

## Scripture Reading

1 Cor 8:5-6 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 6 yet for us there is {but} one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we {exist} for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we {exist} through Him.

### Part V) The Greek and Roman gods

#### part one

We have covered the Egyptian gods by studying the ten plagues and found it to be God's personal assault on the false god system. We studied the Canaanite gods of the Baal system through the children of Israel entering into the Promised Land. In the next two lessons, we cover the third major sector of gods that Bible discusses, the Greek/Roman god system.

### The Olympians

The Olympians are a group of 12 gods, the *dodekatheon*, who ruled after the overthrow of the Titans. They are Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Ares, Hermes, Hephaestus, Aphrodite, Athena, Apollo, Artemis and Hestia. They are named after their dwelling place, Mount Olympus. All the Olympians are related in some way and have a Roman version of each.

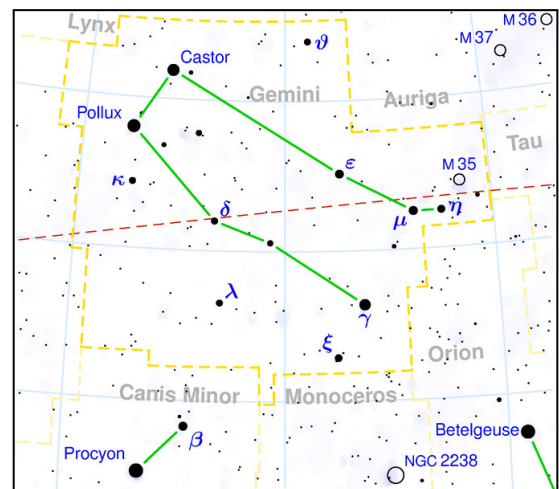
### Zeus: (Roman: Jupiter)



According to Greek mythology, Zeus overthrew his Father Cronus and then drew lots for authority with his two older brothers Poseidon and Hades. Zeus won the draw and became the supreme ruler of the gods. This mythical god had a mythical wife named Hera. He supposedly had many mythical escapes with many mythical women and had many mythical children of the likes of Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Hermes and Ares just to name a few.

### Castor and Pollux: Sons of Zeus with Leda

A couple of sons of mythical Zeus with his infidelity with Leda, the wife of a Spartan king, were Castor and Pollux. Because Leda was human and Zeus was a god, Pollux was immortal and Castor was mortal. According to legend, when Castor died, Pollux petitioned Zeus to bring his twin brother back as immortal. Zeus caved in and made them the Gemini twins and placed them into the sky as a constellation, Gemini. Because the constellation was seen at night, they became the patrons of sailors of the Empire. This is why we find their image at the front of the ship in Acts 28:11 *And at the end of three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, and which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead.* (NAS) The KJV states to "...Castor and Pollux" and the NIV states "...twin gods Castor and Pollux." Obviously the owners of the ship were believers in Gemini as a god.



### More on Zeus

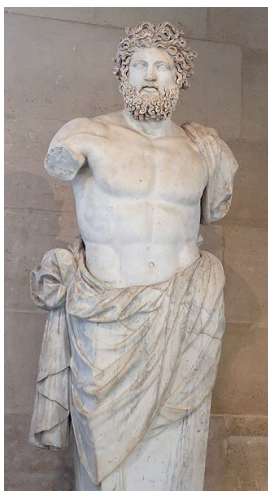
Zeus was considered to be "lord of the sky" and the "rain god". His weapon is a thunderbolt, which he hurls at those who displease him. Many of the modern day Hollywood depictions of the God of the Bible, sitting on a cloud with a bolt of lightning, waiting to smite, comes from this Greek perspective.

In Acts 19:35 it states "And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and

of the image which fell down from Zeus?” They believed that Zeus, the god of the sky, cast down what appeared to be a meteor and as a result they built an altar to it.

Another thought to contemplate is the fact that they had a temple to Zeus in Lystra. Actually nearly all towns had a temple to the greatest of all Greek gods. It was likely at one of these temples that the Christians of Pergamum were being put to death.

Rev 2:13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.



