another side of Baal worship.

This is back at Mt. Carmel. The priests of Baal had been praying to their god, their sun god, to send a fire that will burn the sacrifice upon their altar and prove that he is God.

The 26<sup>th</sup> verse says:

“And they... 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” 1 Kings 18:26.

Now, the 28<sup>th</sup> verse, what did they do when they couldn't get an answer?

“...they... cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them” 1 Kings 18:28.

Get the picture? These are the priests of Baal. What are they doing? They're cutting themselves. The blood is gushing out—the terrible bloody rites, torture, self-inflicted.

So, between Numbers the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter and 1 Kings the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter, you get the picture of the terrible extremes of Baal worship—self-indulgence in fun, frivolity,

fornication, on the one hand, and on the other hand, terrible self-torture. Baal is not noted for moderation or temperance. Baal is either plunging his worshipers into the intoxication of foolishness, and festivities, and fun, or else he is putting them into the torture self-inflicted.

Now, you may say, “Brother Frazee, this has all happened nearly 3,000 years ago. Why are you studying it?”

I’m studying it, my dear friends, because as Baal worship is as old as sin, it’s still with us.

In the book *Prophets and Kings*, page 170, I read:

“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. Then, I want to read that whole sentence again. Do you have down the four? What’s the first? Exaltation of the human above the divine. What’s the second? The praise of popular leaders. What’s the third? The worship of mammon. And finally, the fourth? Placing of the teachings of science above the truths of revelation.

“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... Many are substituting for the oracles of God the theories of men” *Ibid*.

What does “oracle” mean? It’s a voice speaking for God, the Spirit of prophecy, in other words. Is this book an oracle of God, the Bible? In fact, the Bible calls itself the oracles of God.

Is the Spirit of Prophecy the testimony of Jesus? Yes. 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 whom? Baal, that’s Baal worship, that’s Baal worship.

And our opening text says, “Choose. Which will you follow? Which will you obey? If Jehovah be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him” [a paraphrase of 1 Kings 18:21].

You know, just as in Elijah’s day, the question is, “Where is the voice of God?”

Did Baal have some prophets that spoke for him? Yes, hundreds of them. But Elijah stood there alone on Mount Carmel and called for a showdown.

Someone has well observed that a man is not half a prophet. He's either a prophet or he isn't. Was Elijah a prophet? Did he speak for God? When he gave the message, was that the oracle of God? Yes.

Has God given His remnant church the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy? Is that the testimony of Jesus? Then, when so-called science, or research, or theology, or philosophy of any kind attempts to in any way lessen the impact of the truths of divine revelation, that, my friends, is Baal worship. And the more insidious it is, the more dangerous it is.

Back in the 1880s and 1890s God sent His people a special message on righteousness by faith. What city is identified with that in your memories? Minneapolis.

On page 467 of *Testimonies to Ministers*, I read:

"The prejudices and opinions that prevailed at Minneapolis are not dead by any means... 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 and Gospel Workers*, page 467.

Now, 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. And yet, the testimony of the True Witness is that they're really worshipping who? Baal. Is that a good reason for you and me to study it? Yes.

And so, tonight and next Friday night also, I want to study this.

I'm reading on now, on page 468:

"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*.

What is the basic reason for choosing Baal rather than Jehovah? Want their own way; selfishness, in other words.

I want to call your attention to the two extremes that we looked at a few minutes ago from the Bible, the extremes of self-indulgence on the one side and self-torture on the other. I want you to see how they're both rooted in selfishness.

It's 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 till the blood gushed out, how could that self-torture 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 here in *Great Controversy*, page 572. It's talking about the great Christian system which calls itself *the church*, but its reality is a mixture of paganism, using the vocabulary of Christianity. It says it's well adapted to meet the wants of all.

“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.

Now, note the two classes that the papacy is prepared for, that every heathen system is prepared for. One class is people who want to be saved by what? What does that mean, “by their merits”? Is that why those heathen priests were cutting themselves? They thought the more they humiliated themselves, the more they hurt themselves, the more they cut themselves, the more they bloodied themselves, the more possible it was for them to get the favor of their god Baal, and he would do something for them.

I wonder, dear friends, would it be possible for us to try to serve our God in that way?

