

Do We Want To Catch 'Olympic Fever'?

by Staff

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Hundreds of millions of dollars in advertising and non-stop media hype will ensure that "Olympic Fever" will catch on! Is this a "bug" we want to catch? What is the "Olympic Spirit"? What are its origins?

Everyone knows that the Olympic games began in Greece nearly eight centuries before Christ. Every four years athletes would compete against each other for the honor of being Olympic champion in their sport. This idea formed the basis for the modern games, renewed in Athens in 1896.

What provided the basis for the ancient games? Religion, of course! In Greek mythology, Mount Olympus was the home of the gods, where they ran races and performed other intergalactic feats of strength against each other. In Olympia, the city where the ancient games were held, lies the remains of a great temple to Zeus within a *sacred grove*. This temple complex *faces east*, and its altar stands on a mound of sacrificial animal ashes. A temple to Hera, Zeus' wife, lies nearby. East of these temples and connected to them by a short covered porch, worshippers constructed an athletic field to re-enact and celebrate the contests of the gods. We know these re-enactments as the Olympic games.

Alexander Hislop, in *The Two Babylons*, pp. 20, 110, 307-308, identifies Hera and Zeus as Greek equivalents of Semiramis and Nimrod. Along with Hermes (Cush), this unholy trinity was worshipped under different names in various ancient cultures as "mother and child/husband." They are tied together with sun worship and ultimately to worship of the fallen Helel, "son of the morning" or "daystar," Satan the Devil (Isaiah 14:12)!

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the ancient games

always remained a central expression of the Greek ideas that the body of man has a glory as well as his intellect and spirit, that body and mind should alike be disciplined, and that it is by the harmonious discipline of both *that men best honour Zeus*. (11th ed., 1910, vol. 20, p. 93. Emphasis ours.)

Modern Olympic Games

The modern games transfer similar ideas to our day, yet in our humanistic thinking, we have transferred the honor from Zeus to man himself.

What are the Olympics? When we boil everything down to the most fundamental issue, the games promote self-exaltation, one of Satan's worst characteristics. They are tests of skill, speed and strength to see who is the greatest in a particular field.

This hits children hardest of all; the age of the contestants seems to decrease every Olympiad. In some countries, children are trained almost from infancy, and their entire lives are devoted to winning a gold medal. Is this a modern form of passing children through the fire to Molech (Jeremiah 32:35), completely devoting them to a goal, and causing them to lead unbalanced, selfish lives for a temporal reward?

The Greeks adorned the neck of the victor with an olive wreath ("the branch of God," signifying deity). Vast treasures of money and food were heaped on the deified victors who never had to work again. Second place had worked just as hard but received no reward!

Modern Olympic champions receive gold medals, international fame, product endorsements and gifts of all kinds. They often move into lucrative professional sports or business. In a sense, they never have to work again either! But who remembers the silver and bronze medalists?

Notice, though, how truly godly men reacted to being proclaimed "gods." In Acts 14:8-18, the Lystrans declared Paul and Barnabas to be Hermes and Zeus because of a miraculous healing. The people sought to adorn them with wreaths and make sacrifices to them as gods (verse 13)! How did Paul and Barnabas react? They rent their clothes (verse 14) and entreated the Greeks to "turn from these vain things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them" (verse 15). *They would have nothing to do with the Greek gods!*

In 165-164 BC, the Jews took great exception when Antiochus Epiphanes sought to rename the Temple in Jerusalem "the Temple of Zeus Olympias." They equated the idea of erecting a statue of Zeus as the abomination of desolation (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, "Olympian Zeus, Temple of," vol. 5, p. 15; see Daniel 11:31; 12:11)! They wanted no part of the Greek gods either!

The church of God has long tied Easter, Christmas and other holidays to paganism and Satan worship. God soundly condemns such practices in Jeremiah 10:1-6; 16:20; 44:17-25 and Ezekiel 8:3-17 as worshipping the Queen of Heaven, Tammuz and other false gods who were merely men or demons. Yet some of these same ancient pagan practices also feature in the traditions of the modern Olympics. Are the Olympics different just because they do not use the names of Zeus, Hera and Hermes, and because they purport to be devoted to excellence in sports and international brotherhood?

God's View

Jeremiah 7:16-23 shows how God looks on some of these practices. He has not taught us to follow the practices of the heathen but has given us His way of life. In fact, such pagan practices not only provoke Him to anger, but also bring shame to those who participate in them (verse 19). As Moses writes, "You shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. . . . You shall be blameless before the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 18:9, 13).

Just like those who keep Christmas and Easter, the Olympic participants may not worship the gods of the pagans. However, the customs' origins lead directly back to pagan forms of worship. We need to consider Paul's warning, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, *let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 7:1).

Do we really want to catch the Olympic spirit? It is something to consider.