

Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve

PART 1

WORSHIP OF THE LORD GOD

VS

WORSHIP OF BAAL

1 Kings 16:29 – 17:1 (NLT)

Ahab son of Omri began to rule over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of King Asa's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria twenty-two years. But Ahab son of Omri did what was evil in the LORD's sight, even more than any of the kings before him.

1 Kings 16:29 – 17:1 (NLT)

And as though it were not enough to follow the sinful example of Jeroboam, he married Jezebel, the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and he began to bow down in worship of Baal. First Ahab built a temple and an altar for Baal in Samaria. Then he set up an Asherah pole. He did more to provoke the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him.

1 Kings 16:29 – 17:1 (NLT)

It was during his reign that Hiel, a man from Bethel, rebuilt Jericho. When he laid its foundations, it cost him the life of his oldest son, Abiram. And when he completed it and set up its gates, it cost him the life of his youngest son, Segub. This all happened according to the message from the LORD concerning Jericho spoken by Joshua son of Nun.

1 Kings 16:29 – 17:1 (NLT)

Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, “As surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives—the God I serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years until I give the word!”

Intro:

Map of Divided Kingdom



- City
- ★ Capital city
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Israel
- Judah
- International roads
- Local roads

0 10 20 30 40 50 Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50 Kilometers

Northern Kingdom

MEDITERRANEAN
SEA



Crazy talk...

As surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives—the God I serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years until I give the word!”

1 Kings 17:1b

- **What on earth prompted this?**
- **Surely a ridiculous declaration**
- **Why was Elijah so upset?**

God Protects his Prophet

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.

1Kings 17:2-

Background

- God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
- Slaves in Egypt
- Israel taught to worship the one true God at Sinai
- In the Promised Land now for several hundred years
 - Period of Judges
 - Greatest Kings: David and Solomon
 - Dividing of the Nation
 - Introduction of foreign gods

Background

- Judah had a troubled but stable dynasty
 - all kings descended from David, as God promised
- A series of dynasties in the Northern Kingdom – continual upheaval
 - Jeroboam
 - 2 kings capital: Shechem
 - Baasha - killed all of Jeroboam's heirs
 - 2 kings capital: Tirzah
 - Zimri – killed all of Baasha's heirs
 - Reigned for 7 days
 - Civil War between Omri and Tibni
 - Omri becomes King capital: Samaria
 - Ahab was Omri's son family palace: Jezreel

Worship of the LORD God

- What's in a Name?

God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations. (Exo 3:14-15)

Worship of the LORD God

- What's in a Name?
- I AM: Haw Yah
- YHVH: Yah-Veh, Yahweh Yehovah, Jehovah
 - Often Translated LORD (all capitals)

Hebrew, like many ancient mid-east languages has no vowels – so pronunciation is left to ‘convention’,

but the Jews became fearful of pronouncing His name, so the conventional pronunciation was lost.

- Yahweh Elohim (Translated LORD God)
 - Yahweh: proper name: the ONE who IS (nothing exists but for Him)

10 Plagues on Egypt

(LORD God Humbles the Most Powerful of the Earth)

1. All the water turned to Blood
2. The land overrun with Frogs
3. All men and animals infested with Lice or Gnats
4. Swarms of Flies everywhere
5. Plague on all livestock
6. Painful Boils on men and animals
7. Massive Hailstorm – destroying crops, trees, plants...
8. Flying armies of Locusts – ate what the hailstorm had left
9. Darkness – over the whole land, except Goshen
10. Death of all Firstborn – man and animal

10 Commandments

(Yahweh Elohim Changes Slaves to a Holy People)

1. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. You shall have no other Gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image... or bow down to them..
3. You shall not take the name of the LORD (Yahweh) your God in vain..
4. Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy...
5. Honour your father and your mother..
6. You shall not murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not bear false witness against (falsely blame) your neighbour
10. You shall not covet your neighbour's house, wife, servant... nor anything that is your neighbour's

You are made in the image of Yahweh Elohim
Therefore be holy, because I AM holy

Last Song of Moses

“Listen, O heavens, and I will speak!
Hear, O earth, the words that I say! Let
my teaching fall on you like rain; let my
speech settle like dew. Let my words fall
like rain on tender grass, like gentle
showers on young plants. I will
proclaim the name of the LORD; how
glorious is our God! He is the Rock; his
deeds are perfect. Everything he does is
just and fair. He is a faithful God who
does no wrong; how just and upright he
is!

....

