

The Troubling Acts of God: The Conquest of the Canaanites (Part 2)

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The Canaanites' Sins



- Attacking Israel at its most vulnerable
 - Amalekites (Ex.17:8 – 13), Arad (Num.21:1), the Amorites (Num.21:21 – 26; Dt. 2:26 – 37), and Bashan (Num.21:33 – 35; Dt.3:1 – 22).
 - Balak the king of Moab also wanted to attack Israel but was stopped by God through Balaam and a donkey (Num.22 – 24).
 - Israel did nothing to provoke these peoples.
- Forced enslavement (Num.21:1)

The Canaanites' Sins



- Human sacrifices and cult of sex
 - ‘The Canaanites, with their orgiastic nature-worship, their cult of fertility in the form of serpent symbols and sensuous nudity, and their gross mythology, were replaced by Israel, with its nomadic simplicity..., its...monotheism, and its severe code of ethics. In a not altogether dissimilar way, a millennium later, the African Canaanites, as they still called themselves, or the Carthaginians, as we call them, with the...Phoenician mythology which we know from Ugarit and Philo Byblius, with human sacrifices and the cult of sex, were crushed by the immensely superior Romans...’ (William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*)

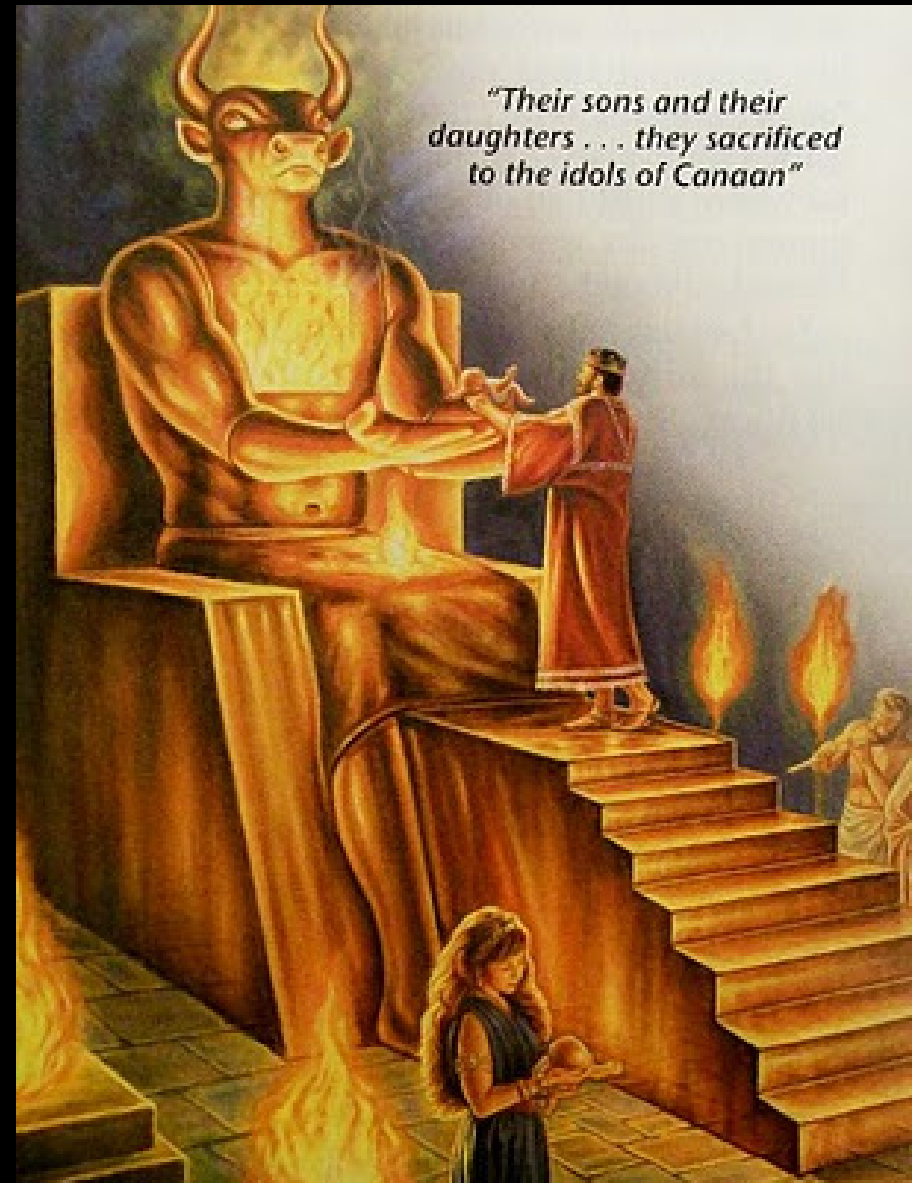
The Canaanites' Sins



- Rape to express dominance over strangers and conquered peoples (Genesis 19)
- Incest, bearing children through incest (Leviticus 18)

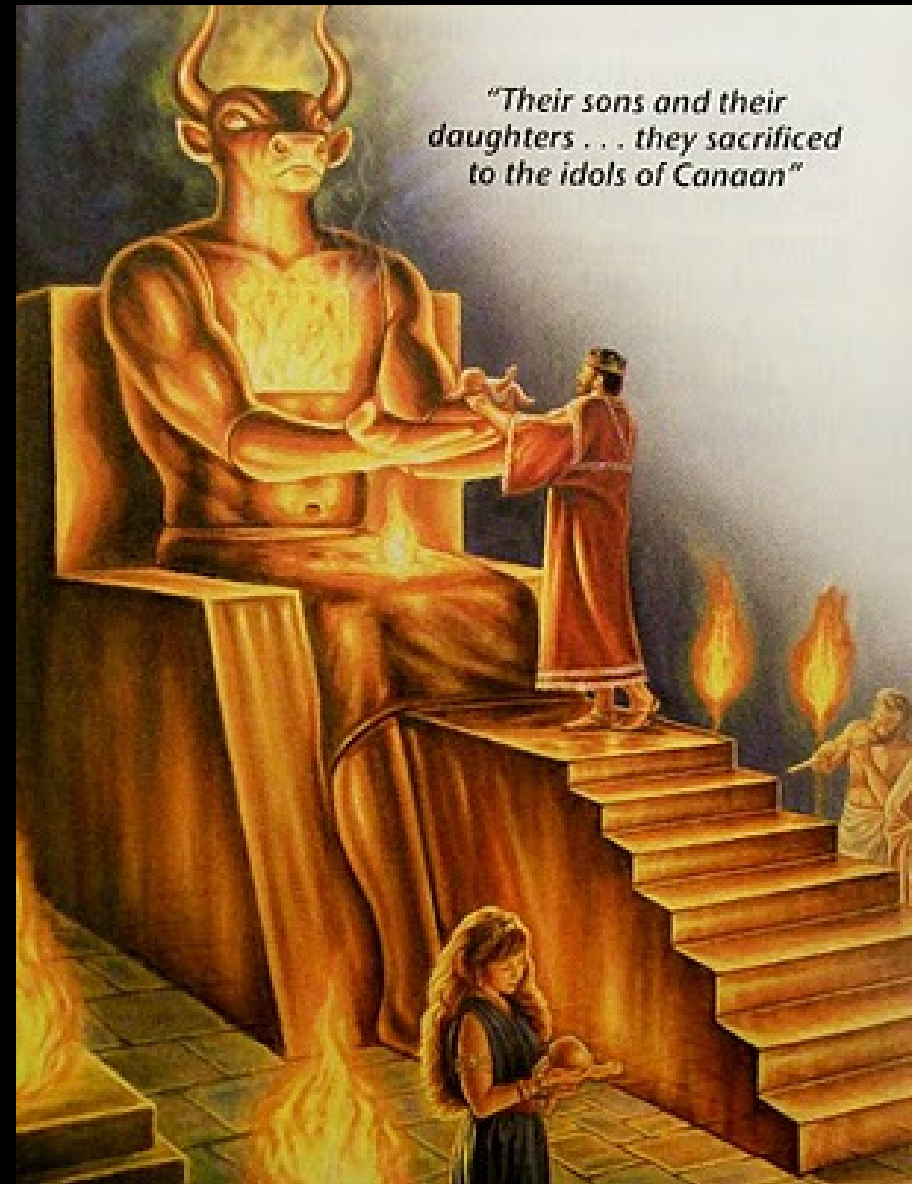
The Canaanites' Sins

- Child sacrifice:
Archaeologists have found 6,000 jars of baby bones in Carthage, which was related to the Canaanites



