



## Myth Made Fact with Dr. Louis Markos

### Lesson 13: Oedipus and Antigone

#### Outline:

##### Oedipus at Colonus, Sophocles

- This play was written at the end of Sophocles' life.
- Colonus is basically a suburb of Athens. This is where Sophocles was born.
- Athens is portrayed as a city of refuge. Athens almost becomes a sacred city.
- Oedipus' daughters take him to a sacred grove in Colonus. This grove is sacred to the Eumenides. This play is taking place three generations before the Eumenides play.
- In most of his play, people are coming to Oedipus as he is preparing for his death. He has come to accept his fate.
- When he comes to Athens, Theseus is King of Athens. Theseus is the perfect, just monarch.
- Creon has heard prophecy that it will be good if Oedipus dies in Thebes. Creon kidnaps his daughters, but Theseus rescues them.
- Creon steps down and lets his nephews be kings (back and forth each year). Polynices wants help from Creon to come and bring him a blessing. Creon puts a curse on his son that the two sons will kill each other.
- Most memorable is the ending of the play. If Oedipus dies in Athens, he will bring blessing in that city, if nobody knows where he is buried.
- Oedipus goes into a secret cave and he dies but he doesn't really die. The gods take him up into the underworld.
  - Nobody knows the grave of Moses.
  - Two people did not die, Enoch and Elijah.
- Oedipus the cursed becomes Oedipus the blessed.
  - When Christ dies on the cross, he is cursed. He dies as a curse.
  - Jesus became sin on our behalf.
  - And yet, the cursed, becomes the blessed.
- There is a strange understanding of the cursed one, the scapegoat, who ends by joining the gods.

##### Antigone

- Eteocles and Polynices were supposed to rule in alternating years.
- Polynices raised an army, and they attacked Thebes (The Seven Against Thebes).
- During the war, Eteocles and Polynices kill each other. More civil war and taboo sins.



- When we deal with passion it gives a window into deeper issues that we need to wrestle with as mortals.
- Creon is forced to be king again. He is going to be into law and order. Creon decrees that he will give a royal burial to Eteocles but not to Polynices, even though this is a sacrilege.
- Antigone tries to give burial rites to Polynices.
- Ismene refuses to break the law with Antigone.
- They are trying to follow truth.
- Antigone is dragged to court. We have dialogues between Creon and Antigone. These are ultimately political.
  - This is another struggle between law and nature.
  - This is a masculine versus feminine.
  - Antigone says, I don't recognize your law, I am following piety.
  - This is very similar to what we call natural law.
- C.S. Lewis showed that all people have a basic understanding right and wrong. He called it the Tao in the Abolition of Man. If all of us has an understanding of the Tao, then there must be a director of the Tao.
  - The play Antigone only works if Creon knows what he is doing is wrong.
  - The play doesn't work if the people in the audience don't know that there is a law that is higher than us.
- Creon refuses to give in. His son (Haemon) is engaged to Antigone.
- Creon decrees that Antigone must die by being buried alive in a tomb.
- He himself is breaking any sense of piety. He won't give in until the chorus (the people of Thebes) tell him to let Antigone live.
- Antigone has already killed herself. Haemon rushes at his father, but kills himself instead.
- Creon's wife kills herself.
- Creon is left alone.
- At the end of the play, Antigone becomes the animal that is sacrificed. Creon becomes the scapegoat sent into exile (internally).
- The pagans have a basic sense of morality.