

The *Theogony* of Hesiod

Lines 562-616 – Zeus Punishes Mortal Men – Fire and the First Woman

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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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Lines 562-616

Reading 8

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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 ten).

AND FROM THAT moment on, Zeus always remembered Prometheus' tricky deception. Consequently, he did not grant the power and might of untiring fire to the Melian ash trees so that mortal men who dwell upon the earth would have it.

Nevertheless, the noble son of Iapetos deceived him and stole the far-seen light of untiring fire in a hollow fennel stalk.

High-thundering Zeus was stung deep in his spirit at this, and his dear heart was provoked to anger when he saw the far-seen light of fire among human beings. [570] At once, then, he made a misfortune for humans that would serve as the price to

counterbalance fire's good.

By the designs of Kronos' son Zeus, the glorious god Hephaestus, the one with two disabled feet, formed out of earth the likeness of a highly regarded, demure young maiden.

And the goddess bright-eyed Athena dressed her in a silvery white dress, arranging its folds, and down from her head she spread with her hands an embroidered veil, a wonder to behold. And around her head Pallas Athena set a lovely wreath of newly blossoming flowers and fresh greens. Above these she set a crown of gold upon her head, one made by the glorious god himself, the one with two disabled feet.

[580] Hephaestus worked on the crown with his own hands as a favor to his father, Zeus. And upon it he fixed many clever embellishments, each one a wonder to behold. He put many wild creatures on the crown, creatures that are nourished by land and sea, wonderful things that are like living beings with voices. And great beauty shone out from the crown.

Then, when he had made this beautiful misfortune to offset the good of fire, and while the young maiden exulted in the arrangement of Zeus' bright-eyed daughter, he led her out to the place where the other gods and human beings were. And the immortal gods and mortal human beings were seized by wonder when they saw the profound deception against which humans are powerless.

[590] For from her comes womankind, those who are female. From her come the destructive race and tribe of women, who are a great misery for mortals when women dwell among men. They are no companions when it comes to destructive poverty—only when there is enough to satisfy.

Women are like drones. While the worker bees in thatched hives feed the drones, they do nothing but harm. All day long until the sun goes down, and every day, the bees are busy making white honeycombs while the drones stay in the sheltered beehives

and reap the toil of others into their own bellies. [600] This is how high-thundering Zeus made women to be a misfortune for mortal men, to be partners in troublesome works.

Zeus gave another misfortune to counterbalance the good of fire. Whoever flees marriage and the mischievous ways of women—that is, the man who doesn't want to take a wife—that man comes to destructive old age without anyone to care for him. And even though he may have everything he needs to live while alive, distant kinsmen divide up the heirless man's property and possessions after he dies. Then again, even the man who takes on the portion of marriage and possesses a diligent wife, one with her thoughts together, even for him will bad things continually match themselves with good things through the years. [610] He who partakes of this baneful offspring lives while bearing the weight of ongoing trouble and sorrow deep within his spirit and heart—his misfortune is beyond remedy.

So it is not possible to cheat Zeus or to evade the notice of his mind. For not even the son of Iapetos, the deliverer Prometheus, escaped his onerous wrath, but by the force of necessity a great bond imprisons him even though he shrewdly knows much.

So ends Reading 8, "Zeus Punishes Mortal Men – Fire and the First Woman." **See you in Reading 9, "The Titanomachy – Zeus Battles the Titans."**



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