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(*Luke 2:25-35*) and Anna (*Luke 2:36-38*), and Joseph (*Matthew 1-19-ff*) and Nathaniel (*John 1:45-47*) and some five hundred others (*I Corinthians 15:6*) who formed the first Christian fellowship in Jerusalem.

One of the most glaring contrasts between the Kingly Christ and the kingly ambitions of the post-Babylonian Jews is the description of His final entry into Jerusalem. Zechariah wrote "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass." (*Zechariah 9:9*) John sees the fulfillment of this in Jesus' choice of beasts for His so-called "triumphal entry" and quotes the prophecy exactly. (*John 12:14-15*) The king the Jews expected would have been more fittingly mounted on a war horse!

The covenant theme is less obvious in Malachi, so we shall reserve comment upon it until later. Enough has been said to establish the covenant theme, "in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," as the pole star of the prophets.

CHAPTER IV

BAAL WORSHIP

Much of the Old Testament, certainly much of the message of the prophets, is indiscernable without at least a perfunctory understanding of the worship of Baal. Every reference to idolatry among God's people unless otherwise specified is a reference to Baal worship. Of the seven immediate neighbors of Israel, only Moab worshipped other *major* deities.

Moab's major deity was Chemosh. It is easily demonstrated that Chemosh was simply Baal with a strong *Jeh* (Jehovah) influence.

Judah worshipped Jehovah, but the influence of Baal was so great that the Jehovah of Judah during the period of the minor prophets is scarcely discernable from Chemosh of Moab. (*eg. Isaiah 66:17*).

Some historians have tried to show that Baal was not one god, but merely a common name ascribed to the local deities of the middle eastern peoples. Careful tracing of the worship performed in his honor, and of the nature ascribed to Baal himself indicates otherwise. The various Baalism worshipped in different localities were one and the same god in various guises and with varying local coloration.

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From Babylon to Assyria and Syria, to Egypt, to Greece, and finally to Rome, the evidence points to the goddess-mother herself, the child and the father as the same unholy trinity. The child presented as a fullgrown deity is presented under the name of Ninus in Babylon, Baal in Assyria, Syria and Israel, Osiris in Egypt, Dionysus in Greece and Bacchus in Rome are one and the same god. So much so, in fact, that sometimes even the name is the same from place to place.

There are a myriad of other names for Baal. The multiplicity in each locale of worship is multiplied by the far reaching locations of his influence. See the chart at the end of this chapter for a sketchy analysis of some of these names in the locations where they were used.

The roots of Baal worship are buried in the silt of Noah's flood and the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel. Its beginnings were apparently brought about, not through the evolution of religious thought, but deliberately as a device to aid in the building of the early Babylonian empire. "Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God." (*Romans 1:21*) The evolution of thought, traceable in the spread of the "Mystery" cults, as this worship is known, throughout the ancient middle eastern world and the Mediterranean basin is to be accounted for on the basis of local coloration and custom as they entered the idolatrous religions from place to place.

It was as the originator of false religion that Babylon earned the title "mother of harlots." (*Revelation 17:5*) The prophets frequently allude to this allegory of Baalism. (eg, *Micah 1:7*)

Wherever the mystery religion spread, there was always to be found three major deities . . . always a father, a virgin mother and a sacrificed son. These were always accompanied by a host of minor gods and goddesses who were believed to exert varying degrees of influence upon the lives of their worshippers.

The similarities shared by the universal triune deities, both in the world of the Bible and throughout the world are too numerous, too obvious and too dominant to be accounted for on the basis of mere coincidence. They point to a common origin of the myths surrounding the father, mother and son.

The scope of this present work will not permit an indepth study of these phenomena . . . by which man, at the dawn of history deliberately turned from the worship of the only God to "The likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four footed beasts and creeping things." (*cf. Romans 1:18-23*) throughout the world. We shall limit ourselves to an oversimplified account of the process as it effected the world of the minor prophets.

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The abundance of evidence, (though admittedly not conclusive proof,) identifies Nimrod as the founder of the sensuous idolatry which soon became identified with sun worship and spread from the Tigris-Euphrates valley round the fertile crescent to the Nile and thence around the entire Mediterranean world. This son of Cush, grandson of Ham, according to the divine record (*Genesis 10:9*) was first a mighty hunter, (his name means "subduer of the leopard.") who soon "began to be mighty upon the earth." (*I Chronicles 1:10*) "The beginning of his kingdom was Babel." (*Genesis 10:10*) Modern archeology identifies the tower of Babel with the ruins of Bers Nimroud which means "tower of Nimrod."

