

by travellers in the early part of last century to be offering sacrifices commemorating the ones offered by Noah when he left the Ark (Gen. 8:20). The Nestorian church² built monasteries on the slopes of Judi Dagh, and one on its summit, because of its association with Noah. An ancient Jewish legend says that the Assyrian emperor Sennacherib revered a plank of wood which came from the Ark, and there are Assyrian carvings of Sennacherib cut into the rocks of Judi Dagh. The third-century-B.C. Babylonian historian Berossus said that the Ark came to rest in the land of the Kurds, which in those times was the area where Judi Dagh is, not the area further north where Mount Ararat is located.

Soon after Noah and his sons went forth from the Ark we read of Noah planting a vineyard and becoming drunk from the wine, perhaps through ignorance of its effect. Ancient tradi-

tions say that wine first appeared in Urartu, and the earliest archaeological evidence of wine comes from this area, in the form of an ancient earthenware pot in which traces of wine sediment were found.

The coming to rest of the Ark on a mountain just above the Tigris/Euphrates valley is, of course, consistent with the account in Genesis of the first cities after the Flood being founded in that valley. According to history the first urban settlements in that area were founded by a people known as the Sumerians, and the view has been put forward, though not generally accepted, that the name Sumer is derived from Noah's son Shem.

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2. The Nestorian church, named after its founder Nestorius, flourished in Asia about 500 years after Christ but is virtually extinct today.

The Canaanite Baal

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JESUS WAS accused of casting out demons by the prince of demons, Beelzebub or Baal-Zebub (Mt. 12:24). Who was Beelzebub? The record in 2 Kings indicates that he was the god of Ekron: "And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of *Baal-zebub the god of Ekron* whether I shall recover of this disease" (1:2). Baal-Zebub is described as the god of Ekron, but this does not mean that he was just the god of this Philistine city. He was in fact one of the main gods of the region.

The title 'Baal-Zebub' in Hebrew probably means 'Lord of the Fly'. The Hebrew *zebub* is similar to *zebob*, which is translated 'fly' (Isa. 7:18; Eccl. 10:1). Furthermore, some Septuagint manuscripts translate the Hebrew of 2 Kings 1 as "Baal, Fly-god", and we cannot dismiss this third-century-B.C. evidence for the meaning of 'Baal-Zebub'. However, the Hebrew title is also an insulting variation of the actual title for Baal, which was 'Zebul-Baal'. The meaning of this title is probably 'Baal, the Prince'. This is suggested by archaeological discoveries at Ras Shamra, which have uncovered uses of the title *zbl.b'l* for Baal.¹ The Hebrew inverts the Ugaritic word order of the title, acts as a pun on its sound, and changes its meaning.

This Ugaritic context for understanding the title is reinforced by the original Greek of the New Testament, which reinstates some aspects of the Ugaritic.² It has 'Beel-Zeboul' rather than the Hebrew 'Baal-Zebub', and therefore puts back the *zbl* word into the title. The New Testament form, however, retains the word order of the title in the Hebrew. The accusation made by Jesus's opponents (that he was in league with Baal-Zebub) also supports the sense for the title; the meaning of *zbl* is 'prince', and the opponents of Jesus make the point that Beel-Zeboul is the 'prince' of demons. Their comments show a rejection of the Old Testament perspective that Baal was a 'god of the flies'. Instead it reflects the Canaanite belief that Baal was a prince.³

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1. See A. S. Kapelrud, *The Ras Shamra Discoveries and the Old Testament*, pp. 33,37 (Basil Blackwell, 1965); U. Oldenberg, *The Conflict Between El and Baal in Canaanite Religion*, p. 82, note 1 (E. J. Brill, 1969); T. Jemielty, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, p. 88 (W/JKP, 1992).
 2. For some reason, the AV translators of the New Testament have used the Hebrew Old Testament form and some old non-Greek versions of the New Testament, rather than representing the actual Greek.
 3. Another indicator that the word *zbl* means 'prince' can be seen in the use of the word in a title for Yamm, the Canaanite god of the sea—he is called

Although the term 'Baal' is used in the Ugaritic (Ras Shamra) texts as a generic term for a class of Canaanite gods, its primary use is as a singular term for the god Hadad. The religious texts in fact are mainly about this god. As well as both the name 'Hadad' and the singular term 'Baal', various epithets are used for Hadad, which involve the element 'Baal', with each epithet having its own special meaning. 'Zebul-Baal' is one of these epithets.