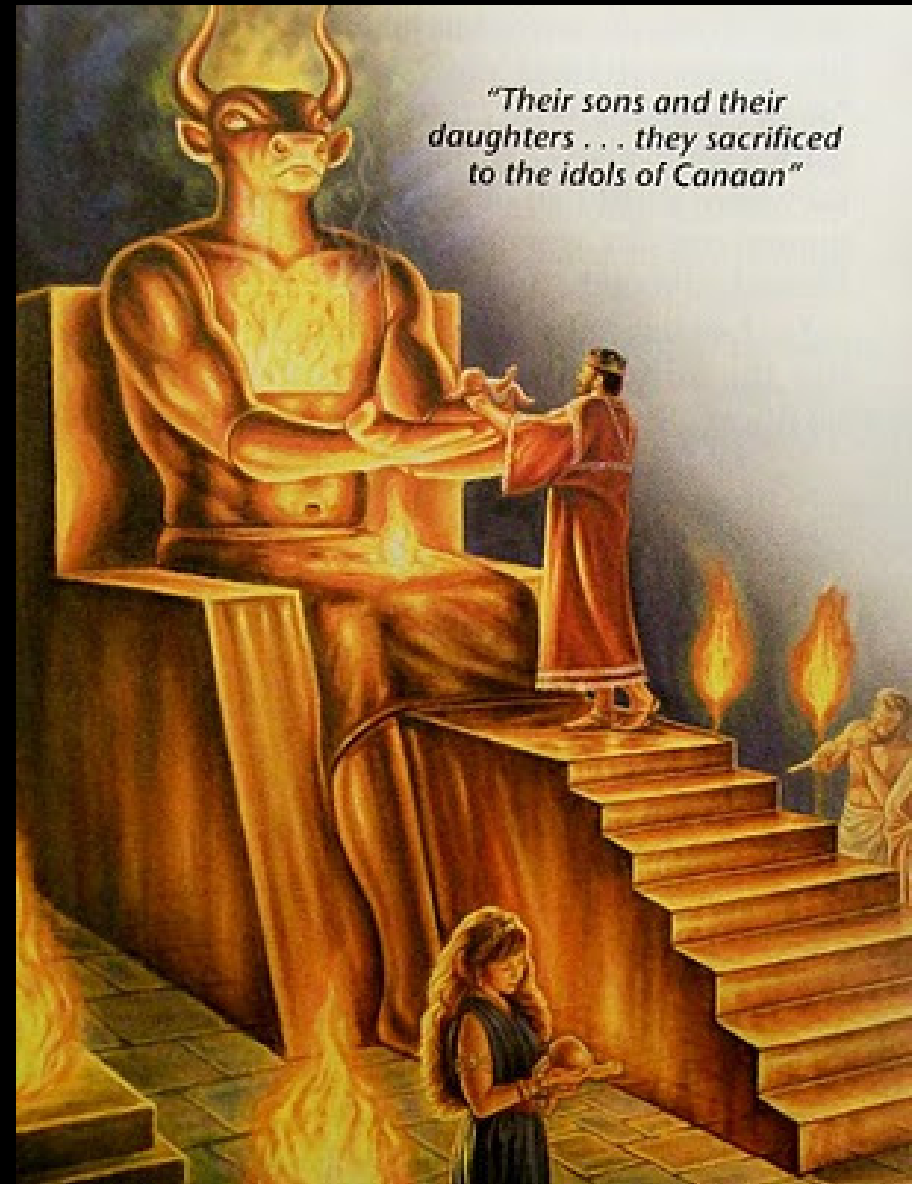
The Canaanites' Sins

- ‘The remains of Carthage amply demonstrate the importance of child sacrifice to its religion and culture and thus indirectly speak to the same institution on the Canaanite motherland. The archaeologists Lawrence E. Stager and Samuel R. Wolff have excavated an area in Carthage that is so full of



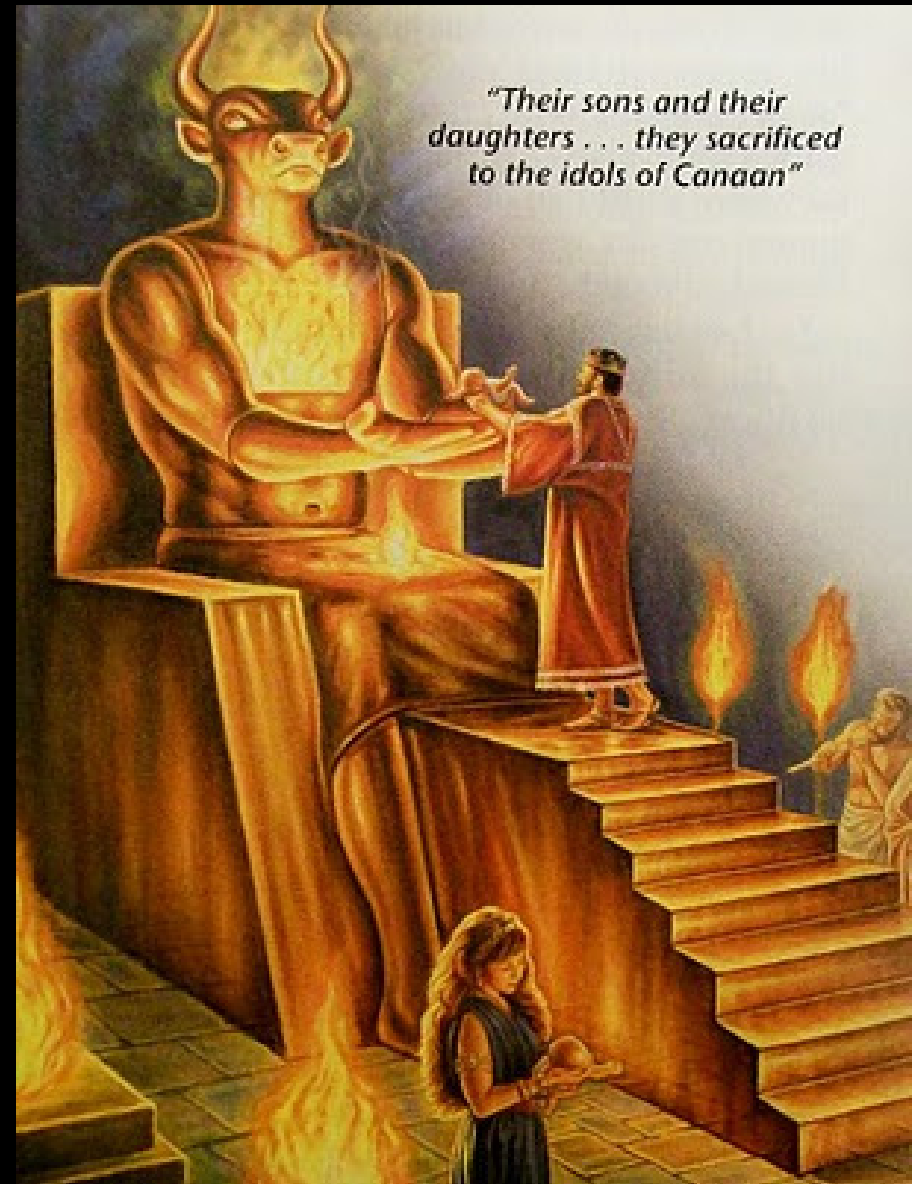
The Canaanites' Sins

urns containing the charred remains of children that they term it the “Carthaginian Tophet.” This area occupies a minimum of 54,000 – 64,000 square feet (that is, between 1 ¼ and 1 ½ acres). On the basis of the density of those urns in the excavated area, Stager and Wolff estimate “that as many as 20,000 urns may