They had one of the largest temples to Zeus in the Empire. When Christians refused to offer sacrifice to this god of the pagans, it usually meant persecution and even death. This actual temple to Zeus was actually taken piece by piece from this location over the period of 25 years and taken to Berlin for display. Today it is found in the museum and viewed by tens of thousands of visitors a year and is known as the “Pergamon Altar”



As you can see, Zeus, alias Jupiter, was quite present in the lives of those that Paul came into contact with. They viewed him as the most powerful overall god, but the Christians of that day knew better. They knew that God and His Son Jesus Christ was really the one that was in control.

### Hera: (Roman: Juno)

Behind every great god there is a goddess the Greeks reasoned. Hera was Zeus’ wife and sister, playing the double role in this way. She is the protector of marriage and took special care of married women. Her sacred animals are the cow and the peacock. Her favorite city is Argos. Hera's marriage was founded in strife with Zeus and continued in strife. Zeus courted her unsuccessfully; He actually tricked her into marrying him.

Legend says at one time she unsuccessfully tried to have Zeus killed. He seized her for this and hung her from the sky with gold chains. She wept in pain all night, but none of the others dared to interfere. Her weeping kept Zeus up and the next morning he agreed to release her if she would swear never to rebel again. She had little choice but to agree. While she never again rebelled, she often intrigued against Zeus' plans and was often able to outwit him. Most stories concerning Hera have to do with her jealous revenge for Zeus's infidelities.



What did those on the island of Crete, the birth place of Zeus, think about the teachings of Paul concerning the behavior of wives in the following verses? Do you actually believe that the Greek and Roman women were thinking about Hera when they heard verses from Paul’s letters that went like this:

- Titus 2:5 “Wives to be “...subject to their own husbands...?”
- Eph 5:22 “Wives, {be subject} to your own husbands, as to the Lord?”
- Col 3:18 “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”

Knowing that the mythical model for women in first-century Asia and Europe was backbiting, death threatened goddess named Hera would not have lined up with the advice from Paul. She was the hero to the majority of women of that day and culture and that would have seemed to run contrary to common belief. Nobody said that preaching the word was a popular thing for Paul, but it had to be done regardless of what they already knew.

### Hestia: (Roman: Vesta)

Hestia was Zeus' virgin goddess sister and swore on the head of Zeus that she would never give up her virginity. Many have identified her as a contributing connection to the "Perpetual Virgin Mary" worship that evolved centuries later in Rome. Hestia, not wanting to be involved in the gods' quarrels, decided to leave Olympus to tend to her sacred hearth where she became a lesser goddess to the others.



She was the goddess of the hearth, the symbol of the house around which a newborn child was carried before it was received into the family. Each city had a public hearth sacred to Hestia, where the fire was never allowed to go out. They tied her to quality family values in the home. Before every meal in the home, a portion was first offered in sacrifice to her to commemorate the peace she brought to the family.

- It is Jesus that brings peace to the home, not Hestia. -Phil 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- It is God we are to thank before the meal, not Vesta. -1 Tim 4:4-5 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; 5 for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

### Poseidon: (Roman: Neptune)



Poseidon was the brother of Zeus. He placed second in the lot drawing with Zeus and Hades concerning shares of the world. His prize was to become lord of the sea and he was widely worshipped by sailors. They prayed to Poseidon for a safe voyage, sometimes drowning horses as a sacrifice.

His weapon was a trident, which can shake the earth, and shatter any object. They believed that when he was displeased that he struck the bottom of the sea with his trident, causing earthquakes, drownings and shipwrecks.

To the Greeks he was second only to Zeus in power amongst the gods. They credited him with causing seizures, epilepsy and other mental disturbances. He had a difficult quarrelsome personality and was portrayed as greedy. He had a series of disputes with other gods when he tried to take over their cities.

- It was not Poseidon that the apostles marveled about, but Jesus. -Matt 8:27 And the men marveled, saying, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" God made the seas; God divided the sea. It appears that God is the one that is to get the credit for what they were giving glory to Poseidon for.
- The apostles would tell you that it was a real Jesus that walked on water, not Neptune. -Matt 14:25 And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.
- It was God that delivered Paul and the other 265 from shipwreck, not Poseidon. -Acts 27:22-25 "And {yet} now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there shall be no loss of life among you, but {only} of the ship. 23 "For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, 24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God

has granted you all those who are sailing with you.' 25 "Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God, that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.

