

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

DAGON MEETS THE LORD

And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. 1 Samuel 5:1-4

Karl Marx was no champion and friend of the truth, but he did say one thing that I believe to be true, even though I don't agree with his intention in saying it. He once said "Religion is the opiate of the masses." Every culture and tribe upon the earth has some sort of "religion" and some sort of "god". Even the Marxists bow down before their own shrines. All men give allegiance to the god of their own design and choosing. Someone has said, one religion is just as good as another, and again I find myself in agreement with them. The gods of the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Philistines, the Buddhists, the Hindus, or the Muslims are all of equal power and ability. In fact this is exactly what Joshua told the children of Israel when he admonished them at Schechem. He said if they felt like it was wrong to serve the true and living GOD, then they should choose one from among the gods they had seen. It really didn't matter which one they chose out of that lot because they were all the same. *"But", he said, "as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Josh 24:15)

The Philistines discovered that their god, Dagon had some limitations when he was in the presence of the the True and Living GOD. Men feel comfortable with a nice little god like Dagon. He wouldn't hurt a flea and he's always right where they left him. They can explain everything that he does. He always leaves every thing up to their choice and free will. They don't have to worry about him "interfering" in their lives because he is a "gentleman" and never goes where he is not wanted. He wants to do so much for them if only they will let him. In fact he helps those that help themselves. They can choose to be faithful to him or just pretend to be, because he won't know the difference. He lives in a special place and can be accessed there night and day according to their own desire, much like a large vending machine. He is especially impressed by religious talk and big offerings of money and talent, not to mention great feats of "faith" and "cross bearing". David described gods like Dagon when he said, *"They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them."*(Ps.115:5-8) He describes the True GOD by saying *"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."* (Ps.115:3)

A god, like Dagon, cannot stand in the presence of the Living GOD. The LORD is not content to share HIS glory with anyone. Most especially with those who masquerade as deity. *"For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God"* (Ex 34:14) The most glorious display of GOD's absolute dominion over all powers can be seen when HE sent HIS own SON, JESUS CHRIST into the world to redeem HIS elect. HE who hates sin, put HIS own darling SON to death on its account. *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."* (Col 2:14-15) HE forever destroyed all those who could in any wise bring harm to those whom HE loved with an everlasting love. Dagon is not just cast down but his hands, feet, and head are severed by the work of JESUS CHRIST in our behalf.

Some prefer the gods of the flesh even when they have to prop them up. It is amazing that the Philistines tried to bolster their hopes in Dagon, even when he was face down before the LORD. Men love religion that suits their flesh. Man by nature is looking for a message that makes him feel better and fulfills his needs and gives him something he can be involved in. He is not interested in giving all glory unto the LORD but feels that human endeavor must play a part in his salvation. The gospel of the grace of JESUS CHRIST has no appeal to anyone other than those who know themselves to be guilty sinners deserving of destruction. Just like the Galatians, the natural mind always gravitates to some "work of the flesh" to enhance his standing before the LORD. He finds it impossible to comprehend that it is "all of grace". *"Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"* (Gal 3:3)

Dagon had as much power with his head and palms cut off as he did when he stood tall. Twice zero is zero. The religion of the flesh is useless to accomplish anything of lasting value, but that does not keep men from embracing it. David said, *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."* (Ps.14:1) Essentially he is saying that the fool's statement is "there is no GOD for me" or there is no absolute GOD to which I will bow. The LORD said to the Pharisees, *"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."* (John 5:39-40) The Pharisees are typical of those who will embrace religion and all of its trappings and outward signs but will not and cannot "worship the LORD in spirit and truth". They will "join the church", "tithe", "witness", "pray", "praise", and any number of other activities but their heart is far from HIM and they will not and cannot relinquish "control" over their own lives. *"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."* (Phil 3:3)

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