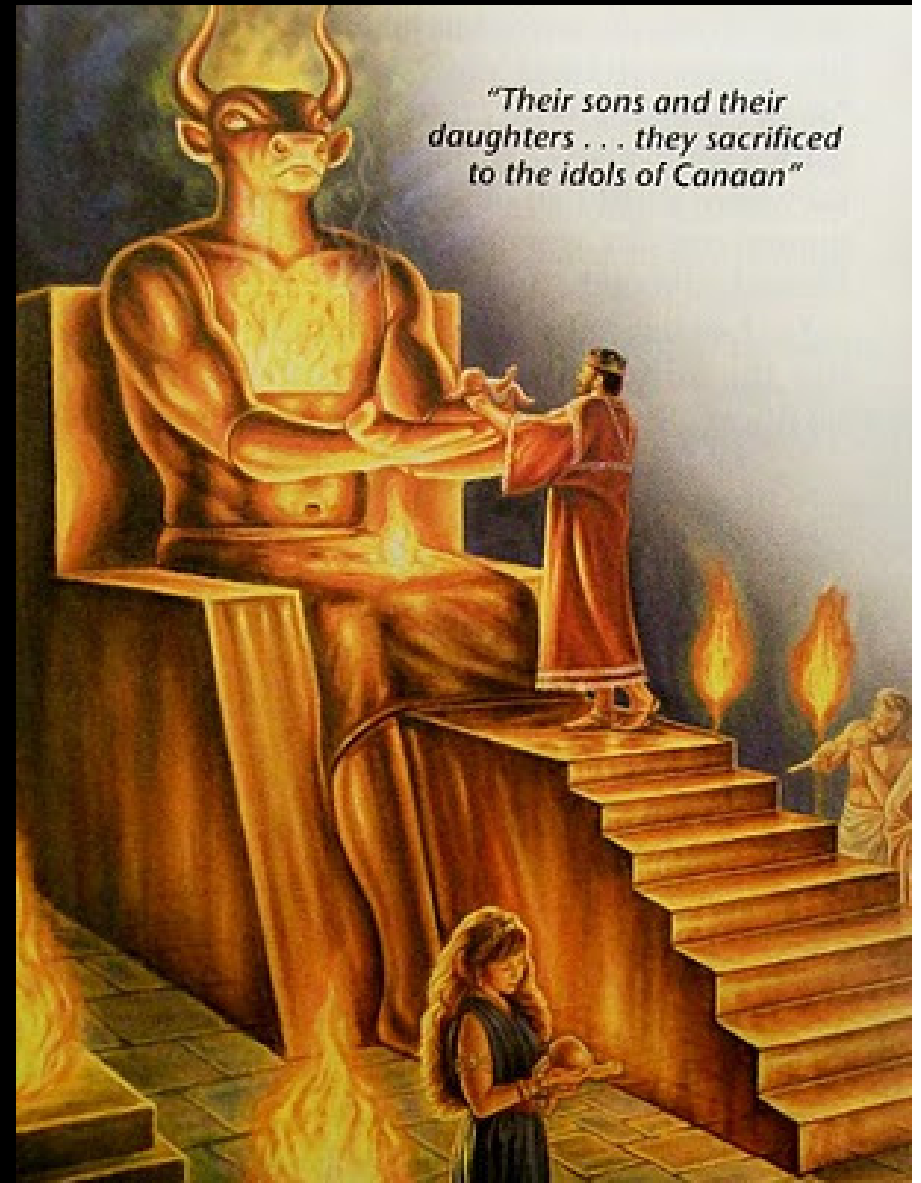
The Canaanites' Sins

have been deposited there between 400 and 200 B.C., “average[ing] out at 100 urn deposits per year or slightly fewer than one every three days.” Against this, some argue that these mute remains suggest that the children in these urns died of natural causes and that the urns testify to Carthaginian funerary practices rather than to a



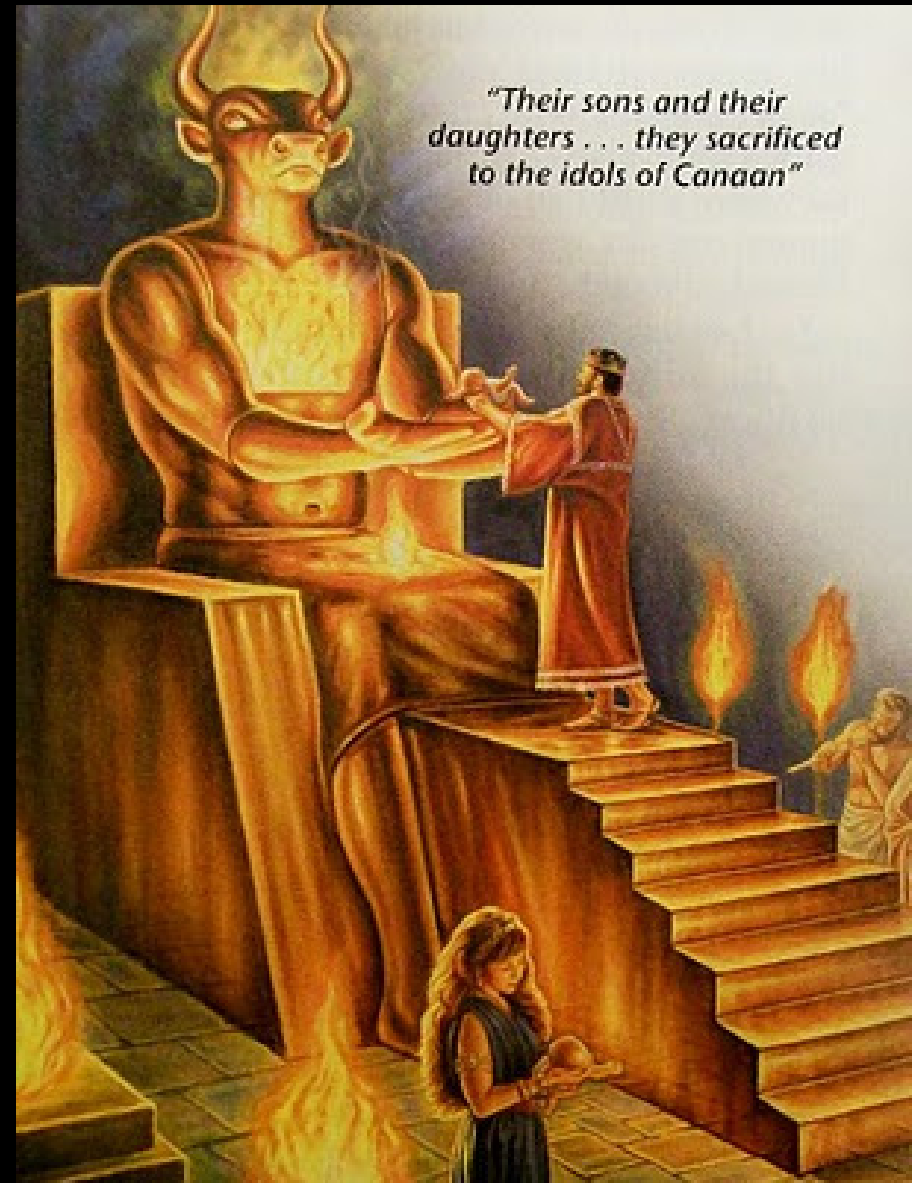
The Canaanites' Sins

cult of child sacrifice. But Stager and Wolff correctly counter that the actual contents of the urns tell a different and more horrific story. For in them they found usually not one but two children, one a newborn and the other of two or four years of age. “It seems unlikely,” Stager and Wolff write, “that disease or some other disaster would



The Canaanites' Sins

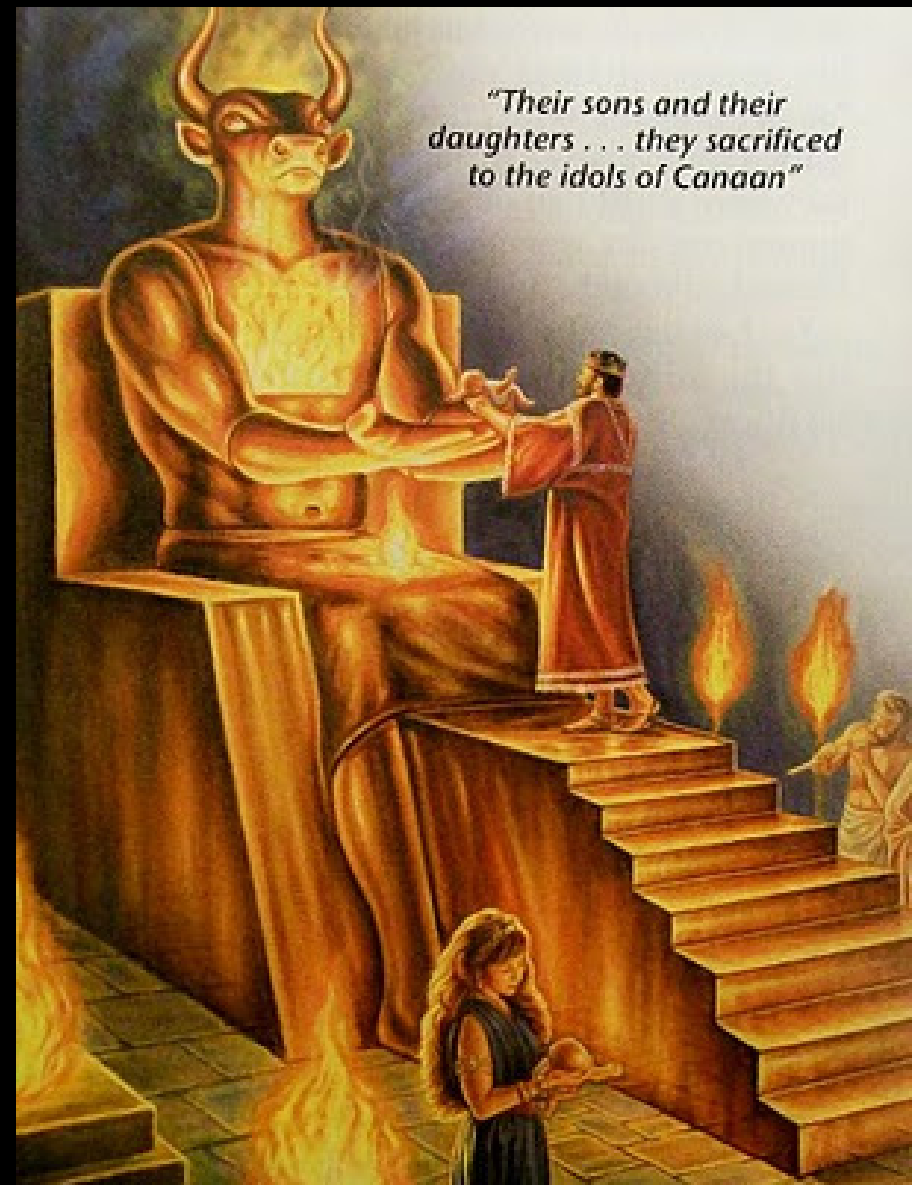
have affected only the two youngest children...from the same family in such a regular fashion.” Moreover, in the same area that they call the Tophet, Stager and Wolff also found urns containing the charred bones of animals. “Should we conclude,” they ask, “that the Tophet was also a ‘pet cemetery’ with cremated lambs and kids?”



