

Those Mythical HEROES of OLD

What an imagination the peoples of the ancient world had creating those famous, powerful heroes that steal the leading roles in many of our 21st century movies!

What power did these gods hold over the people?



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“Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. **All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god**” (Jonah 1:4-5).

Jonah had gone to sleep below deck. “The captain went to him and said, ‘How can you sleep? **Get up and call on your god!** Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish’” (Jonah 1:6).

“Look, today I am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse! **The blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God**, which I am commanding you today; **the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God** and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known” (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

The custom was to call out to YOUR gods when you were in trouble because they could help you. Unlike today, the notion that these gods existed is but a myth that are used in stories to fill our imagination with heroes that we desire and honor. The existence of one God, our Creator remains the belief common only among Judeo-Christians today.

There is ONE Creator with the power to create, Almighty God.

“The LORD is Israel’s king and defender. He is the LORD of Armies. This is what the LORD says: I am the first and the last, and **there is no God except me**” (Isaiah 44:6).

“You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; **besides him there is no other**” (Deuteronomy 4:35).

Then, who were the leading “gods” worshiped by the nations outside of Israel?

EGYPT – GODS OF EGYPT, EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS



Ra (sun) was the sun god. He was the most important god of the ancient Egyptians.

The ancient Egyptians believed that Ra was swallowed every night by the sky goddess Nut, and was reborn every morning.

The ancient Egyptians also believed that he travelled through the underworld at night. In the underworld, Ra appeared as a man with the head of a ram. <http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/gods/explore/main.html>

“So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, **the magicians of Egypt**, also did the same by their secret arts. **For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. BUT AARON'S STAFF SWALLOWED UP THEIR STAFFS**” (Exodus 7:10-12).

“Tell the Israelites to turn back... They are to encamp by the sea, **directly opposite Baal Zephon** (Canaanite god of the storm)” (Exodus 14:2).

Biblearchaeology.org provides some interesting insight into God’s military tactics: “The study of the history and background of Baal Zephon is utterly fascinating. The worship of Baal was known throughout the Fertile Crescent, the Levant, and down into Egypt. Upon this mountain, Baal Zephon, it was believed that Zephon reigned in power and was lord over the sea. Here, Pharaoh may have sensed that the idol Zephon was going to display his power over the Israelites. God tells us some of Pharaoh’s reasoning: “Pharaoh will think, ‘The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.’ And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them” (v. 3, 4a). Indeed he did, and I believe that Pharaoh considered that Zephon would finally rout the Israelites and that Yahweh would be shown to be inferior in power. (Did Pharaoh still think that he and his Egyptian gods had power to subdue the God of Israel unaided by a still more powerful deity?) And it is no surprise that the Lord stopped Israel and turned them around to meet and defeat not only Pharaoh and his army, but also to display his power over Zephon and defeat him at the mountain of his glory and power. Not only this, but Yahweh would lead His people directly through the sea...the sea which the Egyptians believed were under the control of Zephon! And further, that instead of the Israelites being destroyed, showing Zephon’s lordship of the sea, it would be the Egyptians who would discover who was both Lord of the mountain, but also Lord over the sea! There were many ways that God could have chosen to eliminate the Egyptian army; it was no accident that He chose to bring this conflict into the sharpest spiritual focus and to a climax of incredible proportions.

In the end we are left awestruck at the wisdom and power of our God. We can see clearly that God was showing His people, in the most amazing and startling ways, not only that He was Lord over all other gods and over nature, but was teaching His people Israel what happens to those who worship false gods. And lest we forget His love for the Egyptians, we must remember His words, that ultimately, "the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord" (v. 4). Can we not also conclude, that in the end, **God showed His grace to the Egyptians who were in the bondage of following gods who were empty, without power, and unable to save them?"**

<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2006/07/12/Confronting-Baal-Zephon-The-Spiritual-Message-of-the-Meeting-of-Israel-and-the-Armies-of-Egypt-at-the-Mountain-Before-the-Sea.aspx>

GREECE – CLASH OF THE TITANS, WRATH OF THE TITANS, HERCULES, PERCY JACKSON & THE OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF, PERCY JACKSON: SEA OF MONSTERS (IN DEMIGODS WE TRUST)



Zeus – God of the Sky and King of the gods

Zeus was the first of the gods and a very imposing figure. Often referred to as the “Father of Gods and men,” he is a sky god who controls lightning (often using it as a weapon) and thunder. Zeus is king of Mount Olympus, the home of Greek gods, where he rules the world and imposes his will onto gods and mortals alike.