The first inhabitants of Moab are referred to as "mighty ones" (*Genesis 15:5*). Those of Ammon were called "crafty, wicked men" (*Genesis 15:15*). The original dwellers in Edom were the same as those in Moab. (*Genesis 6:4*)

The term *napha* ("Mighty ones") is the same as that translated "crafty or wicked ones." It is also, unfortunately, translated "giants" in some contexts in the Authorized Version of the Old Testament. (Eg. *Deuteronomy 2:20*) Matthew Henry, in these contexts, has rightly rendered the term "terribles ones" in reference to the Emmins in the land of Moab. (cf. *Deuteronomy 2:11*) The term may be synonymous with *nephilium* fallen ones of *Genesis 6:4* and *Numbers 13:33*.

It seems likely that Nimrod, or some other mighty hunter, realized that a band of hunters, trained in the use of weapons to subdue animals could be disciplined to act together and as easily subdue humans. There is little doubt that, at this point in history, animals were multiplying far more rapidly than men, and Nimrod's exploits against them would assure him the rank of hero among his fellows. They could be easily persuaded to give up a measure of their personal liberty in exchange for protection by this "mighty one." This marked a decisive break with the patriarchal system by which men had theretofore been governed. (*Israel followed suit, probably through the influence of her Baal worshipping neighbors when she demanded a king in the place of the judges . . . I Samuel 8:10*)

Nimrod, fully entrenched as the eminent benefactor of his people, led them to seek their chief good in sensual pleasure, and convinced them that they could enjoy the delights of sin without fear of retribution from God. His exploits were always accompanied by troops of women, to the sounds of music, revelings and games . . . and whatever else fed the desires of the flesh.

Galling under the righteous rule of God, recently enforced by

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the flood, these "mighty ones" began to make a deliberate ritual of unrighteousness. Themselves they exalted (Nimrod and his followers, including Simeramis his wife) as leaders of a cult of sensualism. It is quite natural that they be called "fallen ones" by those who did not participate in their debauchery and who still remembered the lesson of the flood.

Diodorus records: "Ninus, the most ancient of the Assyrian kings mentioned in history, performed great actions. Being naturally of a war-like disposition, and ambitious of glory that results from valour, he armed a considerable number of men that were, like himself, brave and vigorous, trained them . . ." Ninus is further described as rising to extraordinary heights and power by bringing the people of Babylon under subjection to him *while it was yet a city*. There is no room for reasonable doubt that Ninus of secular history and the Nimrod of the Bible are one and the same.

Various legends of the death of Nimrod persist throughout the middle east yet today. One such myth among the Arabs says that Nimrod, vexed at God for sending a prophet to warn him against persistence in ritualized immortality, resolved to attack God in heaven. In order to carry out this threat, he built a great tower. Having ascended to the top of the tower, he found himself no closer to heaven than when he started. The following night the tower collapsed, which incident only served to inflame Nimrod's anger. He then devised a plan to fly into heaven in a car drawn by strong birds. The car crashed on Mt. Hermon, and Nimrod was fatally mutilated in the fall. (The mutilation of the god played a prominent role in the worship of Baal.)

Another version of the death of Nimrod, which is far more important in the development of Baal worship, has him being attacked by a wild boar. In this version also Nimrod dies of mutilation.

Yet another version says that he went to the rulers of Bab (Babylon) and endeavored to convince them that they should condone and promote his cult of immorality. Still aware of God's wrath through the flood, they reacted violently and sentenced Nimrod to death by mutilation.

Varied as these legends are, they contain a single common element which forms the heart of Baal worship. Nimrod died violently at the height of his career as a "mighty one" and he was mutilated.

Nimrod's wife, Semiramis, who had risen to power and influence with her husband through the promotion of religious immorality was faced with a decision. She must either sink back into obscurity or

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she must devise a way to transfer her husband's influence to herself. She soon resolved that he should be worshipped as a god. The ancient world in general was familiar with God's promise to send a deliverer to crush the head of the serpent. (*Genesis 3:15*) (Allusions to this promise are found in every major religion.) The followers of Nimrod's cult would be quick to accept Semiramis' presentation of Nimrod reborn through her: as *Zero-ashta* (the seed of woman) *Mish-ras* the mediator. She was at once his wife and his mother, and is so represented throughout the mystery religions.

The earliest pictures of Baal worship show him crushing the head of the serpent, as do those of his Greek, Indian, Scandinavian and Egyptian counterparts. In all the great idolatrous religions of the world there is the death of a great leader-hero who voluntarily lays down his life for his people, only to be reborn of his wife as "*alma mater*" virgin mother. One of the universal titles of this sacrificed son is "deliverer." Part of the ritual of his worship, as we shall see later, is the mourning over his death. (See *Ezekiel 8:14*, where the prophet alludes to the women weeping over Tammuz. Tammuz is one of the early Assyrian titles for Baal.)

Many ancient evidences point to the fact that men shortly after the flood began to picture the heavens pressed close to the earth that one could not stand upright beneath them. This represented God's demands for righteousness and the supression of physical appetites. Nimrod had led the revolt against this, and now Semiramis could present him as the one who, through his own death, had lifted the burden of righteousness from the backs of his followers. Had not God himself promised a deliverer? By virtue of his death his followers could live for the flesh without fearing the wrath of God.