Posiedon = FAKE; God = REAL; Neptune = FAKE; Jesus = REAL. Let us as Christians never forget it.

### Ares: (Roman: Mars)

Ares was the son of Zeus and Hera. He was disliked by both parents and was presented the god of war. He was considered murderous and bloodstained, but also a coward. Ares was apparently an ancient abstract noun meaning throng of battle, war. Although Ares' half-sister Athena also considered a warrior, her position was that of strategic warfare, whereas Ares's tended to be one of unpredictable violence. He basically was the "Thug god" among the Olympians. He did what he wanted and when he wanted.

When caught in an act of adultery with Aphrodite, her husband Vulcan, was able publicly ridicule him. This only makes him even more wrathful. His bird was the vulture and his animal was the dog. Ares had a chariot drawn by four gold-bridled fire-emitting immortal stallions. Among the gods, Ares was recognized by his bronze armor; he brandished a spear in battle.

It is a place called "Mar's Hill" that the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers would "war" over the wisdom of the day.

- Acts 17:22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. (KJV)

It was here that Paul would battle for the souls of others entrenched in the Greek god-system and needing to be freed for the one true God. Many times Paul would use warrior talk in describing the lives of the Christian.

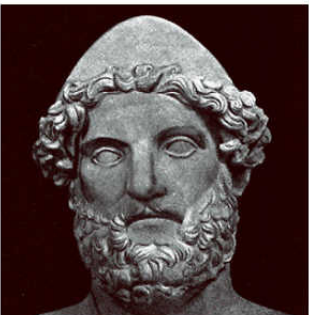
- 2 Cor 10:3-4 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- Rom 13:12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.
- Eph 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places.}

Ares has nothing on the Christian, for we are warriors for Jesus Christ. Mars has nothing on the saints of God for we have been called for battle against the powers of darkness of this world.

### Hephaestus: (Roman: Vulcan)

Hephaestus was the son of Zeus and Hera and was referred to as Vulcan by the Romans. Sometimes it was said that Hera alone produced him and that he had no father. He was the only god to be portrayed as physically ugly. He was also lame. Accounts as to how he became lame vary. Some say that Hera, upset by having an ugly child, flung him from Mount Olympus into the sea, breaking his legs.

He was the god of fire and the forges and was the metal-smith of the gods. He used a volcano as his forge. He as the patron god of both smiths and weavers. He was kind and peace loving. His wife was Aphrodite, who was not faithful to him.



Bust of Hephaestus

## Jesus is the Master of the fire

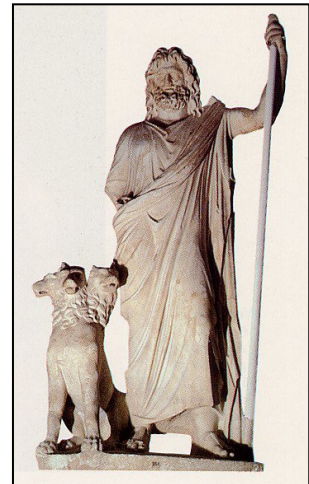
- 1 Cor 3:12-13 Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is {to be} revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.
- 2 Pet 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

## Hades: (Roman: Pluto)

Hades is the brother of Zeus and Poseidon. He had the worst draw and was made lord of the underworld, ruling over the dead. He was depicted as a greedy god who was greatly concerned with increasing his subjects and was seen as exceedingly disinclined to allow any of his subjects leave.

He was also the god of wealth, due to the precious metals mined from the earth. He had a helmet that makes him invisible and a three-headed dog for a pet. He rarely left the underworld and was considered the King of the dead.

- Matt 16:18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.
- Acts 2:27-28 (In reference to Jesus) Because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to hades, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay. 28 "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; Thou wilt make me full of gladness with Thy presence.'
- Acts 2:31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.
- Rev 1:17-18 I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.
- 1 Cor 15:55-57 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.(NKJ)



It is Jesus that overcame Hades by being resurrected from the dead on the third day. He is the one that will get us out of the grave as well through the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the one true God to the Christian.