Turn please, to Deuteronomy the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter verses 29–32. Here's one of the most meaningful verses in our study tonight. This is Moses shortly before they went over Jordan telling the children of Israel, “God says when you get over there in the promised land and start to dispossess those nations, when you start to take Jericho, and Ai, and Gibeon, and all those other places, there's something I want you to watch.”

He says in the 30<sup>th</sup> verse:

“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” Deuteronomy 12:30.

“Do not find out how,” he said, “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 that the purging, cleansing could sweep through every one of God's communities today and sweep out the Baal worship that has crept in, in the name of Jehovah. I wish we would stop watching what this place is doing, and what that place is doing, and the other place is doing, and think if we can't bring it in. In music, in reading, in education, in medical work, in amusements, in recreation, in social life, and all the rest, Baal worship is going on, my dear friends.

God says, “Do not think that you can look around you at the nations and find out how they’re worshipping their gods and mingle it with the worship of Jehovah” [a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 12:31].

This is the way that 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.

Why, in one case, we remember back down hundreds of years later in the day of Ahaz, the king of Judah. He was visiting over in Damascus. He saw a heathen altar over there in Damascus, and it appealed to him. He liked it. So, he had a drawing made of it and sent it down to Jerusalem and told his worker in metals and brass down there to make him an altar like that heathen altar. And he put that 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, my friends. The more appealing the music of this world, the literature of this world, 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’re like that mingling of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that God said not to eat of.

Some of us will need to get down on 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...”  
Psalm 119:37.

I suppose some of you are thinking (I’ll have to be honest with you, I wasn’t thinking about it in connection with this study, but it comes to my mind now), some of you may be thinking about a screen about this big, with something that shakes worse than my hands, with pictures, pictures, pictures, and talk, talk, talk. What for? Most of it’s Baal worship, my friends, most of it’s 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. Six hours a day on the average those things are being poured into the eyes and the ears and the minds and hearts of the boys and girls and the fathers and mothers of America.

God pity us, my friends. By beholding, we become what? Changed [a paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 3:18].

How was Israel led into the apostasy of Baalpeor? By beholding, by beholding. So God says (don’t forget this text in Deuteronomy), “Do not think that you can inquire how other people are serving their gods and bring that into *My* church, *My* temple, *My* tabernacle and worship Me that way. I’ll not take it. I’ll not take it” [a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 12:31].



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

Now, I want to go back to *Great Controversy*, page 572:

“The papacy...” *Great Controversy*, page 572.

Which is the modern form of the mixture of heathenism and Christianity

“...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” *Ibid*.

There are the two extremes. Some people want religion to be fun, and frolic, and festivity, foolishness. And if there's that, they'll go for it. That's one extreme.

The other extreme is this. Some people are looking for religion where they can torture themselves, maybe not with lances and knives, but maybe with guilt, guilt, guilt, guilt, guilt, guilt, guilt.

The Spirit of God, friends, 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 with guilt. The good news is there is cleansing in the blood of Jesus.

Turn now, please, to Hosea the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter and the 16<sup>th</sup> verse. Hosea, you remember, is the prophecy that comes just after the book of Daniel. And here is a wonderful promise, what God is going to do for His people. Keep in mind that this was written to a people who had mixed up the religion of Baal and the religion of Jehovah. In fact, they were even calling God by the name of Baal.

You know what Baal means? My Lord, my Lord. God was calling His people from this Baal apostasy, and He says:

“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.

Now, if you look at the margin, you'll see that the name that God tells His people He wants them to call Him is Ishi. And did you notice what Ishi means? “My husband,” instead of Baal. And Baal means, the margin says, what? “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 instead 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. And He's calling us, not to torture, not to fun and frolic. He's calling us to the joy of fellowship, fellowship with Him.

Has Jesus become that to you, my friend? He wants you to; to enter into it. And so, in the words of Elijah, the Spirit would speak to us:

"...If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him..." 1 Kings 18:21.

If we are to try to find our satisfaction in the fleeting things of this world, or on the other hand, if we're to try to find our merit in torturing ourselves, either physically or mentally, we're spiritualists. That's Baal worship.