The Greek version of this pagan emancipation would show Atlas lifting the heavens upon his shoulders, and Homer would write:

*"From the clear vein the immortal Ichor (precious blood) flowed,
Such stream as issues from a wounded god,
Pure Emanation, uncorruptible flood,
Unlike our gross, debased terrestrial blood."*

Having retained her power and prestige through the claim that her hero-husband had actually died as the promised deliverer and been reborn as a god, Semiramis herself soon became elevated above the plain of mortality and venerated as the "Queen of Heaven," "Mother of God." Just as the early pictures of Ishtar (or Semiramis) have her holding the deified babe and pointing toward heaven.

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This marks the beginning of Zorasterism in Babylon. The true God was not entirely forgotten. As the new religion spread westward he was venerated as "the great invisible," as the "hidden one." He was thought to be unconcerned for the lives of men and was to be worshipped in silence. In Babylon he was known as Belus, Bel (the confounder . . . cf. *Jeremiah* 1:3, Chaos (the god of confusion) and Cush (the father of Nimrod) whose symbol was a club. The idea of confounder and confuser are easily understood as references to the experience at the Tower of Babel, and the club is obviously the symbol of his intolerable wrath.

It was the son and the mother who were the chief objects of worship. He was the great deliverer, and she was, after all, his mother and thus, in a sense, even more to be revered because without her he would never have been reborn following his death.

Various names for the son in Assyria were Kronos, Ninus, Monis, Tammuz, and Zero-Ashter. The mother was known variously as Semiramis, Reah, Cyble, and Ishtar, terms denoting her various relationships to her husband-son and to her devotees.

In Baalbek, the ancient Syrian city of Baal, this worship became refined, more clearly defined and its rituals more stylized. The father was here referred to as Bel. The name Chaos, ascribed to him as the confuser of tongues, lapsed into disuse. The mother became known at Baalbek as Ashtoreth and the son as Baal or Hadaad.

Here also the cult became identified with sun worship. Baal became the god of the sun, and his chief symbol the halo or sunburst.

In Phoenicia the Assyrian names prevailed largely, with some local variation and coloring. It was from Phoenicia that the name of the mother, Astoreth, came into our western languages. The anglicized form is Easter.

In Egypt, the legend of the sacrificed god added a detail concerning his rebirth which made the Egyptian version of his worship distinct. Legend there had it that the god, known to Egyptians as Osiris, had been torn in pieces when he was killed. In the process of his rebirth his mother, known to Egyptians as Isis, or Mut, was required to bring the pieces back together to refashion his body. She was able to locate all but his reproductive organs and his eyes. Hence the son in Egypt became the un-reproductive god of darkness and ruled over the underworld.

The father, identified first with Re and later, in the middle kingdom, with Amon-re rose to a prominence he did not enjoy in Babylon or Baalbek. He ruled the day and produced life through the mother.

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The mother, Isis, became the chief object of the sensual ritualism which marked Egyptian sun worship.

The Egyptian symbol of Osiris the son, was a golden calf which retained the spots of the Babylonian leopard skin in which Ninus had been portrayed. The sun burst became the symbol of Amon-re the sun god . . . and the mother retained her everpresent symbol of fertility, the egg. The single symbol which represented best the cult in Egypt was the egg standing atop a tau cross, thus forming the key of life which was ever held in the hand of Amon-re.

His symbol has been revived in modern times by the Hippie-Yippie movements, whose ritualization of fleshly love, sensual dancing and rhythmic music performed to the accompaniment of narcotic induced hallucinations is hardly discernible from the worship of the Egyptian sun cult.

The Greeks added their own peculiar cultural flavor to the worship of the pagan trinity. The deeds of their ancient heroes were attributed to the son, whom they called variously Bacchus (the lamented one), Plutus, Dionysus, (the sin bearer), Kisos, Adonis, and Mercury (the persuasive speaker.)

The mother was, to the Greeks, Irene, Ceres, Artimus, Aphrodite and Diana. In general, Diana was revered as the goddess of chastity and her temple served by vestal virgins. At Ephesus it was a different story. There she was contemplated as the mother of the gods, and her turreted crown was reminiscent of the tower of Babel.

The father was Hephaistis to the Greeks.

The Romans borrowed their religion from the Greeks as they borrowed everything else from the Greeks. The father became Janus, the mother was Venus, and the son retained the Greek titles of Bacchus, Adonis and Mercury.

Throughout the development and spread of the cult, the multiplicity of names for each of the three deities is derived from terms applied to them in their various relationships to one another and to their worshippers.

They appear in various dress and are credited with the heroic deeds of certain local heroes. In every place they maintain the same essential relationship one to the other. The father, for the most part was given little attention, (excepting in Egypt) though the worshippers were careful not to completely ignore him. The son was revered as saviour-deliverer and worshipped for his direct concern with the affairs of men. The mother, in whom resided the wellsprings of life, and to

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whom the son owed his own life, was the center of the most sensual fertility rites the minds of her depraved priests and priestesses could concoct.