The Canaanites' Sins

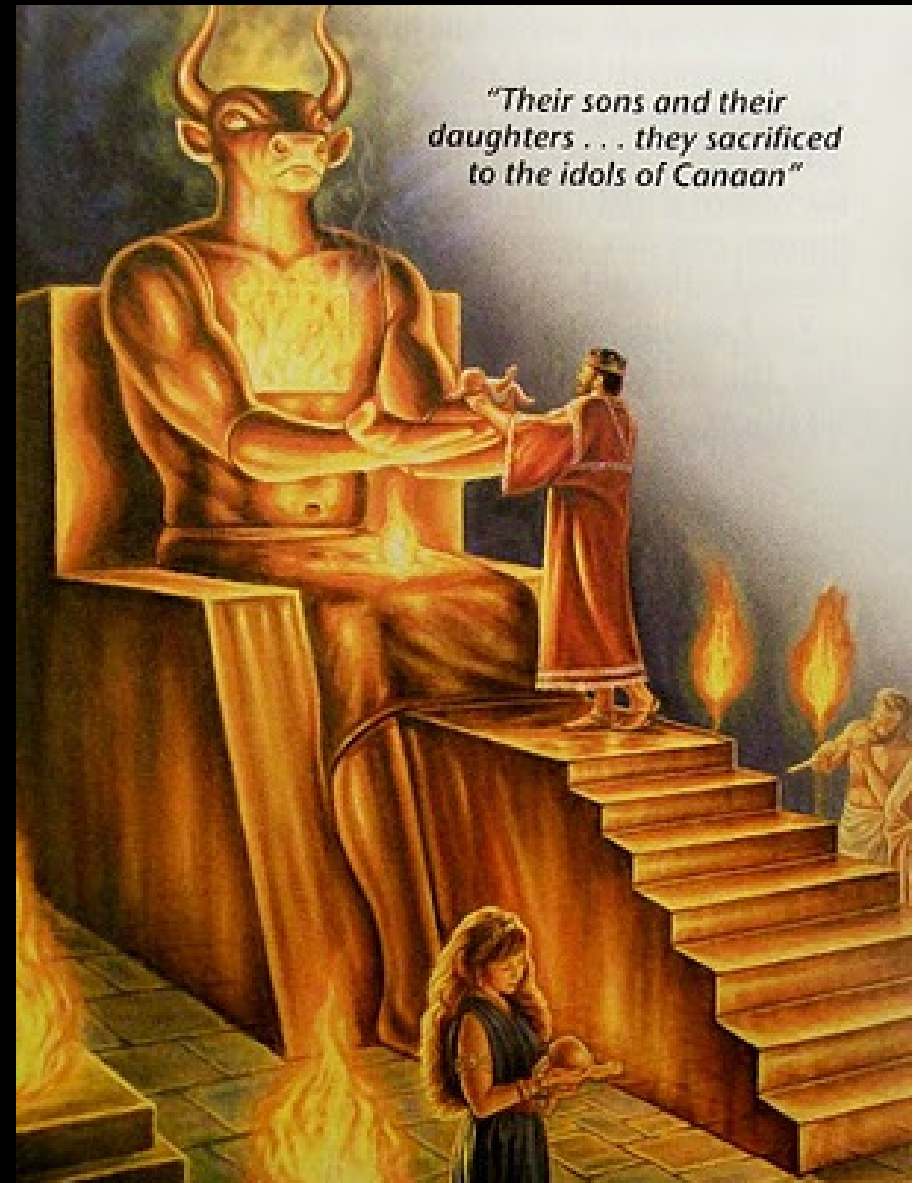
Instead, they opt for what is surely the more likely reconstruction, “that the burned animals were intended as substitute sacrifices for children.”

(Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity*, p.21)



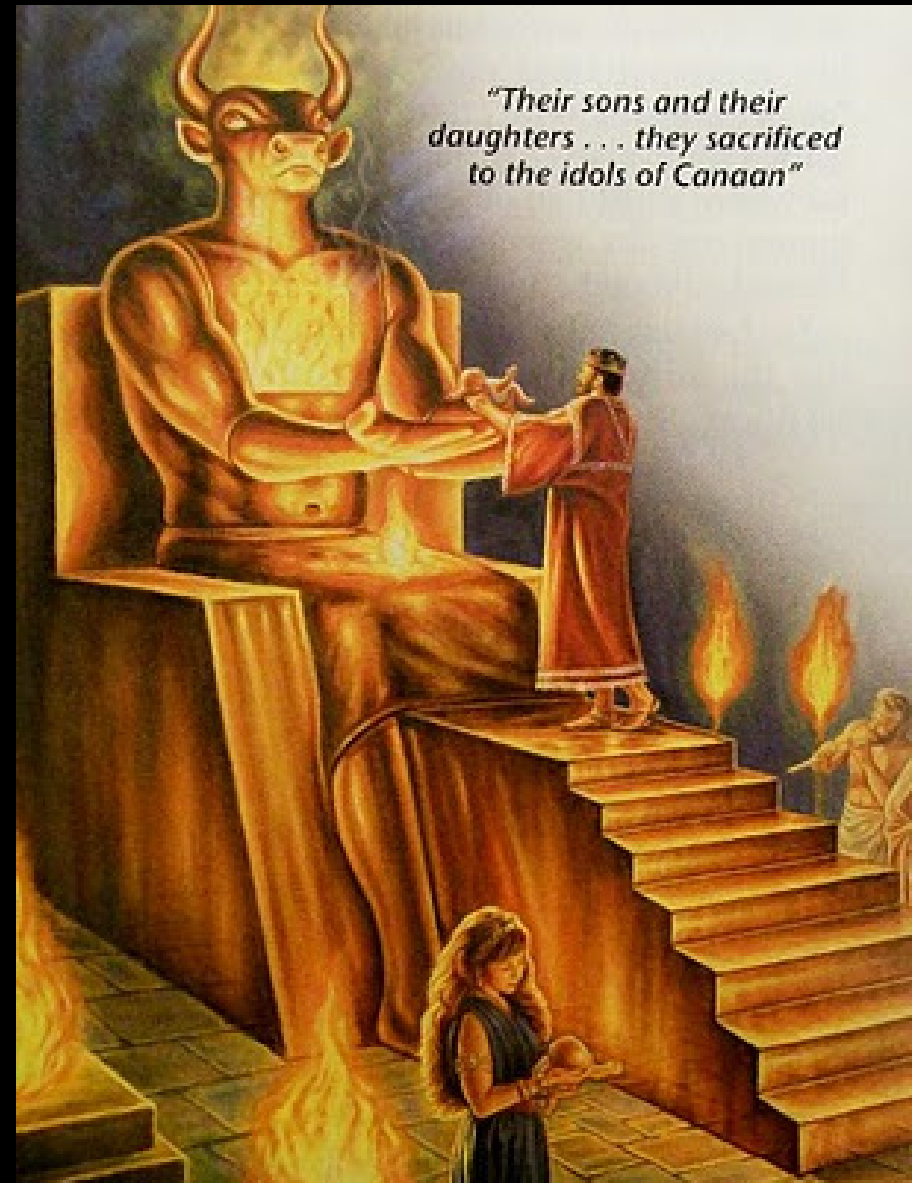
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- Archaeologists have found 6,000 jars of baby bones in Carthage, which was related to the Canaanites
- **Literary evidence: Greco-Roman, rabbinical, biblical**



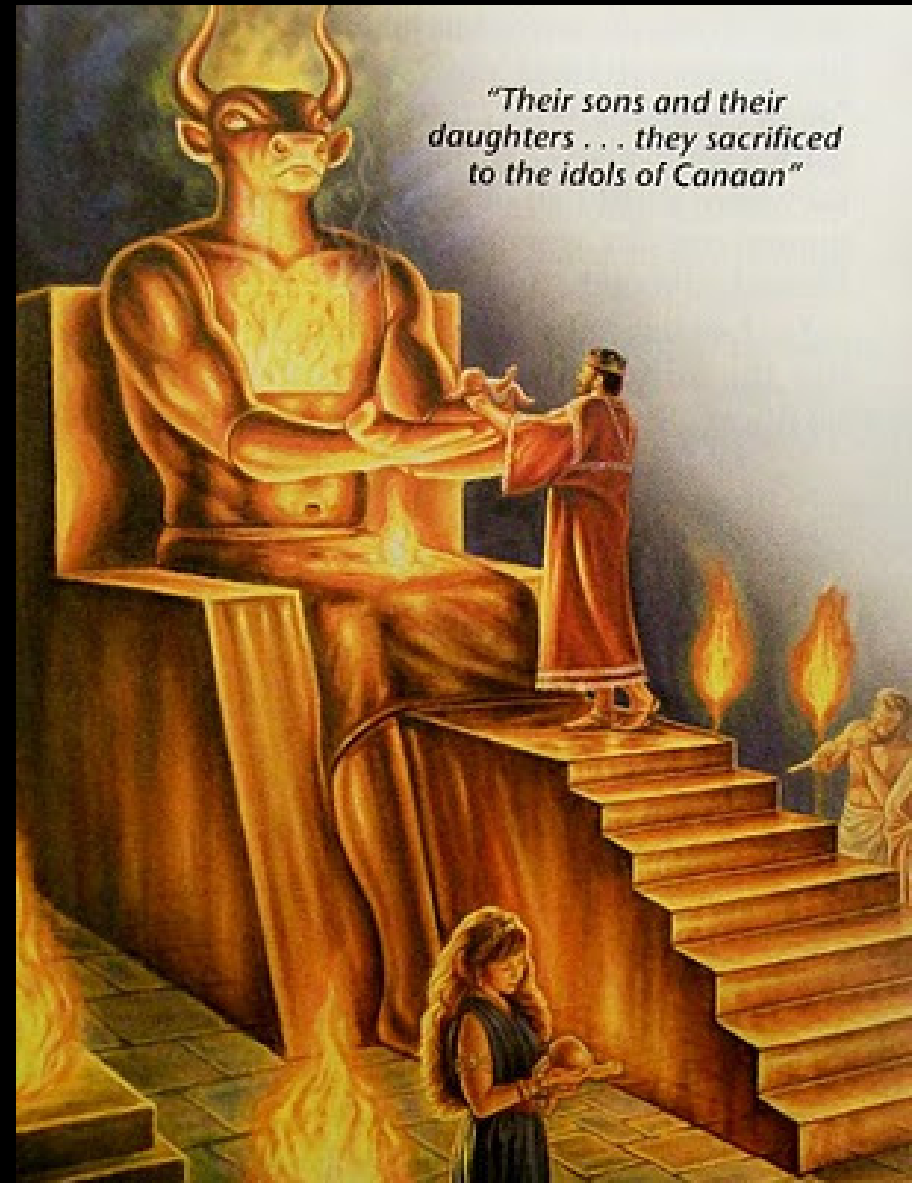
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- Diodorus Siculus (wrote between 60 – 30 BC) mentions the practice in Carthage, as do Plutarch (c.46 – 20 AD), Tertullian (160 – 225 AD), and Orosius (c.375 – 423 AD). Some of these sources indicate babies roasted to death on a heated bronze statue.