Turn please, to Isaiah the 45<sup>th</sup> chapter, and the 22<sup>nd</sup> verse. What's the first word? "Look." Where? "Unto Me." Who's speaking? Our dear friend, Jesus:

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" Isaiah 45:22.

Twenty-fourth verse:

"Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength..." Isaiah 45:24.

You know, friends, to those who've been drunk with the wine of Babylon, it's 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 the self-torture of guilt, the sorrow and disappointment and despair that Baal worship brings sooner or later, oh, what a wonderful message to hear from Jesus' lips the words:

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth..." Isaiah 45:22.

May we go to the Lord in prayer?

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

We love Thee, dear Lord. We're sorry that we've ever allowed ourselves to be led astray by the fun and folly and festivities of Baal. We're sorry that we've ever lingered in his torture chamber and allowed ourselves to be tortured by the guilt and despair that he brings.

But oh, tonight we thank Thee that we can turn from it all, the heartlessness of it all, the selfishness of it all. And here at Thy dear pierced feet, we kneel tonight 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 loved wife could be to a husband, as any son or daughter could be to a father or mother.

And so tonight, we know that Thou art seeking to have us feel a relationship closer than any human tie, a fellowship nearer and dearer than human hearts have ever known.

Dear Lord, just now 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. Go in peace."

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

Be seated.

Now, wouldn't you like to spend just a few moments in witness? This is not a time for reports. We had some lovely reports a while ago. But I wish we could have a number of people that have gotten a blessing and that are surrendering fully to Jesus and want to testify to their love for the Savior. If you'll come right up now and take this front seat, we'll hear from you.

Any others that wish to speak, come right now, please.

[Testimony meeting followed.]

Turn to number 567 please [old *Church Hymnal* (1941)]:

"Come every soul by sin oppressed,  
There's mercy with the Lord..."

On next Friday night, we're continuing this subject. My subject tonight was "Baal." Next Friday night, it'll be "Seven Thousand." Do you know why that number? How many of you know why? All right. The rest of you come, and you'll find out, "Seven Thousand."

If somebody would like some special help and would like to pray for it, come up and we'll pray with you. Come as we sing.

"Come, every soul by sin oppressed,  
There's mercy with the Lord,  
And He will surely give you rest,  
By trusting in His Word.

[Chorus]

Only trust Him, only trust Him,  
Only trust Him now;  
He will save you, He will save you,  
He will save you now.

For Jesus pled His precious blood  
Rich blessings to bestow;  
Plunge now into the crimson flood  
That washes white as snow.  
[Chorus]

Yes, Jesus is the Truth, the Way,  
That leads you into rest;  
Believe in Him without delay,  
And you are fully blest.  
[Chorus]

Come, then, and join this holy band,  
And on to glory go,  
To dwell in that celestial land,  
Where joys immortal flow.  
[Chorus]"  
*Seventh-Day Adventist Hymnal, #279.*

Isn't it wonderful that:

"The relations between God and each soul are as distinct  
and full as though there were not another soul upon the  
earth..." *Steps to Christ*, page 100.

Each one of us can call Him Ishi, "You're mine, all mine; I'm yours, all yours."

Will the congregation kneel with us as we pray?

Dear Lord, we're so glad that we can come on behalf of these who are  
especially seeking Thee for a wonderful blessing. Just now, whatever the load on  
their hearts, take it, for Thou hast said:

"Come unto Me... and I will give you rest" Matthew 11:28.

Oh, my Father, we cannot cut ourselves till the blood runs, like those priests  
of Baal. We have no confidence in any working up human merit, getting a good  
report card because of our deeds. We come in our great need. But oh, we thank  
Thee that Thy love is all that we need to plead.

We renounce the hidden things of darkness. We renounce the foolishness,  
the folly, the wickedness of Baal. We renounce his self-worship and self-merit, and  
we come bringing the name of Jesus. Oh, we thank Thee that He died for us. He is  
the One Who was pierced. It's His blood flowing to cleanse us.

And so tonight, just flood the hearts of all with Thy wonderful blessing. All through this congregation, let every soul find the Savior a present help, a present friend.

And now, as we go out from this service, we pray that the love of Jesus shall so fill our hearts it'll overflow the waters. Tonight, tomorrow, and through the week, let us be watching for souls. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

God bless you, and good night.

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