Worshippers were initiated into the cult by ritual which utilized rhythmic music, flashing lights and narcotic potions to induce emotional experiences and physical sensations by which the candidate came to believe he had actually shared, vicariously, in the atoning death and re-birth of the deliverer-god.

In addition to this universal triad, there was in each locale a multitude of minor deities . . . gods and goddesses who had originally been local tribal gods and who were included in the hierarchy of heaven when the worship of the sun god trinity became predominant. Mount Olympus reeled with the rhythm of their reveling.

So, it was that the prominent male deity of all of Israel's neighbors came to be known and worshipped as Baal. His influence upon the people of God cannot be overstated.

He claimed several titles throughout Assyria and Palestine, all of which are easily applicable to Nimrod to whom may most probably be traced the first use of his blasphemous title: the meaning of Baal is "Lord!"

The original title of Baal seems to have been *Baal-Abarin*, lord of the mighty ones. Other titles include *Baal-Aph*, lord of wrath, *Baal-lashon*, lord of the tongue, *Baal-hatzim*, lord of arrows, *Baal-Bereth*, lord of fir trees, *Baal-Berith*, lord of the covenant.

Baal-Aph, lord of wrath, depicts the originator of the cult as a man angry against the righteousness of God and His demands, which, as we have seen, were depicted as the oppressive lowering of the heavens. In lifting this oppressive insistence upon righteousness, Baal-Aph became the deliverer of his people.

Baal-Lashon, lord of tongues, depicts the original Baal as persuasive in drawing away a following from the worship of the righteous God. Centuries later his counterpart in Greece and Rome would be known as Mercury, the orator (not messenger) of the gods.

Baal-Hatzim, lord of arrows, depicts Baal as a mighty hunter and warrior. Such prowess in the hunt was the beginning of Nimrod's power.

Baal-Bereth, lord of fir trees, represents Baal as the great deliverer made immortal through his rebirth. The evergreen became the symbol of immortality.

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This concept of everlasting power is also described in another title *Baal-Berith*, lord of the covenant, describing his everlasting power and indestructible life as giving him authority over men. This title was itself a direct challenge to Jehovah, the covenant God of the Hebrews.

A final title, probably ascribed to the father rather than the son, was *Baal-Thalath*, the lord of the rib, or husband of the rib. This signifies that he always walked sideways (with a limp). (It is probably the origin of Vulcan's lameness also). Thus the father of the gods was identified with Adam, through an allusion to the creation of his wife from his rib. In memory of this the priests of Baal limped, or walked sideways about the altar. In *I Kings 18:26* the word rendered "leaped" means, literally, to limp. It was a side-ways limping dance performed about the altar as the sacrifices were offered to Baal. In performing it, the priests slashed themselves in memory of Baal's sacrifice, after having first numbed themselves with narcotic potions.

It has been said that Baalism was, at its root, the worship of everything immoral. Its beginnings and evolvment are described vividly as *Romans 1:18-32*. The entire Roman world of Paul's day was permeated with the religious concepts and immoral practices promoted by the Mystery cults. Even the Jews shared them, albeit without associating their concepts with pagan worship *per se*. (Cf. *Romans 1:32*)

The worship of Baal, and his various counterparts in other ancient peoples, centered around certain annual feast days, each of which commemorated some momentous event in the sacrifice of the son and the life-giving virtues of the *alma mater*.

The sacrificial death of Baal for the deliverance of his people was celebrated in connection with the winter solstice, the time when the sun reached its farthest point from the equator. The lengthened period of darkness common to winter months and the abbreviated period of daylight accompanied by the overshadowing of the sun by clouds was taken as commemorative of the death of the sun god.

On *December 24*, after sun set, a huge log was burned to symbolize his suffering and death. Next morning a fir tree stood in its place, symbolizing his immortality. The tree was trimmed with colored eggs, depicting the fertility of the virgin mother through whom he had been reborn.

December 25th was given over to orgies of immortality and drunkenness. Baalbek's Berosus, later known in Greek and Roman times as the *festival of Bacchus* or *Saturnalia* were varied versions of the cele-

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bration of the rebirth of the sun god. Slaves were temporarily freed to depict the deliverance of the people by Baal. One slave was chosen and honored as Zoganes, the god of wantonness.

Zoganes found his way to Europe, during the dark ages, in the person of the "Lord of Misrule." It was he who there led the *Christ Mass* festivities on December 25th. There also the *fir tree* trimmed with *eggs* commemorated the re-birth of the deliverer and became part of the Christ Mass festivities.

The mistletoe, regarded as a divine branch come down from heaven and growing on the sacred tree which sprang from earth, also figured in the rituals of Baal and became more prominent as the influence of the cult spread through northern Europe. The kiss, symbol of the reconciliation bought by the sacrifice of the sun god signaled the beginning of the sensual rites beneath the mistletoe.

