

Deuteronomy 13

January 3, 2024

Here we find the Lord, through Moses, warning the children of Israel against turning to the gods worshipped by the local people in the land they will inhabit. Although there were dozens of Canaanite deities, some of the more prominent ones mentioned in scripture are:

Asherah, a Canaanite goddess, often mentioned in connection with wooden poles

Ashtoreth, a goddess of war and fertility

Baal, meaning lord, a Canaanite and Phoenician god

Baal-Zebub, meaning lord of the flies

Bel, the chief deity of Babylon

Chemosh, the chief god of Moab

Dagon, worshipped in Babylon and Philistia

Molech, the chief deity of Ammon

Tammuz, a Babylonian fertility god

In keeping with the injunction in the previous chapter to not inquire about other gods, scripture gives almost no detail about the appearance or worship of these gods. But archaeology tells us that most had a distinctive representation, personal function such as war god, and geographic locale.

They are never viewed as rivals to the true God. Their adherents might be enemies of God's people, as the priests of Baal were to Elijah, but the "gods" themselves are nothing (1 Cor. 10:19).

God makes it quite clear. He has no physical shape, is the head of **all** creation, and has no limit to His dominion (Psalm 47). And even though He has chosen a small group of people to bear His name, it is for the blessing of **all** mankind (Gen. 18:18, 22:18, 26:4).

Questions:

1. Deuteronomy 18:21-22 says to judge a prophet by whether his words come to pass. But here verses 1-5 say to stone him even if the signs and wonders he foretells actually occur. Why?
2. Why do you think the Lord imposes such drastic penalties on being attracted to other gods?
3. Is there any application for us in these warnings?

4. What is the reason for the dreadful commands of verses 6-11?
5. Can you think of examples in scripture where favoring a family member leads to problems?
6. Are there any New Testament parallels to those commands?
7. Verse 15 tells of the destruction of entire cities. How does that terrible fate begin?
8. Read verses 16-17. Why must all property be destroyed?