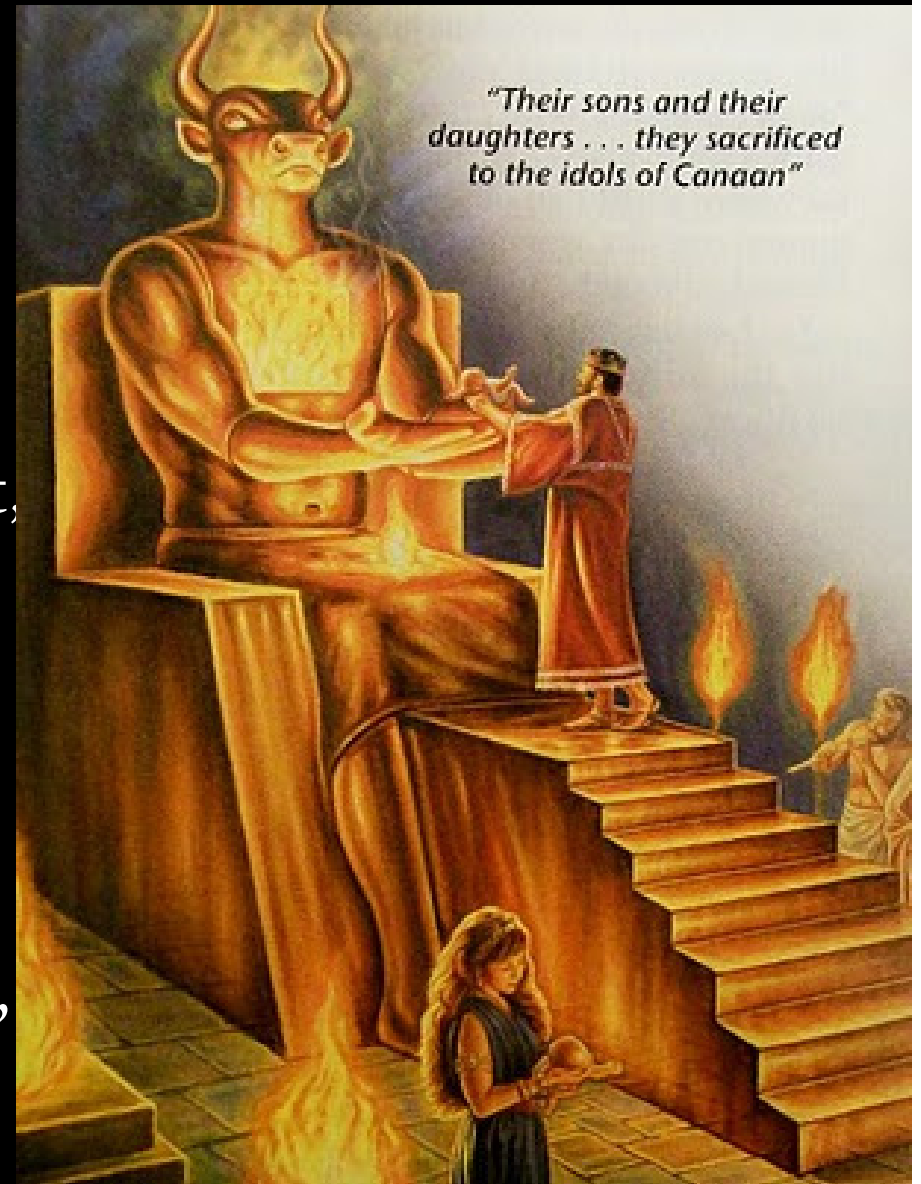
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- Diodorus Siculus wrote between 60 – 30 BC, ‘There was in their city a bronze image of Cronus extending its hands, palms up and sloping toward the ground, so that each of the children when placed thereon rolled down and fell into a sort of gaping pit filled with fire.’



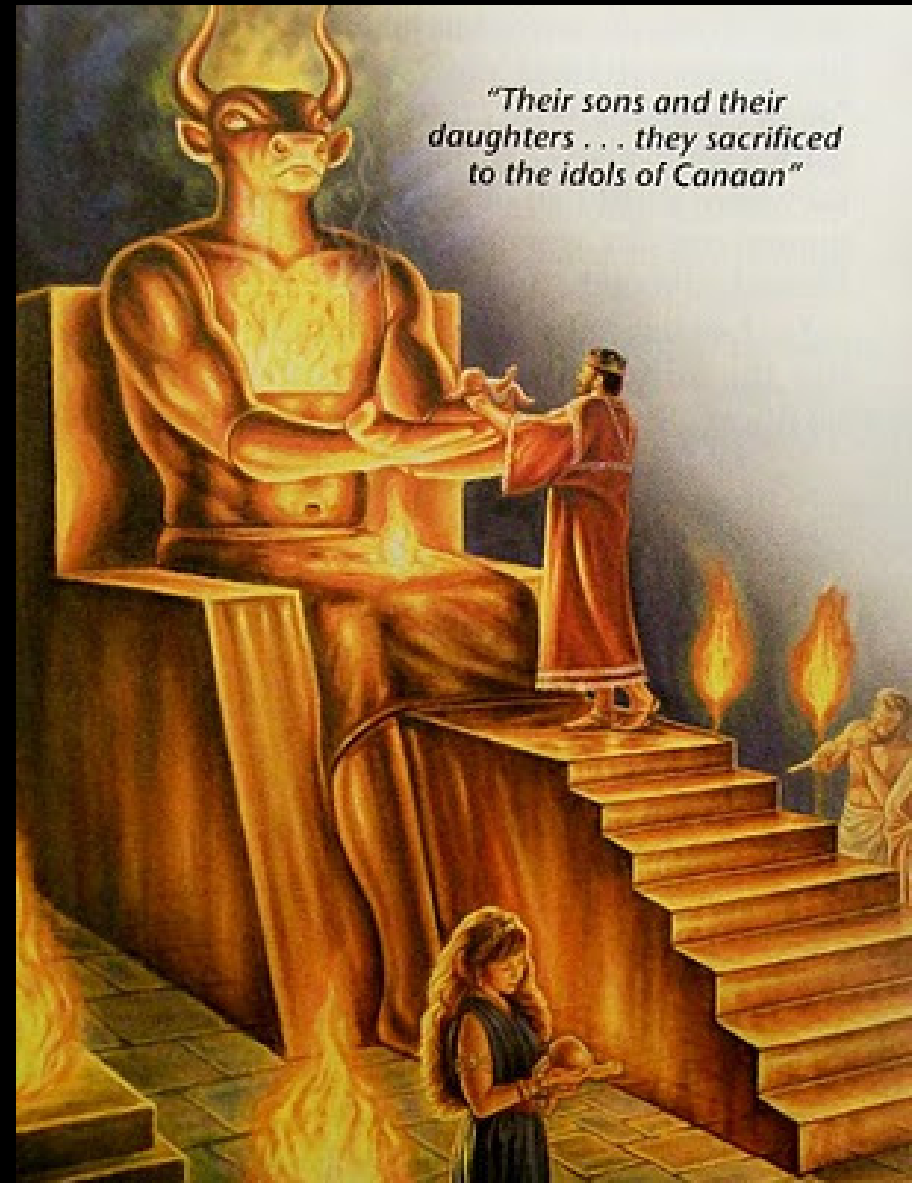
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- The rabbi Rashi writes, “Tophet is Moloch, which was made of brass; and they heated him from his lower parts; and his hands being stretched out, and made hot, they put the child between his hands, and it was burnt; when it vehemently cried out; but the priests beat a drum, that the father might not hear the voice of his son, and his heart might not be moved.” (Rashi, 12th century, on Jeremiah 7:31)