The boar came to figure significantly in the observance of the sacred solstice. He was sacrificed to the god in memory of the legend which said that a wild boar had been the instrument of the death of the sacrificed god. The sacrificed boar then became the "main course" of the feast in honor of Baal. One cannot but be aware of this practice when reading such passages as *Isaiah 66:17* and other Old Testament Scriptures forbidding the eating of pork. The problem in the early church of eating meat sacrificed to idols (eg. *Romans 14*) sprang from this and other animals sacrificed to the Greek and Roman versions of the sun god.

In Egypt the symbol of Osiris (the son in the pagan trinity) was the goose, and in Rome sacred geese were always kept in the temple of Jupiter, as at Baalbek.

The traditional English Christmas dinner consisting of a boars head, goose and yule cakes finds its historic origin in Baal worship.

The worship of Astarte, the mother of Baal was always the worship of fertility and fecundity. The letter "O", symbol of *Zero-Ashta* (the seed of woman) in Babylon, came to represent the egg in her fertility rites.

The rite took place in the spring. Its date was determined using the method established by early Babylonian astrology. Three days after the vernal equinox, when the sun god crossed the equator on his way north for the spring and summer seasons, a feast of forty sacred days began. The period, known in Egypt as Lent and held in honor of Osiris, was later celebrated in Greece and Rome in honor of Adonis. It represented forty days of mourning by Ceres (the mother) over

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Prosepine her daughter who had been carried away and raped by her husband-son.

During the Greek period at Baalbek, when Baal was worshipped in the temple of Bacchus, the fusion of the Greek variation of sun worship caused little difficulty as it became identified with the fertility rites connected with the egg and observed by Baal worshippers since the time of the divided kingdom and before. The dyed eggs were eaten with barley cakes following the consecration of both to Baal and Asheroth (Easter). This feast was eaten to the accompaniment of lewd dances and sacred prostitution.

The feast of the eggs marked the end of the forty days of Lent. Its beginning was signaled in Egypt, in the Temple of Karnak, by the sun light streaming through an aperture in the ceiling at just the right angle once each year to strike the head of Mut, the mother of Osiris.

These and other feasts, observed with variations and refinement throughout the ancient world grew out of the Baal worship with which Israel was surrounded, and to which she more than once surrendered.

Elevated places were selected for the worship of Baal. This may explain Elijah's choice of a mountain as the site for the contest with the prophets of Baal. Meeting them on their own ground he made mockery of their counterfeit religion. Baal worship in high places must also be kept in mind in reading the words of the Psalmist: "I will lift up mine eyes *unto the hills*. From whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord (the real Lord) which made heaven and earth." (and not from Baal, lord of the hills!)

Perhaps the most vivid description of Baal worship, as it confronted the people of God, is evidenced in the worship conducted by the Ammonites. The local name for Baal at Ammon was Moloch. It is likely that it was from the worship of Moloch that the Phoenician name Baal-Hammam, lord of the heat, originated.

Moloch was made of brass, cast with the head of a calf and seated on a brazen throne. Both the throne and the image were hollow, as were its arms and legs. The idol thus shaped, formed a furnace in which the flames were fanned to incredible fury ("seven times hotter than hot") by the draft created as fire swept upward through the limbs to the trunk and through the outstretched arms.

With the arms of Moloch heated red by the flames, the victim, usually a baby girl, was thrown into them where she immediately burned to death. The infant's screams were drowned by the frantic beatings of the drums which signaled the beginning of sensual dances and lewd rituals.

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References to this horrendous practice may be found in such Old Testament passages as *Ezekiel 16:22*, *Jeremiah 7:31*, and *Jeremiah 19:5*.

It was from the word *binnom*, describing the screams of dying infants that the Jews took the name of the Valley of Hinnom. In expression of their disgust for this unspeakable cruelty they made the valley in which it was practiced the city dump of Jerusalem. It was this valley from which Jesus borrowed the word Gehenna . . . translated Hell!

Milton's description of the worship of Moloch is vivid and accurate:

*"First, Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood
of human sacrifice, and parents tears;
Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud
Their children's cries unheard, that passed through fire
To this grim idol, Him the Ammonite
Worshipped in Rabba and her watery plain
In Argob and Basan, to the stream
Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such
Audacious neighborhood, the wisest heart
Of Solomon he led by fraud to build
His temple right against the temple of God
On that opproborious hill; and made his grove
The pleasant valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence
And black Gebenna call'd, the type of Hell"*

The worshippers of the sun, personified in Baal, spiritualized the reproductive powers in the male and female human being. With the image of a virile bull before them, and the egg of fertility as an instrument of worship, they tried to revive the forces of reproduction and life through ritualized fornication. With Baal, at the center of the religion was always the virgin mother . . . perpetually virgin despite her invention of and dedication to sacred prostitution. It was the corruption of Jehovah worship by Baalism which was the chief cause of the downfall of the northern kingdom and the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom. It was the culture produced through a corruption of Jehovah worship by Baal worship against which the prophets spoke. It was a people whose covenant relationship to God was compromised by the sensual worship of idols that the prophets sought to call to repentance. The task was over-whelming, and the result all but inevitable.

