



Myth Made Fact

with Dr. Louis Markos

Lesson 7: Perseus

Outline:

The four greatest heroes of Greek mythology:

- Perseus
- Jason
- Theseus
- Hercules

Setting

- Hesiod was a contemporary of Homer, late 8th century. Hesiod lived in Greece as a farmer.
- The four ages of man:
 - Golden Age: Live close to nature, close to the gods, and close to ourselves, a world before greed, before man cut open the earth for rare metals to kill each other
 - Silver Age: long youth that was happy, but they became violent and foolish and they were hidden under the earth
 - Bronze Age: men were warlike and fierce
 - Iron Age: this is the current age, far away from the Golden Age, we've lost a sense of shame and piety, we've lost our center and our balance
 - This concept is ubiquitous, that we are falling away.
- Hesiod adds a fifth age between the Bronze and Iron, and he calls it the age of heroes. There is almost a rebirth of the Golden Age with soldiers who fight for honor. This is when basically all of Greek mythology takes place (1500 BC – 1150 BC).
 - The Trojan War is the end of the Golden Age.
 - Every Greek tragedy takes place during that Golden Age, except a play about the Persian War, which is written as though the Persian war is taken place in a mythic Golden Age.

Perseus

- Perseus is the son of Zeus.
- Acrisios heard a prophecy that Danae will give birth to a child who will kill him, so he locks Danae in a tower.
- Zeus transforms himself into a shower of gold and impregnates Danae. Perseus is his child.
- Acrisios takes Danae and Perseus and locks them in a coffin and sets it adrift. Danae and Perseus are rescued by Dictus, who raises Perseus as his son.



- Perseus fits the archetype of the foundling. All the foundlings are usually children of royal/aristocratic birth and are raised by the poor/common people until they grow up and step into their destiny.
 - Why is this so persistent? All of this points to Jesus Christ, son of God raised by a poor carpenter until he steps into his messianic destiny.
 - All of the foundlings are messianic and they set things right.
- Polydectes wants to marry
- Polydectes sends Perseus to do something that will surely get him killed so that Polydectes won't be responsible. Polydectes sends Perseus to get the head of Medusa.
- Zeus, Hermes, and Athena gives Perseus gifts:
 - Helmet to cause you to be invisible
 - Shield that is impenetrable and is shiny inside
 - Bag that grows or shrinks whatever is needed to fit
 - Sword so strong it can cut through stone
 - Winged slippers with which he can fly
 - We are told by Paul in Ephesians to put on the full armor of God.
- How do you kill Medusa if you are turned to stone by looking at her? He uses his gifts and kills Medusa and bags her head which closes around her.
- When Perseus gets back home, he turns all of his enemies to stone.
- Perseus later kills Acrisios in the stands at a discus throwing match.
- Perseus sees Andromeda who was chained to a rock to be fed to a fearsome sea creature. Perseus immediately falls in love with her. Perseus kills the sea monster.
- Perseus takes Andromeda and builds Mycenae.
- Eventually, Perseus took the head of Medusa to Athena, who put the head on her shield that she uses to terrify her enemies.