(Deut 32:1-4)

1st Song in the Hymnbook

Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

(Psa 1:1-6)

Song in a Rebellious World

Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence—As fire burns brushwood, As fire causes water to boil—To make Your name known to Your adversaries, That the nations may tremble at Your presence! When You did awesome things for which we did not look, You came down, The mountains shook at Your presence. For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, Nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts for the one who waits for Him. (Isa 64:1-4)

The Worship of Baal

- Who was Baal?
- `Baal' simply means Lord, Master, husband
- Pantheon of 'gods'
 - Dagon, Ashtoreth, Baal, Mot, many others..
 - Baal son of Dagon (and presumably Ashtoreth)
 - Mot (god of death) invites his brother Baal for a meal, kills and eats him
 - Dagon calls for Baal to be resurrected
 - Baal in gratitude dethrones his father and partners with his father's wife Ashtoreth to become Lord of the Pantheon

BTW, Kohene Baal (C'hanne-B'al – or canni-bal) literally means Priest of Baal in Hebrew

The Worship of Baal

Contest between Baal and Mot

- **Seen in every season change**
 - Death and resurrection theme
 - Drought and rain
 - Plenty and Want
 - Success and Failure
- **Baal called the Lord of Storms, the Lord of Rain, the Lord of Triumph in the face of Defeat**

(see why Elijah declares it shall not rain?)

The Worship of Baal

Baal and Ashtoreth

- **Ashtoreth: Mother Goddess**
 - God of fertility, fruitfulness
 - Men, animals, crops
- **Worship of Baal and Ashtoreth became paired together**
 - Sordid 'Gods' of Rain, Success, Triumph and Fruitfulness

Note: Molech (Phoenicia) and Chemosh (Moab)

- Seem to be proper names sometimes given to Baal (Lord)

The Worship of Baal

Israel Introduced to Baal (Numbers 25)

- Balaam advised only one way to harm the Israelites;
 - Get the LORD angry with them
 - Trick them into Baal worship by offering free sex
- Midianite and Moabite women offered fun food and sex
 - Only catch was to join in worship ceremonies for Baal of Peor (literally Lord of the Gap or Lord of the Hole!)
- 24,000 Israelite men died...

The Worship of Baal

- ‘Priests’ or ‘Prophets’ of Baal
- ‘Priests’ or ‘Prophets’ of Ashtoreth
- Seeking of ecstatic ‘spiritual’ experiences using sex, drugs, and cuttings (blood)
- Ritual Prostitutes, male and female
 - Hetero- and homo-sex
- Transvestism
- Sex with Animals (like their ‘gods’ did)

The Worship of Baal

- **Mosaic Law Prohibitions re: Baal worship practices**
 - Pursuing sex outside of marriage is abominable, and punishable by death
 - Or if the two are unmarried, then they must become married
 - **Transvestism forbidden (Deut 22:5)**

“A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.”

The Worship of Baal

- **Human Sacrifice**
 - Bible repeatedly condemns the horrible practice, of 'passing your children through the fire'
 - Archeology in Carthage uncovered mass graveyard of burned sacrifices
 - Memorial inscriptions for their 'offering' to Baal
 - Most were male babies, < 3 months old
 - Some females, some small animals (pets) also sacrificed,
 - 'Passed through the fire' in the hope of getting Baal to give them favor and success in their gravest desire or need.
 - After Romans sacked Carthage, it is said they discovered human remains in the foundations or cornerstones of the city

The Worship of Baal

- **Human Sacrifice**

- Go back and read 1 Kings 16: 34 (KJV)

“In his (Ahab’s) days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub... “

- Consider that now Baal Worship was the official religion of the land.
- Ahab went to congratulate Hiel on rebuilding Jericho..
- Is it any wonder that Yahweh Elohim’s prophet chooses now to confront Ahab, with a direct challenge to Baal’s authority?
 - It shall NOT rain.

Conclusion

- **Who will we serve??**
 - The god of this world (who might as well be called Baal)
 - Offers unbridled sexual gratification and expression
 - Promotes gender 'fluidity'
 - Suggests the sacrifice of any principle or person around us, in service to 'self expression' or 'self fulfilment' or 'success'
 - The Creator of all things, Yahweh Elohim
 - Who made us in His Image
 - Calls us to a higher moral and spiritual plane
 - Be Holy, even as I AM Holy
 - Love Yahweh Elohim with all your heart, soul and strength
 - Love your neighbour as yourself

A day of decision is upon us

Benediction

The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight for living. Reverence for the LORD is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the LORD are true; each one is fair. They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb. (Psa 19:7-10)

Next Week

**Choose This Day Whom You Will
Serve
(Part 2)**

Elijah Forces the Question