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From the time of Moses Baalism had been a threat to the faith of the covenant people. The first mention of this influence in Scripture is found in *Numbers 22:41*, and the first indication of Israelite participation in it in *Numbers 25:3*.

There can be little doubt that the people from the beginning had been familiar with sungod worship, of which Baalism was one form. Abraham had been called out of the Chaldees, which was the cradle of sun worship. For four hundred years the children of Israel had lived in Egypt, where the worship of Amon-re, Isis, and Osiris, along with a myriad of minor deities literally dominated every facet of life, from the Pharaoh to the lowest slave.

In *Judges 2:11, 13, 3:7, 8:33, 10:6, and 1:10* we learn that the influence of Baal among the people increased rapidly following their occupation of the promised land. From time to time there were periods of repentance (eg. *1 Samuel 7:4*), but the temptation of a religion of sensual experience against the worship of an invisible God who must be served in obedient faith was overwhelming. Modern archeology has unearthed little evidence of graven images among the people at this period of their history, but there is an abundance of amulets and charms depicting Asthoreth, the fertility goddess always associated with Baal, which were worn by Israelite women during pregnancy.

It remained for Solomon to introduce sun god worship into Israel to such an extent that it became an integral part of the daily culture of the people. True, Solomon built the temple to Jehovah in Jerusalem and indulged in lavish patronage of Jehovah worship. But it is equally true that the kingdom of Solomon was most noted among foreign contemporaries, not for his strict worship of Jehovah but for its crass commercialism. It was in this pursuit that Solomon concluded treaties and entangling alliances with polytheistic states. It was to support this policy of national aggrandizement that he levied taxes and conscripted laborers to the extent that, following his death, his successor son's refusal to abandon the policy brought about the permanent division of the kingdom and the ultimate end of the Davidic dynasty.

Religious exclusiveness such as that demanded of Israel under the law, is never the handmaiden of internationalism and power politics. Solomon's alliances were often sealed by opportunistic marriages to pagan princesses, and strange wives, rather than being required to worship and serve the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were encouraged to continue in their native forms of the sun god worship which dominated the ancient near east. The temple itself, although incorporating

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the divinely given pattern of the tabernacle in its "floor plan", was essentially a Canaanite structure, built by Canaanite architects on a Canaanite high place. And in its shadow Solomon himself erected, for his Egyptian wife, another temple to the sun god!

Although Solomon must bear the blame for introducing idolatry, (and idolatry in those days, in that part of the world meant sun god worship, of which Baalism was one form) into Jerusalem and so into what was to become the southern kingdom, this despicable religion found fertile soil in the north also. The champion of Baal there was Jezebel whose name has come to be synonymous with everything immoral.

The civil strife which brought about the division of the kingdom following the death of Solomon was instigated by a prophet of God (*I Kings 11:26-29*) who was speaking against the new order in Jerusalem, not only because it demanded unjust levies from the northern tribes but because it had placed paganism in the seat of Jehovah worship. Another prophet warned Rehoboam that the uprising in the north was God's will. (*I Kings 12:21-24*).

When Jeroboam erected in Bethel a shrine to rival the temple in Jerusalem, it was a shrine to Jehovah, and golden bulls placed in it were intended simply as symbolic support for the throne of the invisible Jehovah. But the similarity of the golden bulls to the images associated with Baal worship was too obvious. Many who came to the shrine to worship Jehovah remained to worship the golden bulls. There can be little doubt that this marked the beginning of the strange admixture of Baalism and Jehovah worship which came to be the religion of the northern kingdom. It was by confusing these two mutually incompatible faiths that Jeroboam "made Israel sin." (*I Kings 15:34*).

The attempt of the northern kings to recapture the glories of Solomon led them into an alliance with Phoenician Tyre. Now any student of ancient history is aware that Tyre in particular, and the Phoenesians in general were responsible for bringing Baal worship into the Mediterranean coastlands in the first place. The alliance between Samaria and Tyre was cemented by a marriage of Ahab to the pagan princess Jezebel.

Whatever can be said about Jezebel, and a great deal has been said, both in the Bible and in other writings, she was a woman of deep religious conviction. She was not content to merely be allowed to serve her foreign god in Israel. She became a missionary, determined to turn the entire northern kingdom from Jehovah to Baal. It is to her credit that, unlike the professing Jehovahists among whom she

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lived, she was not interested in a compromise between the two mutually antagonistic religions. She took every measure at her disposal to bring the issue to a showdown. (*I Kings 18-19*).

