



Historically Speaking

Volume 2, Number 12 December 2023

Olympian Zeus

Zeus

Roman names: Jupiter and Jove

Zeus, though the youngest of the children of Cronos and Rhea, became the chief Olympian and Lord of the Sky. He was therefore frequently referred to as the Cloud-Gatherer. The thunderbolt was his weapon (made for him by the cyclops). He was the most powerful of all of the gods, and even brags in the Iliad that, "If a golden rope were fastened to his realm, all of the gods and goddesses together could not pull him down."

Yet (like all of the other gods and goddesses of the ancient Greeks) he was not omnipotent or omniscient. He could be opposed and he could be deceived, and this was demonstrated several times in the myths.

He is the protector of guests, and this plays a significant role in the myths. His sacred tree was the oak and the eagle was his sacred bird. He is often associated with bulls, but so was his brother, Poseidon. The sacred oracle of Zeus was in Dodona, the land of the oaks. His priests there interpreted his words from the rustling of the oak leaves. He had a sacred breastplate called the Aegis which was made for him by Hephaestus, though he allowed his daughter, Athena, to be the wearer of the Aegis.

He is the father of many of the heroes of Greek mythology.



The mighty oak tree is sacred to mighty Zeus.



2023 NANOWRIMO

As I am preparing this issue of Historically Speaking, I am half way through the month of November, the National Novel Writing Month. I have two books in process and one of them is NOT a novel, it is a hybrid; part memoir and part treatise on the science and art of teaching and learning. The working title is TO TEACH. The other project is a novel with the working title of AMON. It takes place around 700 BCE starting in Thebes, Egypt and I don't know where it will wind up going. Between the two I have 24,150 words so far. The goal is 50,000 for the month.

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From Hesiod's "Theogony:"

“But Rhea was subject in love to Kronos and bore splendid children, Hestia, Demeter, and gold-shod Hera and strong Hades, pitiless in heart, who dwells under the earth, and the loud-crashing Earth-Shaker, and wise Zeus, father of gods and men, by whose thunder the wide earth is shaken. These great Kronos swallowed as each came forth from the womb to his mother’s knees with this intent, that no other of the proud sons of Heaven should hold the kingly office amongst the deathless gods. For he learned from Earth and starry Heaven that he was destined to be overcome by his own son, strong though he was, through the contriving of great Zeus. Therefore he kept no blind outlook, but watched and swallowed down his children: and unceasing grief seized Rhea. But when she was about to bear Zeus, the father of gods and men, then she besought her own dear parents, Earth and starry Heaven, to devise some plan with her that the birth of her dear child might be concealed, and that retribution might overtake great, crafty Kronos for his own father and also for the children whom he had swallowed down. And they readily heard and obeyed their dear daughter, and told her all that was destined to happen touching Kronos the king and his stout-hearted son. So they sent her to Lyctus, to the rich land of Crete, when she was ready to bear great Zeus, the youngest of her children. Him did vast Earth receive from Rhea in wide Crete to nourish and to bring up. To that place came Earth carrying him swiftly through the black night to Lyctus first, and took him in her arms and hid him in a remote cave beneath the secret places of the holy earth on thick-wooded Mount Aegaeum; but to the mightily ruling son of Heaven, the earlier king of the gods, she gave a great stone wrapped in swaddling clothes. Then he took it in his hands and thrust it down into his belly: wretch! He knew not in his heart that in place of the stone his son

was left behind, unconquered and untroubled, and that he was soon to overcome him by force and might and drive him from his honors, himself to reign over the deathless gods.

After that, the strength and glorious limbs of the prince increased quickly, and as the years rolled on, great Kronos the wily was beguiled by the deep suggestions of Earth, and brought up again his offspring, vanquished by the arts and might of his own son, and he vomited up first the stone which he had swallowed last. And Zeus set it fast in the wide-pathed earth at goodly Pytho under the glens of Parnassus, to be a sign thenceforth and a marvel to mortal men. And he set free from their deadly bonds the brothers of his father, sons of Heaven whom his father in his foolishness had bound. And they remembered to be grateful to him for his kindness, and gave him thunder and the glowing thunderbolt and lightning: for before that, huge Earth had hidden these. In them he trusts and rules over mortals and immortals.”

With that, Zeus became the new chief god and the ruling class of gods once again changed. The Titans were replaced by the Olympians; Zeus, his brothers and sisters and some of the children of Zeus and his siblings.



The Aegis was the breastplate (shield) of Zeus.



The thunderbolt was the weapon of Zeus.



The most majestic of birds, the eagle, was sacred to Zeus.