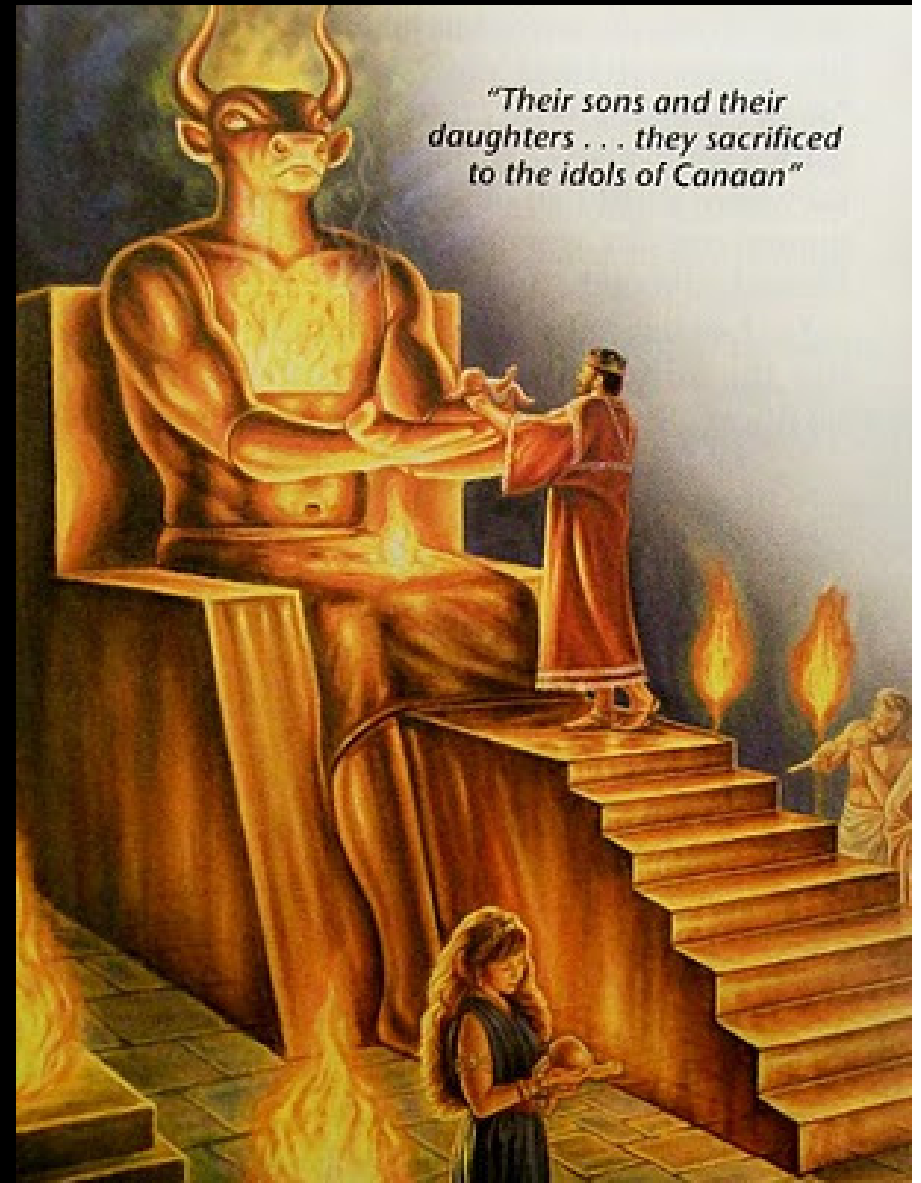
The Canaanites' Sins

- Biblical evidence:
 - (Genesis 4:16 – 26)
 - Genesis 22
 - Leviticus 18:21
 - 1 Kings 16:34
 - 2 Kings 3:27
 - Micah 6:7



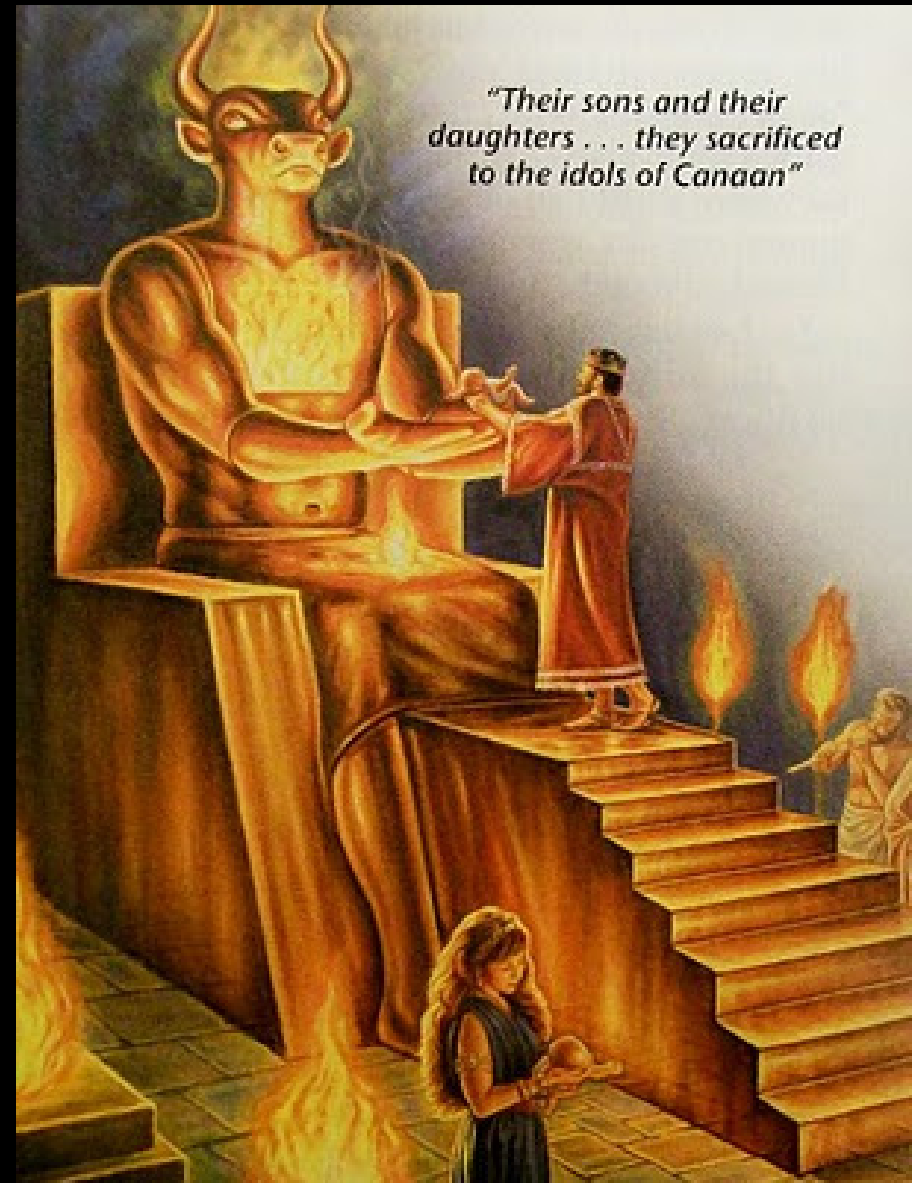
The Canaanites' Sins

- How would a defeated, child-sacrificing people try to avenge themselves?



The Canaanites' Sins

- How would a defeated, child-sacrificing people try to avenge themselves?
- A parallel: How would people stuck in a culture of gang violence respond to an outside threat?



The Character of God

- Ultimately, God had to protect Israel, to ensure a community for Jesus
- Given the intention of enemies to destroy Israel, could God really have protected Israel without taking any human life at all, ever?

The Character of God

Three basic choices

- God causes human evil
- God ignores human evil
- God stops human evil



The Character of God

- Did God consign the Canaanites to hell? No.
 - ¹ Peter ^{3:18} For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; ¹⁹ in which also **He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,** ²⁰ who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

The Character of God

- Did God consign the Canaanites to hell? No.
 - ^{1 Peter 4:6} For the gospel has for this purpose been preached **even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.**

The Character of God

- Did God consign the Canaanites to hell? No.

“I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

Amen.”

The Apostles' Creed (*decentralized, spontaneous* development across churches in the 2nd century, testifying to the widespread oral teaching that Jesus went to the dead)

The Character of God

- Did God consign the Canaanites to hell? No.

“...For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man;
so God and Man is one Christ;
Who suffered for our salvation;
descended into hell;
rose again the third day from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
he sitteth on the right hand of the God the Father Almighty,
from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead..”

