

# THE BATTLE OF IDOLS

# IDOLATRY IS MISPLACED WORSHIP

AN **IDOL** IS ANYTHING THAT TAKES  
PLACE ABOVE GOD IN OUR WORSHIP.

# BAAL WORSHIP

Baal was a major Canaanite god, **worshiped as the god of fertility, storms, and rain**. He was believed to control agricultural success, which made him central to the economy and survival of ancient cultures that depended on farming.

# WHY DID ISRAEL STRUGGLE WITH BAAL WORSHIP?

The Canaanite culture around them worshiped Baal, making it tempting to conform.

Baal worship promised rain and prosperity, making it appealing in times of drought or struggle.

Israel often tried to blend Baal worship with their worship of Yahweh, but God demanded full devotion (Exodus 20:3).

# 1 KINGS 18: 20-40



So Ahab summoned all the Israelites and gathered the prophets at Mount Carmel. [21] Then Elijah approached all the people and said, "**How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him.**" But the people didn't answer him a word.

[22] Then Elijah said to the people, "I am the only remaining prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. [23] Let two bulls be given to us. They are to choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and place it on the wood but not light the fire. I will prepare the other bull and place it on the wood but not light the fire. [24] Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The God who answers with fire, he is God." All the people answered, "That's fine."

[25] Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Since you are so numerous, choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first. Then call on the name of your god but don't light the fire." [26] So they took the bull that he gave them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "Baal, answer us!" But there was no sound; no one answered. Then they danced around the altar they had made.

[27] At noon Elijah mocked them. He said, "Shout loudly, for he's a god! Maybe he's thinking it over; maybe he has wandered away; or maybe he's on the road. Perhaps he's sleeping and will wake up!" [28] They shouted loudly, and cut themselves with knives and spears, according to their custom, until blood gushed over them.

[29] All afternoon they kept on raving until the offering of the evening sacrifice, but there was no sound; no one answered no one paid attention.



[30] Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near me." So all the people approached him. Then he repaired the LORD's altar that had been torn down: [31] Elijah took twelve stones-according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel will be your name"- [32] and he built an altar with the stones in the name of the LORD. Then he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold about four gallons.

[33] Next, he arranged the wood, cut up the bull, and placed it on the wood. He said, "Fill four water pots with water and pour it on the offering to be burned and on the wood." [34] Then he said, "A second time!" and they did it a second time. And then he said, "A third time!" and they did it a third time. [35] So the water ran all around the altar; he even filled the trench with water.



[36] At the time for offering the evening sacrifice, the prophet Elijah approached the altar and said, "LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that you are God in Israel and I am your servant, and that at your word I have done all these things. [37] Answer me, LORD! Answer me so that this people will know that you, the LORD, are God and that you have turned their hearts back."

[38] Then the LORD's fire fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. [39] When all the people saw it, they fell facedown and said, "The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!"

[40] Then Elijah ordered them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let even one of them escape." So they seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there.

LIKE ISRAEL, WE HAVE TO  
CHOOSE—**WILL WE SERVE  
GOD WITH OUR WHOLE  
HEARTS, OR LET IDOLS  
TAKE HIS PLACE?**

Exodus 20:3-6 CSB

**Do not have other gods besides me.**

[4] Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. [5] **Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God,** bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, [6] but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands.



① **RECOGNIZE**

② **REMOVE**

③ **REPLACE**

Idolatry isn't just about golden statues—it's anything that takes God's place in our hearts. We are constantly in a battle for our worship and devotion. Winning this battle means identifying our idols, tearing them down, and fully surrendering to God.

# REFLECTION QUESTIONS



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## RECOGNIZING THE IDOLS

What stood out to you about Elijah's challenge in  
1 Kings 18:21?

Why do you think the people didn't respond  
when Elijah asked, "If the Lord is God, follow  
him"?

What are some things in our culture (or personal  
lives) that can become idols—even if they aren't  
bad things?

How can we tell when something has become an  
idol in our hearts?

## REMOVING THE IDOLS

Why do you think it was so important for Elijah  
to rebuild the altar to God (v. 30)? What does  
that say about turning back to true worship?

Tearing down idols isn't easy. What are some  
obstacles that make it hard to let go of idols in  
our lives?

Can you think of a time when God challenged  
you to give something up because it was taking  
His place?



# REFLECTION QUESTIONS

## REPLACING THE IDOLS

After God sends fire from heaven, the people respond by falling facedown in worship. Why is that response significant?

What does it look like for you to “seek first the Kingdom of God” in your everyday life?

How can you create space in your week to replace distractions with time for God?

## HEART CHECK QUESTIONS

If you’re being honest, what’s one thing in your life that competes for your worship or devotion?

What would it look like for you to fully surrender that area to God this week?

How can we encourage each other to stay committed to God and not waver between two opinions?