Zeus was the last child of the titans, Cronus and Rhea, and avoided being swallowed by his father (who had been told one of his children would overthrow him).

Along with Hades and Poseidon, Zeus shared the rule of the world and became king of Olympus as the children of Cronus were filled with admiration for their noble brother and sided with him against their unjust father – even following Zeus into The Battle of the Titans.

<https://greekgodsandgoddesses.net>

“While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was **greatly distressed** to see that **the city was full of idols**. So, he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:16-17).

“A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, ‘What is this babbler trying to say?’ Others remarked, ‘He seems to be advocating foreign gods. They said this because **Paul was preaching the good news of about Jesus and the resurrection**” (Acts 17:18).

“Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, ‘May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean’” (Acts 17:19-20).

“Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: ‘Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and observed your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now **what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you**’” (Acts 17:22-23).

“The God who made the world and everything in it, is the LORD of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. **God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him**, though he is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring’” (Acts 17:24-28).

Patheos.com provides some well-researched insight:

“Who is Paul quoting there? In the original text...in whom do we live? In whom do we move? In whom do we have our being? We’re the offspring...of whom? Zeus.

Here’s the first quotation in context, in Epimenides’s *Creatia*:

They fashioned a tomb for thee [O Zeus], O holy and high one-

The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!

But thou art not dead: thou livest and abidest forever,

For in thee we live and move and have our being.

Let’s stop there. What is this tomb for? And why is Epimenides calling Cretans “liars”?

It is because the Cretans thought that Zeus was born, lived a mortal life, and died. They also had a tomb for him, and many apparently believed that he was reborn every year. But in saying Zeus was a dying god with mortality, they were pretty close to atheists for the rest of the Greek world, who insisted, as Epimenides did in this poem — that Zeus wasn’t dead, and that he will be alive forever.

What that means is that Paul literally took from the apologetics to defend Zeus’s existence against the atheists of his day — book, chapter, and verse — and basically said, “Yeah, that verse about Zeus? That’s the guy I’m talking about.”

So, when atheists compare God to Zeus — Paul was the one who started it, making the two synonymous.

And Paul by no means stops there. You see that nasty little *ad hominem* attack against the Cretans, calling them “liars, evil beasts, idle bellies”? That’s profoundly insulting

and is not at all an apologetic, I think you'll agree. Obviously the protection for Zeus's status for a deity was poor.

And yet, in Titus 1:10-13, Paul QUOTES from the nastiest, most transparent, absolutely worst defense of Zeus as a defense of his own theology:

For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception.... They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach.... One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." This saying is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth.

It turns out, again, that when atheists compare the defense of Zeus to the defense of the Christian God, they're not exaggerating. Paul actually did this — actually, again, seeming to make the Christian God synonymous with Zeus.

Now, here's the second part of that Acts 17 quote in context, from Aratus's Phaenomena:

From Zeus let us begin; him do we mortals never leave unnamed; full of Zeus are all the streets and all the market-places of men; full is the sea and the havens thereof; always we all have need of Zeus. For **we are also his offspring**; and he in his kindness unto men giveth favourable signs and wakeneth the people to work, reminding them of livelihood. He tells what time the soil is best for the labour of the ox and for the mattock, and what time the seasons are favourable both for the planting of trees and for casting all manner of seeds. For himself it was who set the signs in heaven, and marked out the constellations, and for the year devised what stars chiefly should give to men right signs of the seasons, to the end that all things might grow unfailingly. **Wherefore him do men ever worship first and last.**

Zeus. Literally talking about Zeus. About worshipping Zeus, about Zeus' commands, about his laws and everything he rules over...Zeus. So, to the listening crowd, when Paul said, "We are his offspring," he was literally saying "We are Zeus's offspring."