The Athanasian Creed (possibly 4th or 5th century)

The Character of God

Jesus descending to the dead



The Character of God

- God hit a pause button on their lives
- God still wanted to deal with the root problem of evil in them: the corruption in their human nature
- Jesus came to them to give them a choice to surrender to him; their real choice is important for Peter's argument in 1 Peter

The Character of God

- How did God reach out to the Canaanites beforehand?
 - Noah, the grandfather of Canaan (Gen.9:18 – 27)
 - Scattering Babel (Gen.11:1 – 9)
 - Abraham and Sarah (Gen.11:27 – 25:11), including rescue
 - Melchizedek (Gen.14:18 – 20)
 - Four hundred years of patience with the Amorites and other Canaanites (Gen.15:16)
 - The warning of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.19)
 - Isaac and Rebekah (Gen.21:1 – 35:29)
 - Jacob and his family (Gen.33:18 – Gen.45:28)
 - The marriage of Judah and Shua, Judah's son to Tamar, and Tamar's children by Judah (Gen.38)
 - Salvation from famine by Joseph (Gen.41:57)

The Character of God

- How did God reach out to the Canaanites beforehand?
 - Inviting a 'mixed multitude' (Ex.12:38) in Egypt to join
 - Broadcasting His power for forty years between the Exodus from Egypt and the Conquest of Canaan (Ex.15:15; Josh.2:10)
 - Calling for surrender and accepting defectors like Rahab into Israel (Josh.2, 6)
- Plus, Canaanites co-existed with Israel for an extensive period of time
 - 'The kindness of God leads us to repentance' (Rom.2:4)

The Character of God

- How did Jesus reach out to the Canaanites?
 - And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed'... Then Jesus said to her, 'O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed at once. (Mt.15:22 – 28)
 - For Christ...went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient... For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God. (1 Pet.3:19; 4:6)

The Character of God

- The Canaanites were committing very real and very troubling evil, especially threatening Israel
- God acted to protect Israel, to protect Jesus
- Israel did not kill women and children, but waged a precise military campaign against kings, soldiers, and military fortresses
- Israel accepted surrender and incorporated them
- This was not ethnic, but geographic and behavioral
- God wanted a homeland for Israel; this was a one time event; no more land conquests

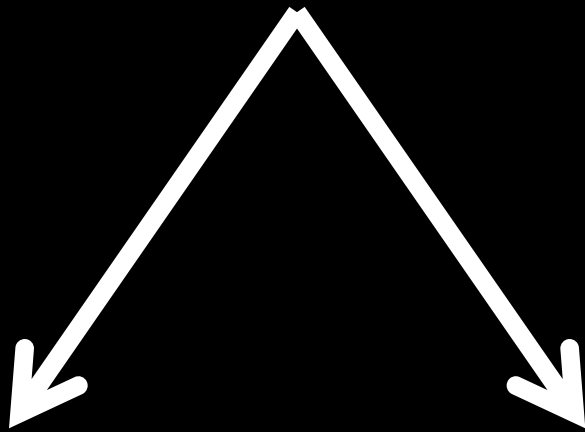
The Character of God

- God was not consigning the Canaanites to hell, but hitting a pause button on their lives until they met Jesus
- Is any of this inconsistent with what we know about God through Jesus Christ, that God loves us and desires each person to be healed and transformed through Jesus?
- We have to work harder to think it through, but fundamentally, I think it is consistent.

No Theological Problem

Both theological perspectives can accommodate the Conquest of Canaan

God is arbitrary



God
saves
some
(mercy)

God
destroys
others
(justice)

God is loving
(Trinitarian)



God in Jesus
offers new humanity
to ALL

Lessons

- Biblical Theology
 - The study of themes traced through the biblical narrative
- Systematic Theology
 - The study of God's character and the attempt to make statements about Him based on the entirety of the biblical data

Lessons

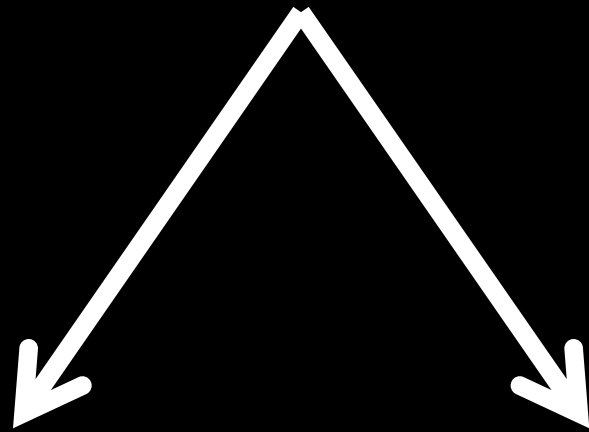
- Biblical Theology
 - Cultural-historical context:
 - Idea-for-idea, not just word-for-word
 - Not random, but is controlled by the context of the contemporary literature
 - Literary context:
 - Treat the whole book; how does the *Book of Joshua* end?
 - Israelites are not 'the good guys'
 - Same human nature problem as everyone else
 - Canonical context:
 - Whole canon; how does the NT treat it?

Lessons

- Systematic Theology

- Which one best describes the character of God?

God is arbitrary



God
saves
some
(mercy)

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others
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God is loving
(Trinitarian)

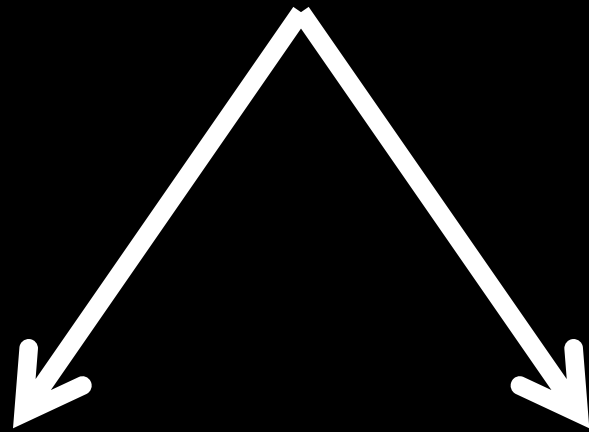


God in Jesus
offers new humanity
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Lessons

- Systematic Theology
 - *Why would God's love be primary?*

God is arbitrary



God
saves
some
(mercy)

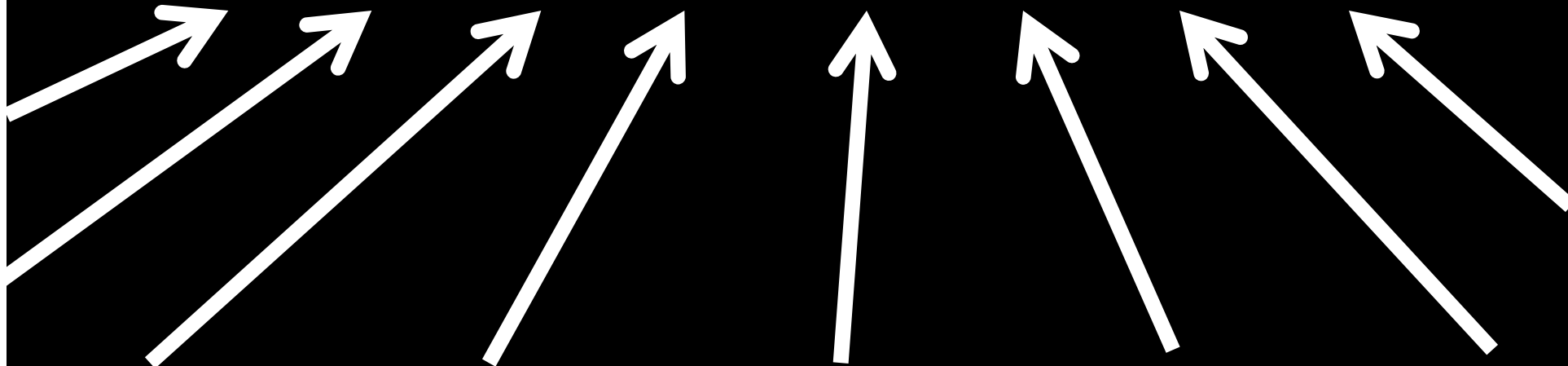
God
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“God as Lightswitches” Equal Attributes?



