



Myth Made Fact with Dr. Louis Markos

Lesson 9: Theseus

Outline:

Theseus

- Theseus fits with what is called the archetype of the foundling.
- Theseus is more of a legend than a myth. Theseus is a legendary king of Athens.
- Plutarch was a great Greek historian who tells parallel stories of Greeks and Romans. Theseus is compared to Romulus.
- Theseus grows up in the country side, but when it is time to move into his destiny he is ready to take this on.
- Aegeus (father of Theseus) laid down a task. He took a sword and a pair of sandals and put them under a stone. Only when Theseus was strong enough to roll away the stone and take the sandals and sword was he ready for his destiny.
- On the way to Athens, Theseus cleans up the road of those who prey on the weak.
- Both Theseus and Hercules are beast slayers. In killing the beast and cleaning out the roads they are about to make civilization possible.
 - Theseus killed Procrustes.
- Athens is in trouble.
 - In Phoenicia, the king has a beautiful daughter named Europa. Zeus fell in love with Europa. Zeus comes in the form of a beautiful milk white bull.
 - Europa jumps on the back of the bull and the bull swims to Crete.
 - Europa gives birth the King Minos. We call his age the Minoan civilization.
 - Poseidon sends King Minos a beautiful bull from the sea, and he was to sacrifice the bull. Poseidon was angered. The gods filled Minos' wife with passion for the bull.
 - She gave birth to the Minotaur, half man and half bull.
 - King Minos hires Daedalus to imprison the Minotaur.
 - Minos imprisons Daedalus and Icarus in the labyrinth. The only way to escape is by air. Icarus is told to take a middle course (not too high or too low). Icarus flew too low and then too high and the wax on feathers melted and he drown.
 - Greek mythology can teach the roots of virtue. At the root of virtue is what Aristotle called the golden mean. Don't go to one extreme or another.



- God gives us rules so we won't self-destruct when we lose the middle path of virtue.
- Minos sent his son to visit Athens, and his son dies in an accident. Minos blamed the Athenians. He said to Aegeus that every 9 years 7 youths and 7 maidens must be sent and sacrificed to the Minotaur in place of his son.
- On the third round, Theseus appeared. Theseus agrees to go along to destroy the Minotaur and save the people.
 - Theseus is a messianic figure.
- Ariadne shows Theseus how to navigate the labyrinth. She helps Theseus sneak in a string and sword.
- On his way back home Theseus abandons Ariadne. Dionysus marries Ariadne, as a good savior. Theseus is a bad savior.
- Before he left Athens, his father directed Theseus to fly a white sail if he has survived. Theseus forgot to change the sails. His father sees the black sails and he flings himself into the Aegean and dies.
- Theseus is a noble king of Athens, but he is flawed.
- He conquers the Amazons, and marries the queen of the Amazons. They have a son Hippolyta.
- He abandons her and returns to Crete and marries the sister of Ariadne. Her name was Phaedra. Phaedra, Theseus, and Hippolyta live together.
- The gods fill Phaedra with an unholy desire to sleep with Hippolyta.
 - A play by Euripides called Hippolytus tells the story about the end of Theseus.
 - At the core of the play is the problem that Hippolytus is a good and noble young man and a devotee of Artemis.
 - When Phaedra makes her advances, Hippolytus is horrified. Phaedra kills herself. She leaves a suicide note that says she killed herself because Hippolytus tried to rape her.
 - Theseus puts a curse on his son. The curse causes a bull from the sea to charge at Hippolytus and his horses trample him.
 - He tells Theseus that he is innocent.
 - Hippolytus is killed by a bull from the sea. Theseus the beast slayer ends up being destroyed by a beast.
- Don't make the mistake of Theseus. Don't give in to disordered desires. Keep the center track.