

Proper 4
Cycle C RCL

1 Kings 18:20-21, (22-29), 30-39

L. Toombs once commented in a lecture at Wake Forest University that the religion of ancient Israel and Judah became Baalism as the Hebrews settled into the agricultural life of Canaan; and he contended that it was only the Babylonian exile that made Yahwism dominant. This localized, agricultural Baalism to which Toombs referred is not at issue in this miracle story. At issue is the question of the king's cult and, hence, the national cult. For both Israel and Judah up until the time of Ahab the king's cult was at least nominally that of Yahweh. Ahab's marriage to Jezebel represents a shocking departure from this tradition through which the king's cult and hence the nation's cult became the cult of the Phoenician Baal as practiced by Jezebel's father, Ethbaal of Sidon, a political alliance with the seaboard kingdom that would provide Ahab access to the port facilities there. Mt. Carmel, overlooking the modern city of Haifa, was the scene. Elijah's taunts against the 450 prophets of Baal (many from nearby Sidon) may have poked fun at Baal's supposed presence and diligent care for his subjects. It may also reflect a Baalistic cult practice in which the god is aroused from slumber to receive the prayers of his worshipers.

or

1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30, 41-43

These excerpts from Solomon's dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem reflect the conviction of the Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr) that the Temple was the only place on earth where sacrifice might be offered because it is the dwelling place of God's "name" (presence, verse 29). This understanding derives not from the time of Solomon in the 10th century BCE but from the time of the Deuteronomistic Reform under King Josiah in the 7th century BCE. In Solomon's day there still existed multiple Yahweh temples in Palestine.

Psalms 96

This *hymn* is categorized by investigators like S. Mowinckel as an "enthronement psalm" because of the reference to Yahweh reigning (*malax adonai*, 96:10). Mowinckel believed such enthronement psalms belonged to a New Year's liturgy that enthroned Yahweh as king of Israel and, indeed, as king of the whole world.

Galatians 1:1-12

There is a serious debate about who the recipients of this letter were. One thesis holds that they were Christians in the region of modern Ankara, Turkey which was the region originally settled by the Celtic peoples called "Galatians" in the third century BCE. Against this is the fact that neither Acts nor Paul ever specify any travels of Paul in this area. The Romans called the whole middle portion of Turkey "Galatia," and this region includes several churches associated with Paul in our literature. Against this understanding, however, is the fact that Roman Galatia is a massive province, and Paul is quite explicit in the addresses of his other letters. There is no dispute, however, about the fact that Paul expresses great anger in his letter to the Galatians over their serious departures from the Gospel he has taught them.

Luke 7:1-10

See Matthew 8:8-15. It is unusual for Matthew and Luke to agree on a story not contained in

Mark, and this has led some commentators to challenge the entire hypothesis of a “Q” sayings-document that might be common to Matthew and Luke. Luke uses the story to warrant the church’s Gentile mission while Matthew uses it to underscore the church’s position as the New Israel. The image of the kingdom of God as a great feast is closest to that of Isaiah 25:6.

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