

Greek Creation Myth

In the beginning, there was formless confusion of Chaos brooded over the unbroken darkness. Then out of the void appeared Erebus, the unknowable place where death dwells, and Night (Nyx). All else was empty, silent, endless, darkness. Then somehow Love (Eros) was born bringing a start of order. From Love came Light and Day. Once there was Light and Day, Gaea, the earth appeared.

Gaea alone gave birth to Uranus, the god of the heavens. Uranus became Gaea's mate. Together they produced the three Cyclopes, the three Hecatoncheires, and twelve Titans.

But, Uranus was a bad father and husband. He hated the Hecatoncheires. He imprisoned them by pushing them into the hidden places of the earth, Gaea's womb. This angered Gaea and she plotted against Uranus. She made a flint sickle and tried to get her children to attack Uranus. All were too afraid except, the youngest Titan, Cronus.

Gaea and Cronus set up an ambush of Uranus as he lay with Gaea at night. Cronus grabbed his father and castrated him, with the stone sickle, throwing the severed genitals into the ocean. The fate of Uranus is not clear. He either died, withdrew from the earth, or exiled himself to Italy. As he departed, he promised that Cronus and the Titans would be punished. From his spilt blood came the Giants, the Ash Tree Nymphs, and the Erinyes. From the sea foam where his genitals fell came Aphrodite.

Cronus became the next ruler. He imprisoned the Cyclopes and the Hecatoncheires in Tartarus. He married his sister Rhea, and under his rule the Titans had many offspring. He ruled for many ages. However, Gaea and Uranus both had prophesied that he would be overthrown by a son. To avoid this Cronus swallowed each of his children as they were born. Rhea was angry at the treatment of the children and plotted against Cronus. When it came time to give birth to her sixth child, Rhea tricked Cronus. She secretly carried the child to Crete and then wrapped a stone in swaddling cloths. Cronus, thinking it was a baby, ate the stone.

The child was Zeus. He grew into a handsome youth on Crete. He consulted Metis on how to defeat Cronus. She prepared a drink for Cronus which would force him to vomit up the five other children. Rhea convinced Cronus to accept his son and Zeus was allowed to return to Mount Olympus as Cronus's cupbearer. This gave Zeus the opportunity to slip Cronus the specially prepared drink. This worked as planned and the other five children were vomited up. Being gods they were unharmed. They were thankful to Zeus and made him their leader.

Cronus was yet to be defeated. He and the Titans, except Prometheus, Epimetheus, and Oceanus, fought to retain their power. Atlas became their leader in battle and it looked for some time as though they would win and put the young gods down. However, Zeus was had other plans. He went down to Tartarus and freed the Cyclopes and the Hecatoncheires. Prometheus joined Zeus as well. He returned to battle with his new allies. The Cyclopes provided Zeus with lighting bolts for weapons. The Hecatoncheires he set in ambush armed with boulders. When the time was right, Zeus retreated drawing the Titans into the Hecatoncheires's ambush. The Hecatoncheires

rained down hundreds of boulders with such a fury the Titans thought the mountains were falling on them. They broke and ran giving Zeus victory.

Zeus exiled the Titans who had fought against him into Tartarus. All except for Atlas, who was singled out for the special punishment of holding the world on his shoulders.

However, even after this victory Zeus was not safe. Gaea, angry that her children had been imprisoned, gave birth to a last offspring, Typhoeus. Typhoeus was a creature more terrible than any that had gone before. However, Zeus, having learned to control thunder and lightning stuck Typhoeus down. Typhoeus was buried under Mount Etna in Sicily.

Much later a final challenge to Zeus rule was made by the Giants. They went so far as to attempt to invade Mount Olympus, piling mountain upon mountain in an effort to reach the top. But, the gods had grown strong and with the help of Hercules, the Giants were subdued or killed.

Now, the world, having been cleared of all the monsters, was ready for mankind. Prometheus and Epimetheus were spared imprisonment in Tartarus because they did not fight with their fellow Titans during the war with the Olympians. They were given the task of creating man. Epimetheus was in charge of the task of giving the creatures of the earth their various qualities, such as swiftness, cunning, strength, fur, wings. Unfortunately, by the time he got to man Epimetheus had given all the good qualities out and there were none left for man. So he turned to Prometheus for help. Prometheus took over the task of creation and sought a way to make man superior. He made man stand upright like the the gods did and gave them fire.

Prometheus loved man more than the Olympians, who had banished most of his family to Tartarus. Because of Prometheus' love of man, Zeus created women. So when Zeus decreed that man must present a portion of each animal they sacrificed to the gods, Prometheus decided to trick Zeus. He created two piles, one with the bones wrapped in juicy fat, the other with the good meat hidden in the hide. He then made Zeus pick one pile. Zeus picked the bones. Since he had given his word, Zeus had to accept that as his share for future sacrifices. In his anger over the trick, he took fire away from man. However, Prometheus lit a torch from the sun and brought it back again to man. Zeus was enraged that man again had fire. He decided to inflict a terrible punishment on both man and Prometheus.

To punish man, Zeus had Hephaestus create a mortal of stunning beauty. The gods gave the mortal many gifts of wealth. This creation was Pandora, the first woman. A final gift was a jar which Pandora was forbidden to open. When she was completed, Zeus sent her to Epimetheus.

Prometheus had warned Epimetheus not to accept gifts from Zeus but, Pandora's beauty was too great and he allowed her to stay. Eventually, Pandora's curiosity about the jar she was forbidden to open became too great. She opened the jar and out flew plagues, sorrow and mischief for mankind. However, the bottom of the jar held one good thing - Hope. It was the only good thing in the jar and remains to this day mankind's sole comfort in misfortune.

However, a greater punishment lay in store for Prometheus. Zeus had his servants, Force and Violence, seize Prometheus, take him to Caucasus, and chain him to a rock with unbreakable

adamanite chains. Here he was tormented day and night Zeus gave Prometheus two ways out of this torment. He could tell Zeus who the mother of the child that would dethrone him was. Or meet two conditions: First, that an immortal must volunteer to die for Prometheus. Second, that a mortal must kill the eagle and unchain him. Eventually, Chiron the Centaur agreed to die for him and Hercules killed the eagle and unbound him.

Prometheus name has stood through the centuries, from Greek days to our own as the great rebel against injustice and authority of power.