The gods and goddesses of Phoenecia were thus arrayed against the one true God. Baal the sun god and his wife-mother Astarte (Ashtoreth) represented the most completely carnal forces of fertility. The rituals performed in their names, especially those to Astarte, were concerned with the control of fecundancy of the earth of animals and of man. The most degrading acts imaginable were performed as acts of public worship to curry the favor of the gods.

The contrast between the absolute morality demanded by the law of Jehovah and the absolute immorality of Baal worship cannot be overstated. If Israel were to be God's people, and keep His laws there could be no compromise with such ritualized lewdness. Men take on the character of the gods they worship. If Israel ever took Baal to his bosom in earnest, it would be the end of Israel as a covenant people.

Yet many did turn from Jehovah, with His demands for righteousness to serve Baal and Astarte—and their own fleshly desires. Some, clinging to tradition, yet indulging in apostacy actually came to address Jehovah as though He were Baal.

After the death of Jezebel, there were a few feeble attempts at reform. Added to these were the warnings of the prophets of God, which were anything but feeble. But the die was cast. It was all downhill—all the way to destruction. When finally the Ashara, high goddess symbol of Baalism, was allowed by Jehu to remain in Samaria, it became apparent that the paganism introduced as a foreign cult now thrived as an Israelite cult . . . the predominant religion, eventually, of the northern kingdom! The influence of this cult upon the ultimate demise of that kingdom cannot be overstated.

It was against this compromised worship and its resultant sinful society that the prophets of the pre-exilic age thundered, in both the north and the south. The only ray of hope which shown through the storms clouds which the prophets saw on the horizons of both Israel and Judah was the conviction that a remnant of the covenant people would repent and remain faithful to the Covenant of Jehovah.

It is possible, at first casual contact, that the essentials of Baal worship will impress the Christian reader as being remarkably similar to those of Christianity. The belief in a trinity, the sacrifice of the son of a god for the deliverance of his people, the birth of the son through a virgin mother may give one a start.

B A A L W O R S H I P

A closer look will show these similarities, if indeed they can be called similarities at all, to be those of a counterfeit. The trinity of Baalism was composed of a nearly unknown father god who was for the most part ignored by the worshipper, a son sacrificed to save his people FROM RIGHTEOUSNESS, and a mother who was portrayed as the same time as a virgin and the leader of a cult whose priestesses were public prostitutes. The trinity of the Christian (if this term is permissible at all, being unscriptural,) is composed of an all-powerful, loving Father whose will is the overriding purpose of all, including the life of His Son, a Son whose life was given to save His people FROM RIGHTEOUSNESS, and a Holy Spirit whose nature is entirely non-physical and hence as far from the nature of the sun goddess as is possible. The re-birth of the sacrificed Baal was through the powers of the goddess. The resurrection of Jesus was by the power of the Father. The virgin mother of Baal was elevated as Queen of Heaven, while the virgin mother of Jesus is last seen among the humble worshippers of her Son. (*Acts. 1:14*) The purpose of Baalism was to thwart the demands of God, the ideal of the Christian faith is to fulfill His eternal purpose.

THE SEPTUAGINT—LXX

We have included in this commentary, instead of the usual paraphrase, a translation of the Septuagint.

This is the earliest version of the Old Testament Scriptures now in existence, or of which modern scholarship possesses any certain knowledge.

Translated from the original Hebrew into Greek in Alexandria, Egypt, beginning under the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus and being completed under Ptolemy Sater (c. 285 B.C.), the Septuagint filled a critical need in its day. The influence of the Greeks upon the Jews living outside Judea was so great that they no longer spoke or read Hebrew. Putting their Scriptures into one common Alexandrian dialect of the day was an event comparable to our translation of the King James Version in 1611.

As with any attempt to bring thought from one language to another, there is some loss, no doubt there is in bringing Hebrew theological forms into the philosophic language of the Greeks.

However, the version is important to the Christian scholar, not only as the oldest Scripture now in existence, but because it is the version quoted and alluded to by Jesus and the Apostles.

The LXX, as it is called for the 70 Jewish scholars who translated it, was the Bible of the New Testament Church.

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	BABYLON (Assyria)	SYRIA	PHOENICIA	EGYPT	GREECE	ROME
FATHER	Belus Bel (the confounder) Chaos (god of confusion) Cush	Bel	Bel	Amoun Re Amoun-re	Hephaïtis Saturn	Janus
MOTHER	Gybele Semiramis Istar Rhea	Ashtoreth	Astarte Astoreth	Maut Isis	Irene Ceres Artemis Aphrodite Dinah	Venus
SON	Kronos Zero-ashta Mithras Tammuz Ninus Momin	Baal Hadaad	Baal (?)	Osiris Khons	Plutus Bacchus Adonis Mercury Kisos Iacchus	Bacchus Adonis Mercury Jupiter

QUESTIONS OVER INTRODUCTION

Chapter I—Questions

How to Study the Bible

1. What is *exegesis*? How is it superior to *interpretation* as an approach to Bible Study?
2. In the science of exegesis, what is meant by "removing the differences?"
3. List and explain the rules of exegesis:
 - a. why is a dictionary an important tool to Bible study?
 - b. why is an unabridged dictionary preferable?
 - c. how do the rules of grammar aid in Bible study?
 - d. what is meant by context?
 - e. why is it important to study scripture in context?
 - f. what is the advantage of studying the Bible in its historical setting?
 - g. what is analytical Bible study?
 - h. what is the inherent danger of analytical study of scripture?
 - i. why should commentaries be used only after the first five rules of exegesis have been applied to a text?
 - j. discuss the importance of prayer as a factor in Bible study.

