

The *Theogony* of Hesiod

Lines 453-506 – Kronos and Rhea’s Offspring – Zeus the Conqueror

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“Let him hear the advice of Hesiod. . . . The advice of Hesiod is good.” —Aristotle

“Lampon . . . greatly honors the sayings of Hesiod, the one he declares and recommends to his sons.”
—Pindar

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Kronos and Rhea’s Offspring – Zeus the Conqueror

Lines 453-506

Reading 6

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This reading comes from the Cave’s
The Best of Hesiod’s Theogony & Works and Days
(where it appears as chapter eight).

AND RHEA WAS overpowered and conquered by Kronos and brought into the world glorious children: Hestia, Demeter, and golden-sandaled Hera, and strong Hades, who dwells in a house beneath the earth and has a pitiless, merciless heart, and the loud-sounding Earth-shaker, Poseidon, and Zeus, who is wise in counsel, the father of gods and men—the wide earth shakes beneath his thunder.

And great Kronos swallowed these down when each child emerged [460] from the mother’s holy womb and moved toward her knees.

His intention was to prevent the other illustrious

sky-dwelling gods from holding the honor of kingship among the immortals. The reason? He had overheard Earth and starry Sky talking. They said that even though he was mighty, he was nevertheless fated to be overpowered and conquered by his own son, by means of Zeus’ great will and plans. Consequently, his vigilance was not blind. Rather, he kept an open eye on what was happening and swallowed down his children.

But an insufferable grief seized Rhea. Therefore, right when she was about to bring Zeus into the world—Zeus, the father of gods and men—she

implored [470] her own dear parents, Earth and the starry Sky, to contrive some plan with her, a scheme that would help her give birth to her dear son without being noticed. And more. She begged she could make him pay, that retribution through the Furies (Erinyes) might overtake great Kronos, the one whose counsels are crooked, for what he did to his own father and for swallowing his own children.

Earth and Sky readily heard their dear daughter and were persuaded by her. And they showed her everything that was fated to happen regarding Kronos the king and his mighty-spirited son. Then they sent her to Lyktos, to the rich land of Crete, when she was ready to bring into the world the youngest of her children, great Zeus. And huge Earth received him there [480] on broad Crete to nourish and raise him.

There on Crete, Rhea came first to Lyktos, quickly carrying him through the dark of night. She took him in her hands and hid him in an enormous cave deep in the depths of the sacred earth on the densely wooded Mount Aegean.

Then she wrapped a great stone in swaddling clothes, and she gave it to Sky's son, to the great ruler, the king of all the older gods. Right then he snatched the stone up into his hands and thrust it down into his belly—the reckless, merciless, wretched one!

He didn't observe and understand in his mind and heart that his son, unconquered and untroubled, [490] had been swapped with the stone, and that his son was destined to quickly overpower and conquer him by the strength of his hands and drive him out from his honor-portion. Then he would rule among the immortals.

As the lord's might and glorious limbs grew swiftly, and as the seasons of the year turned full around, great Kronos, the one whose counsels are crooked, was tricked by Earth's clever suggestions to free his offspring again. Then Kronos was vanquished by the skill and strength of his own son. First he vomited up the stone—the thing he had swallowed last. And down upon the broad-pathed earth Zeus set up the stone in most holy Pytho under the hollows of Parnassus, [500] to be a sign from that time forward, a wonder for mortal men to behold.

And he freed his father's brothers from the destructive bonds, Sky's sons (*the Cyclopes*), the ones the father had imprisoned in his folly. They returned thanks for his kindness, giving him thunder and the smoky thunderbolt and flashing lightning that huge Earth had earlier covered over. Relying on these, Zeus rules over mortals and immortals.

So ends Reading 6, "Kronos and Rhea's Offspring – Zeus the Conqueror." **See you in Reading 7, "Iapetos and Klymene's Offspring – Prometheus Tricks Zeus."**



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