Now, I'm not saying that this is the be all and end all of Christian apologetics. I know that they have a lot more up their sleeves.

But this is to say that apologists can't say that the comparison to Zeus is unfair. Not believing in the Christian God is about as common-sensical as not believing in Zeus. This is not a far-fetched, outlandish claim. Rather, it's an argument not just made by atheists, but also by Paul, the leading theologian of the Christian faith."

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/barrierbreaker/the-apostle-paul-said-that-god-and-zeus-were-kinda-the-same-thing/>

The gods worshiped by the nations outside of Israel were real. The ancient people felt the punishment of the gods and they feared them. Paul was not arguing for the existence of the gods; the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans believed in their existence. Rather, **he was arguing for the existence of the one true God**. Today, I argue for the existence of these ancient gods because a coalition of heavenly gods are prophesied to return (Daniel 11) and believers need to be aware, as well as, the existence of the one true God.



ROME

The Romans were curiously eager to identify their own gods with those of the Greeks, and reinterpret stories about Greek deities under the names of their Roman counterparts. Rome's early myths and legends have also a dynamic relationship with Etruscan religion, less documented than that of the Greeks.

While Roman mythology may lack a body of divine narratives as extensive as that found in Greek literature, Romulus and Remus suckling the she-wolf is as famous as any image from Greek mythology except for the Trojan Horse. Because Latin literature was more widely known in Europe throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, the interpretations of Greek myths by the Romans often had the greater influence on narrative and pictorial representations of "classical mythology" than Greek sources. In particular, the versions of Greek myths in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, written during the reign of Augustus, came to be regarded as canonical.

<http://www.crystalinks.com/romemythology.html>

The nations outside of Israel inherited these gods from the Almighty God at the time of Babel. They were commissioned to teach the nations the way of God. But, the gods turned rogue and led the nations to worship them: build temples in their honor, perform abhorrent child sacrifices, and celebrate days that honor them. **Now, God battles rogue heavenly sons.** Our battle is not against flesh and blood.

God gave His sons authority: "God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the 'gods'" (Psalm 82:1).

God gave the members of His heavenly court rulership over the nations: "When the Most High assigned lands to the nations, when he divided up the human race, he established the boundaries of the peoples according to the number in his heavenly court" (New Living Translation Deuteronomy 32:8).

Some of His sons have gone rogue and on Judgement Day, they will be mortalized and die like mere men: "I said, 'You are gods; you are all sons of the Most High. But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler'" (Psalm 82:6).

"But I say, that **the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils**" (1 Corinthians 10:20).

These gods warred against each other for power and glory and taught the nations to war against each other for the same purpose. Upon Christ's resurrection, he imprisoned them and their power is no longer felt, as it was in the ancient days.



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"Then the sailors said to each other, 'Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.' **They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.** So, they asked him 'Tell us, **who is responsible for making all this trouble for us?**'" (Jonah 1:7)

"He answered, 'I am a Hebrew and **I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land**'" (Jonah 1:9).

"This terrified them and they asked, 'What have you done?' (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so) (Jonah 1:10).

"The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So, they asked him, 'What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?'" (Jonah 1:11)

"'Pick me up and throw me into the sea,' he replied, 'and it will become calm.' I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you" (Jonah 1:12).

"Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. **At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him**" (Jonah 1:15-16).

The God of the Hebrews was feared by the sailors and they turned to worship Him because they recognized His power. Jonah knew his God well; that is why he was running away from Him. He was told to warn the people of Nineveh of their destruction because of their wickedness. Jonah knew that if the people of Nineveh repented, the Almighty God would not punish them. He knew that the God of the Hebrews was "gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity" (Jonah 4:2).

The people of Nineveh believed God and repented in dust and ashes. The God of the Hebrews—the Supreme God had compassion and did not bring destruction on them.

The God of the Hebrews had compassion on the people of Nineveh; He loves all of mankind.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son [only unique Son and Heir], that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).



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His rogue sons have taken the nations down the fatal road of rebellion against God. But, Christ has paved the way for our return to our Creator and God who is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love.

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