

Baalim

“And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim” - Judges 2:11

The Israelites had departed Egypt approximately 80 years prior to our text. They subsequently wandered 40 years in the wilderness with Moses before he died and then spent the next 40 years capturing parts of the Promised Land with Joshua. When Joshua died the Israelites were without a leader. Their true spiritual intentions would now be exposed.

Interestingly, as long as Joshua lived the people appeared to worship the Lord, *“And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel”* (Judges 2:7). However, not even having been led by a God-fearing man and having been eye-witnesses to God’s many miracles along the way was enough to keep them worshipping the Lord once they were on their own. Shortly after Joshua’s death, the youth turned their backs on God—the God that brought their elders out of bondage—and began to consider what the other religions around them had to say. Joshua had warned them to not have anything to do with these other religions, *“Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day”* (Joshua 23:6-8). They disobeyed this command and very quickly began to serve Baalim, *“And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger”* (Judges 2:12).

It appears that the youth never did listen to Joshua’s teachings when he was alive for they soon became dissatisfied or perhaps unsure of the teachings they had received under him. Reactions of dissatisfaction or unbelief such as these to God’s word were not unprecedented then nor are they today. Consider that

the Israelites previously had tired of the daily manna (Num 21:5) in the wilderness and that Eve had doubted God when the serpent asked her in the Garden of Eden, *“hath God said”* (Gen 3:1). Satan has many ways to get us to question God’s word. Why the youth served Baalim in the face of Joshua’s Godly instruction is not easy to understand other than to realize that they chose not to listen to Joshua and only feigned an interest in the word while he was living, *“...and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel”* (Judges 2:10). The youth no doubt had attended worship services, going through the motions, but obviously the word had no lasting effect. They could not have taken God’s word personally which only comes through repentance and the forgiveness of sins preached in His name (Acts 2:38). God is angered by this kind of outward show of interest which only hides an inward disregard for His mercy. He allows every person to follow their own gods to their own destruction, *“Wherefore I (God) also said, I will not drive them (false teachings) out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you”* (Judges 2:3). Yet, God continues to call all who have strayed, even the generation who rejected Him in our text, through the many trials He allows them to experience in life. He tests all people through trials, especially those who have strayed, to see if they, like the prodigal son, will ultimately seek to return to Him in repentance. When God finds a humble and contrite heart He will race out to meet that repentant soul and instruct His servants on earth to place a robe and a ring upon him.

Today we are faced with the same choices: serve God or serve Baalim. If we think of Baalim as being any departure from the truth of God spoken in the Bible, then it is easy to understand how any one of us can serve Baalim, even seated at worship in a true church, as were the youth in our text. Baalim worship was very popular during Joshua’s time. It is today. Baalim worship works with the emotions of an individual. It satisfies inner desires, provides enjoyable feelings, and assures one that all is well. Such willful disregard for the Word allows one to indulge in guilt-free sin. The youth in our text

served Baalim because they “*knew not the Lord*”. They attended worship services but they never spiritually searched for God—they did not possess the Spirit of God, “... *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*” (Romans 8:9).

So when people, young or old, refuse to obey all of God’s words given in the Bible they will become tested with all forms of false doctrine, “*That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not*” (Judges 2:22).

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Clearly, unless one personally knows Jesus as a savior no amount of preaching will cause a person to come into faith or to stay in faith. As mentioned earlier, one can only “know” Jesus when he/she has received the gift of the Holy Spirit through repentance and faith. The trials we experience in life are not because God hates us; it’s because He loves us and wants us to be saved from our sin and to live with Him in heaven eternally. This is true for the believer and the unbeliever.

Thank God for the many trials you experience and pray for those who have chosen to serve Baalim.
God’s Peace,

Charles Korhonen

Nov 6	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
Nov 13	Charles Korhonen	
Nov 20	Ken Storm	
Nov 27	Chad Kuivanen	Potluck meal

Winter Schedule

Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9:45am
Church at 11am
Bible Study at 7pm on Wednesday.