Love

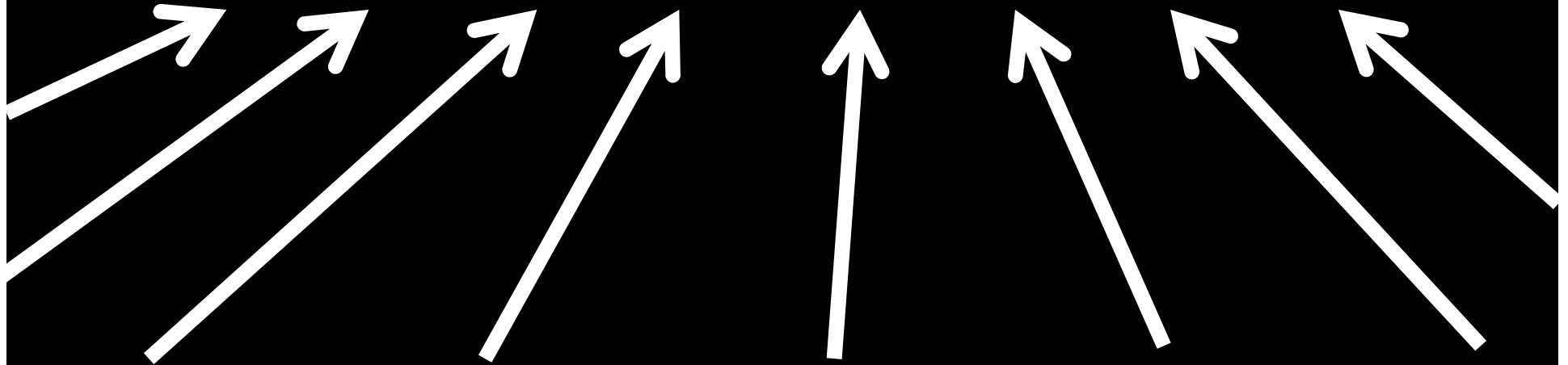
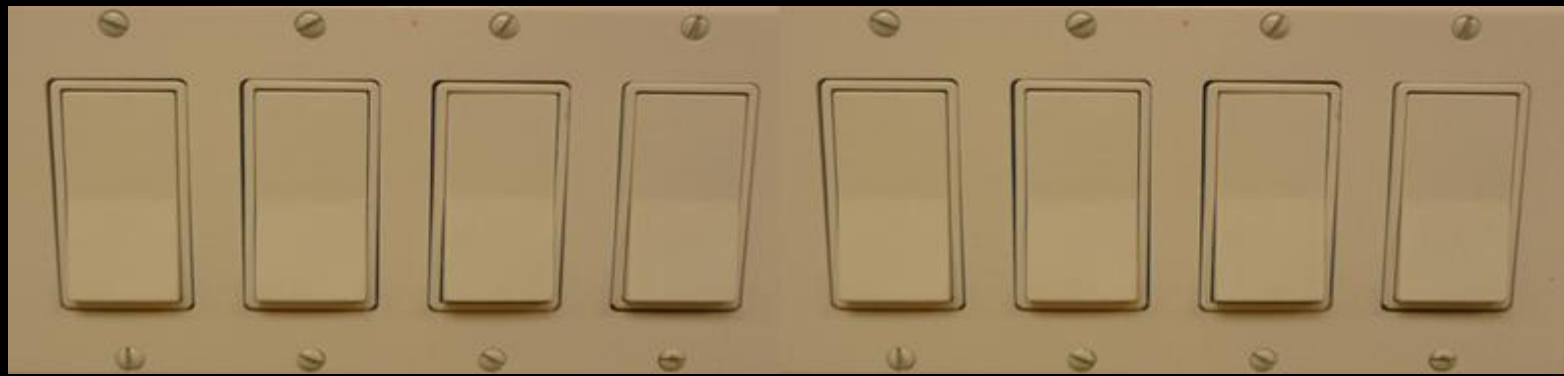
Wrath

Holiness

Mercy

Etc.

Or is there integration?



Love

Wrath

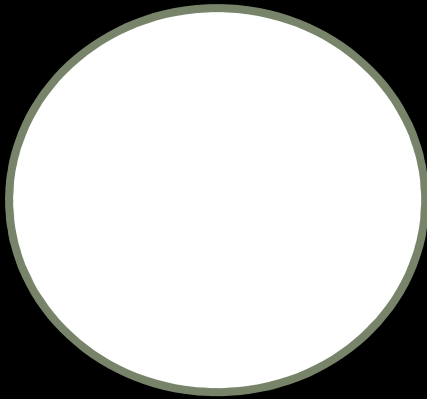
Holiness

Mercy

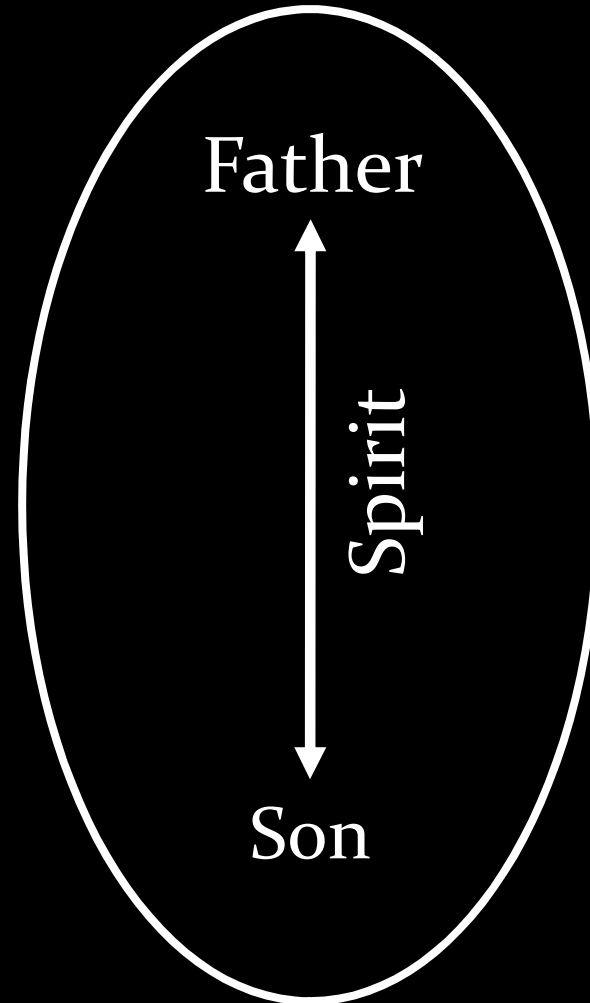
Etc.

What is God's Nature?

God as Singularity



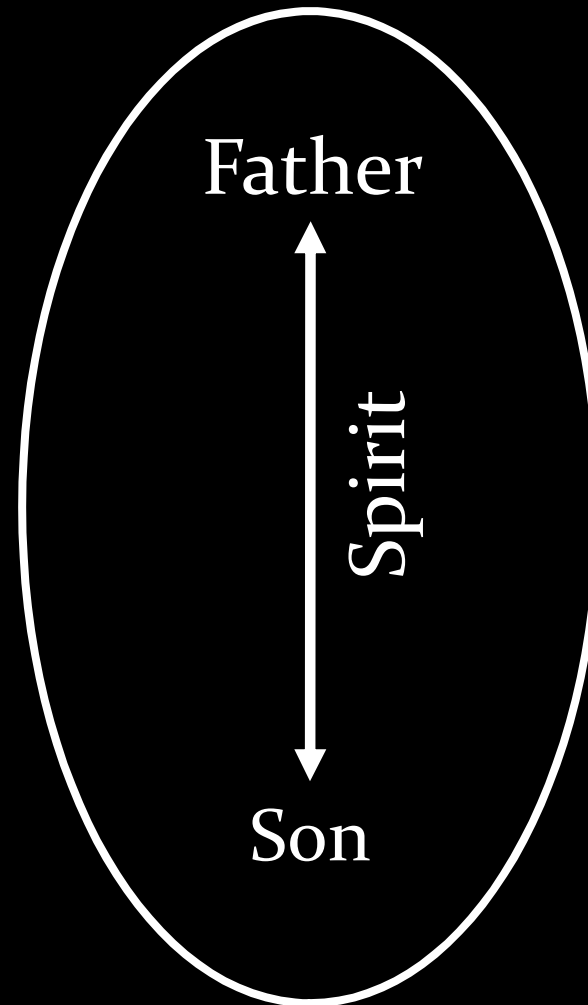
God as Trinity



What is God's Nature?

- Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father...The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. (John 14:9 – 10)
- For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him ... In him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form. (Colossians 1:19 & 2:9)
- And he is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature... (Hebrews 1:3)

God as Trinity



Primary Characteristics?

God as Singularity

- ??

God as Trinity

- Loving
- Personal
- Relational
- Family
- Friendship
- Unified
- Community
- Other-centered

Primary Characteristics?

God as Singularity

- ??

God as Trinity

- Is Love

Secondary Characteristics?

God as Singularity

- ??

God as Trinity

- Is Love
- Just
- Wrathful
- Merciful
- Holy
- Sovereign
- Powerful
- Wise
- Etc.

Secondary characteristics are how God relates to creation

- Holiness requires commonness, etc.

Secondary Characteristics?

God as Singularity

- ??
- Can be arbitrary
- Can do and be anything
- No need to integrate

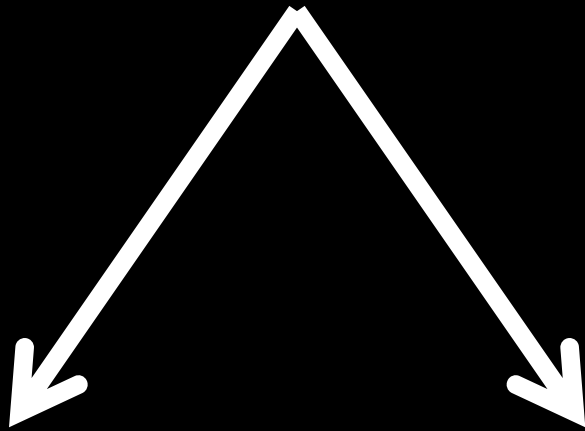
God as Trinity

- Is Love
 - Just
 - Wrathful
 - Merciful
 - Holy
 - Sovereign
 - Powerful
 - Wise
 - Etc.
- Must be integrated
 - E.g. How does God's love shape His justice?

Systematic Theology

- Which model of God is Triune?

God is arbitrary



God
saves
some
(mercy)

God
damns
others
(justice)

God is loving
(Trinitarian)



God in Jesus
offers new humanity
to ALL, opposes all
human evil down to
its source in us