Chapter II—Questions

What Is A Prophet?

1. List two popular views of prophecy and show how each contradicts the other.
2. What three questions must we answer to arrive at a scriptural view of the prophet?
3. What is the literal meaning of the Biblical word Prophet?
4. The watch word of the Biblical prophet is not "it shall come to pass" but _____?
5. Explain the Biblical concept of prophecy from *II Peter 1:20-21*.
6. Compare the characteristics of the false and true prophets in Israel.
7. The primary function of the prophet in the time of the minor prophets was?
8. How does the work of the prophet relate to the government of Israel as a theocracy?
9. What is meant by the statement "Prophecy is conditional?"

Chapter III—Questions

The Covenant Theme in the Prophets

1. What is the "blood red thread" which holds the Bible together.
2. Discuss—"the covenant was proposed by God, not man."
3. The covenant arrangement between God and His prophets was maintained by _____ rather than physical ancestry.
4. Who first received the covenant from God (*Genesis* 12: 1-3)?
5. Whom God chooses He _____?
6. Whom God calls He _____?
7. Whom God blesses He _____?
8. The called continue to receive God's blessing only as long as they _____.
9. The historical epochs of the Bible do not record these religious systems. Rather they are the record of _____.
10. The descendants of Abraham are all who _____, (*Galatians* 3:7)
11. How did circumcision constitute a warning concerning the covenant.
12. How should Israel's position as a nation of priests have effected her attitude toward other peoples?
13. In God's eyes, true Israel's primary concern was a covenant and its promise of _____.
14. How does the sacrifice of Isaac show the true meaning of the covenant?
15. _____ is the most basic idea in God's dealing with Israel.
16. Jesus understood the Old Covenant Scriptures in terms of His own _____, _____, _____, and _____. And concluded the end of it all to be _____.
17. What is the relationship of John 3:16 to the covenant theme of the Bible?
18. The "spiritual genetic to be preserved by Israel's obedience of the Law of Moses was _____.
19. The answer to Jewish narrowness was _____.
20. It is the _____ (the faithful few) who were truly Israel, according to the minor prophets and the New Testament.

QUESTIONS OVER INTRODUCTION

Chapter IV—Questions

Baal Worship

1. Every reference to idolatry among God's people, unless otherwise specified, is a reference to _____.
2. The various Baalism worshipped in various localities were _____.
3. In the trinity of Baalism, the child is variously called _____ in Babylon _____ in Assyria, Syria and Israel _____ in Egypt, _____ in Greek and _____ in Rome.
4. The beginning of Baal worship was not the result of religious evolution but of _____.
5. Wherever this false religion spread it centered in three major dieties, a _____, a _____, and a _____ son.
6. The abundance of evidence identifies _____ as the founder of idolatry.
7. _____ of secular history and _____ of the Bible are one and the same.
8. all the versions of the death of Nimrod contain a single common element which forms the heart of Baal worship this element is _____.
9. Simcramus wife of _____ became _____ mother of _____ the mediator who in turn became Baal of the Canaanites.
10. Tammuz was _____.
11. What was meant by the ancient picture of heaven pressed so close to earth that a man could not stand upright?
12. What unique element did the Egyptians add on the legend of the sacrificed god.
13. What devices were used to initiaite worshippers into the sun god cults?
14. Baal had many names, derived from his various actions and relationships:
 - a. Baal-Aph Lord of wrath signifies _____.
 - b. Baal-Lashon Lord of tongues signifies _____.
 - c. Baal-Hatzin Lord of Arrows signifies _____.
 - d. Baal-Bereth Lord of Fir Trees signifies _____.
15. Baalism at its root, is the worship of everything _____.
16. What is the significance of December 25th in Baal worship?
17. Who was Moloch?
18. How did Solomon influence the rise of Baalism in Israel?
19. The evil queen _____ was a missionary of Baalism.
20. The pre-exilic prophets thundered against _____ worship and its resultant _____.

MINOR PROPHETS

"Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria . . ."

(II Kings 17: 5-6).

"I besieged and captured Samaria, and carried off 27,290 of its inhabitants as booty."

The Assyrian text of this victory inscription of Sargon II dealing with his campaign in Israel, which is preserved in the original, reads like a confirmation of the biblical statement.

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
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