

*Roma die uno non aedificata est.*¹

Literature 1



The Gift of the Gods and The Founding of Rome

We will be reading our way through the mythological past of Rome and Greece in this course.

1 Greece

Read: “Two Gifts from the Gods, and What Came of Them.” You will find it on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive in Volume 3, Classics, Legends of Greece and Rome by G. H. Kupfer, no 2.

In this story you meet the gods Jupiter or Jove (Ζεύς, Zeus), Vulcan (Ἡφαιστος, Hephaistos), and Mercury (Ἑρμῆς, Hermes) and the humans Pandora (Πανδώρα) and Epimetheus (Ἐπιμηθεύς). Pygmalion (Πυγμαλίων, Pygmalíōn) is also mentioned and this is a separate story:

Pygmalion was sculptor who carved a woman out of ivory. His statue was so beautiful and realistic that he fell in love with it. Aphrodite, goddess of love had a festival day, and Pygmalion too scared to admit his desire, quietly asked for a bride who would be “the living likeness of my ivory girl,” at her altar. When he returned home, he kissed his ivory statue, and found that its lips felt warm. He kissed it again, and found that the ivory had lost its hardness. Aphrodite had granted Pygmalion's wish. Pygmalion married the ivory sculpture which had changed to a woman under Aphrodite's blessing.

Ancient Greek mythology is fascinating if you bear in mind as you read it that it is a twisting of the truth. You are constantly reminded of Eve, Adam, the curse, the garden of Eden, the Serpent – but something has gone terribly wrong with the stories. The reason for this is the basis of Greek thought. It seems that whoever wove the myths considered that when the serpent offered Eve the fruit he was acting as the true enlightener of humanity. In the Bible we read that Adam's son Cain was a murderer and on the Devil's side (1 John 3 verse 12) but his younger brother Seth was on God's side. The flood destroyed all Cain's evil works leaving only Noah (a descendant of Seth) and his family. It has been argued that the whole Greek religious system was a celebration of the re-establishment of the philosophy or religion of Cain after its destruction during the flood of Noah's day.² Whether or not this is exactly the case it is very clear that there are distorted echoes of Genesis in Greek myths which point to the handing down of this twisted view of history by Noah's

¹ Rome was not built in a day.

² See https://creation.com/images/pdfs/tj/j17_3/j17_3_85-92.pdf

descendants. Certainly it seems self evident that the Greek gods were developed out of the ancestors of the Greek people and those ancestors stretch right back through Noah to Adam himself. This week's story tells how the Greeks explained how sorrow entered the world. You could make a list of the elements of the story which correspond to the truth as we have it in Genesis, noting how the truth is twisted. The answers I came up with are on the last page of this exercise.

2 Rome

Read "The building of Rome." You will find it on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive in Volume 4, "Stories from the History of Rome" no.1.

If you have a synchronological chart you will find a picture of Romulus and Remus and the she wolf that will help to place this legendary event in a historical time frame. Roman history is well covered on the Synchronological Chart. Get into the habit of looking on it each week as many of the stories we are covering can be found on it.



Suggested answers:

Evil comes upon humanity through the actions of a woman.

The story is twisted so that the gift of woman is given with the intention of bringing sorrow.

There is a warning. Just as Adam and Eve were warned about the tree, Epimethius has been warned not to accept a gift from heaven because it will bring "woe." Note how the story twists the element of rebellion into receiving a gift "from heaven."

There is "hope" at the end of the story but it is a counterfeit hope. It is a hope just in hope itself which is ultimately a hope in nothing. In the true story in Genesis the hope is stated in Genesis 3 verse 1. Here the first hint is given of a Saviour from sin who will provide a way of escape from the curse of sin.