In the Canaanite pantheon, the supreme god was El. He was surrounded by a council of gods, amongst whom there was some rivalry. In particular there was rivalry between Baal, the god of fertility, and Yamm and Mot, the gods of the sea and the underworld. The series of stories that describe their conflict is known as the *Baal Cycle*.

The first conflict is between Yamm and Baal. Yamm sends messengers to Baal, who is among the council of gods in the presence of El. Baal is outraged at their challenge:

"Then Prince Baal (*zbl.b^c/l*) is shaken:
[He seize]s with his hand a striker,
In his right hand a slayer,
The lads he st[rikes (?)]". 2.II.37-39

"Then Prince Baal (*zbl.b^c/l*) is shaken.
The terraces in . . .". 2.II.43^{4,5}

In the conflict that ensues, Baal is encouraged by another god, Kothar:

"Indeed, I tell you, Prince Baal (*zbl.b^c/l*),
I reiterate, O Cloudrider:⁶
Now your enemy,
Now smash your enemy,
Now vanquish your foe". 2.IV.7-8

Baal wins the conflict and Yamm is destroyed. He has a victory feast on Mount Zaphon.

"He serves Mightiest Baal,
Waits on the Prince, Lord of the Earth (*zbl.b^c/l/ars*)". 3.I.2-4⁷

The title 'Zebul-Baal' drops out of the Baal Cycle from this point in favour of other epithets, and in particular in favour of 'Zebul-Baal of the Earth', translated above as 'Prince, Lord of the Earth'. (The meaning of 'Baal' is 'Lord'). One scholar comments:

"Not until Baal's final victory over Yamm, who fights on behalf of El, does Baal actually succeed to his 'everlasting kingship' as pronounced by Kothar, who gives him his new title 'Prince, Lord of the Earth'".⁸

It is as 'Lord of the Earth'⁹ that Baal is next challenged by Mot, the god of the underworld. Baal is killed by Mot, but revives and takes back his kingship.

The Ras Shamra texts date from the period 1400-1350 B.C. but reflect older traditions. The Old Testament record of Baal-Zebub concerns an event dated about 853-852 B.C. The remarks of Jesus's opponents over eight hundred years later do not necessarily indicate the survival of Beel-Zeboul as a viable god over such a long period.¹⁰ Neither should we assume that Jesus's opponents themselves believed in Beel-Zeboul. They may just have been using the common perceptions of the day in their attack. All we can say is that their use of the title and the mention of demons shows development of understanding and a different view of Beel-Zeboul from that illustrated by King Ahaziah. The 'prince' of the Canaanite pantheon has become the 'prince of demons' by the time of Christ.

'Prince Yamm'. Compare Walter Christian Kaiser Jr., *The Ugaritic Pantheon*, pp. 56-7 (unpublished PhD dissertation, Brandeis Univ., 1973), and contrast H. A. Whittaker, *Studies in the Gospels*, p. 250 (Biblia, 1988). H. A. Whittaker conveys another scholarly view that the meaning of the title is 'Lord of the Dwelling'. This view is based on the Hebrew word *z'bul* as found in 1 Kings 8:13 and Isaiah 63:15. See I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 473 (Paternoster, 1978). This view seems less likely for the reasons I have set out. Baal is called 'Zebul-Baal' before he has a temple or dwelling.

4. Quotations are taken from M. S. Smith's translation in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, edited by S. B. Parker (JBL, 1997).
5. Other texts describing this episode, and which use the title 'Zebul-Baal', are translated in U. Oldenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-6.
6. This title is modified and applied to Yahweh in Psalm 68:4 and 104:3.
7. Since this title is used of Baal after he has won victory over the Sea, it is interesting to note a similar title applied to Yahweh in the context of Israel crossing Jordan (Josh. 3:11,13).
8. See U. Oldenberg, *op. cit.* p. 141. Also it is worth noting that the goddess Athirat proclaims Baal to be 'king' in her appeal to El for Baal to have a palace (4.IV.43-44 in M. Smith, *op. cit.*).
9. Texts where the title occurs are: *Baal Cycle* 5.VI.8-10, 6.I.41-43, 6.III.1-3,20-21, 6.IV.15-16, in M. S. Smith, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, *op. cit.*
10. Ekron itself seems to have been destroyed in Nebuchadnezzar's campaign of 604-603 B.C. and ceased to be an important urban centre (Zeph. 2:4). On Ekron, see T. Dothan and M. Dothan, *People of the Sea*, ch. 21 (Domino, 1992).