



Vote Your Idols In!

And the Finalists Are... Dagon (a.k.a. Aqua Lord) and Moloch (a.k.a. Kid Burn)!

"Knowest thou, I admire Lord Dagon – the shimmering of his silver fins maketh mine bowels to leap as an hart," Beth-astarte gushed as she sat down on the bench next to her long time friend Adah. Adah, daughter of one of the most prominent Canaanite merchants in Gaza, had been recently dedicated to the "mergod" of the Philistines. Tomorrow she would make her way to Ashdod to spend the rest of her life as a temple priestess. "How enviest I thou, my dear bosom sister! Thy name was fitly given thee – how thou wouldst adorn the temple as an ornament."

Adah was ecstatic; indeed the great statue of Dagon was so magnificent. Yet she couldn't help but think that the trickle of envy admitted by Beth-astarte was more like a hidden torrent of green spew. "Thou art of great tenderness my friend – thou wishest me well and I am filled with much gratitude from thy kind thoughts. How desirest I to meet our Lord Dagon. It is of happy fortune that we do not worship that dread Moloch of the filthy Ammonites!"

Beth-astarte gasped audibly as she recalled how thousands of Israelites were forced to march to the gruesome image to be sacrificed to it. "I canst believe that thou wouldst mar this stellar day with such a dreadful thought. The Ammonites are of unsound mind – how canst they rip their children from their own wombs to be burnt on such an altar? If I possessed a child, I would never perform such blasphemy."

Adah recognized the bitter tone in her friend's voice – indeed, Beth-astarte had tried long to conceive, but without success. Why wouldn't Astarte, to whom her friend had been dedicated at birth and worshiped, grant her most dedicated devotee a child? It was no wonder; Adah thought to herself, that Beth-astarte had turned to Dagon. But what if the temple priests were unable to impregnate her? Would her friend eventually turn to Moloch, vowing, as many Canaanite women had already, to give her first born to him upon the birth of her second?

Adah shrugged off the thought – such unpleasantness, she thought, on the eve of her departure to Ashdod, would surely bring bad luck to her in her service to Dagon. She continued talking to Beth-astarte but indulging in unspoken thoughts of her future and the men she would bless by letting them experience Dagon through her body. If she had to give a vote to any of these idols, it would have to be Dagon, hands down.

But where is Dagon today? Where are these gods today? Where are their devotees? What profit has resulted from the countless hours spent discussing their merit? What have they done for us? These gods are no where to be found today and aren't worshiped. Their devotees are long gone. There has been no profit associated with the much discussion. They have done nothing for us. But what are the idols in our lives? How much do we concentrate on them and spend time watching and reading about them?

A New DMS-IV Diagnosis: Demagogic Obsessive Psychotic Episode (DOPE)

Society is filled with demagogues – men and women who have considerable influence over the rest of the populace. They are celebrities – from participants in the various and aptly named idol shows to movie stars, and from politicians to the local basketball captain – people talk about them, dream of them, and fuss over them. There are those like JFK and LKY whose life's works have been studied and discussed, adding some value to the understanding of nation building. Then there are those like Hilton and Ritchie who are famous for being famous. What focus are we placing on which demagogues? Is it worthwhile? Does it add any value to our lives?

Yes, we have a culture that is celebrity conscious. In fact, judging from the kind of TV programs and magazines out there, and even celebrity endorsed

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advertisements; it is not incorrect to say that Singaporeans are obsessed with celebrities. At times we may read of the occasion stalking of these celebrities by their psychotic fans. Even Sting of The Police fame experienced an erotomaniacal moment, giving him a true-to-life experience only his song spoke about until then – “Every breath you take and every move you make, every bond you break, every step you take, I’ll be watchin’ you.” Other times, we might send 10 or more SMSes at \$0.60 each so that ours would-one-day-become-a-celebrity, endorse a mamak store chain, and be forgotten in a generation or less.

And while Christians in the church may be less obsessed (hopefully so) and not psychotic (thankfully so), we can afford to be not obsessed at all. There seems to be competent knowledge of movie stars, rock stars, pop stars, sport stars, etc, often times Christians differ little from their unbelieving counterparts in knowing such trivia. Are there DOPES in our church? Hopefully there are no full blown cases, but we could tackle the mild ones. Why is there such an intense interest in celebrities?

A Christian Perspective

The reason for such an interest is simple. One of the great weaknesses of mankind is our desire to elevate those who have some measure of success in various fields. But the Bible admonishes mankind against the worshiping of idols and the preoccupation with man. The reason for this is that it keeps people away from God. Even after the giving of the Moral Law, when Moses went up Sinai to commune with God, the people fashioned a golden calf and worshiped it. The sin continues today, with the admiration of and preoccupation with people and their (mis)deeds than the worship of God.

While the unbelieving public is undeterred by boundaries (for they know of none) against hero-worship, we Christians ought to know better. But nevertheless, we are also affected by it. Yes, even Christians, which is why Paul had to warn the Corinthians Christians in 1 Corinthians 10:6-7, “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”

Paul desired them to be on the guard against idolatry – that they be not like the Israelites of Exodus fame who sat down to eat and drink and then to “play” as the adherents of other religions did. Paul cautioned the Christians against what other religions did. Take a look at any pagan religious festival today – the people set aside a day which they can’t miss, flock to see their idol paraded, enjoy and are entertained by the religious festivities, and make an event out of it with their friends.

The reason why idolatry was warned against by Paul was because this sin opened up a floodgate to other sins; this is seen in 1 Corinthians 10:8-14. After idolatry, the people committed other sins such as fornication, tempting (testing) Christ, and murmuring (complaining against those having authority). The admonition here is that of self-examination and circumspection. The admonition is also for Christians to be on guard because such temptation to idolize people will increase because of end-times lawlessness.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 describes the end-time lawlessness often cultivated by modern idols: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

That is why Paul emphasized to the Corinthian Christians in verse 14, “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.”

Conclusion

Under God’s grace to us, we can enjoy the talents of man and we can indeed admire the handiwork of God in a talented person. But sin occurs when these things enjoy more preoccupation from us than our preoccupation of God. And having a sound mind, let us consider the amount of time, effort, energy, and emotion we put into the demagogues of this world – that’s how much we take away from God. Let the world have her Dagon or Moloch, we have our Jehovah. And he must win the vote.

Preacher Mark Chen

Relocation Update

The following Sunday School classes have changed location:-

Junior Dept :

P4 boys are now in FEK Kitchen while the P5 boys remain in the 2nd Parsonage Library 1

Young Teens Dept :

**Sec 1 Girls (A) are in Reference Library 2
Sec 3 Mixed in FEK Classroom 2**

Seniors Dept :

**1B is now in FEK Office
3B/NS 1 now meets in Reference Library 1**