

The Time of Greed Two: Deucalion

(Time – 5:06)

Zeus returned to Olympus. He pondered the bedlam below. Fire? No: too fickle. One wind-borne leaf could turn Olympus into a pyre. Flood? Yes: flood. He called his brother, the king of the tumbling wave, Poseidon. The sea-god donned a helmet of black cloud, wrapped himself in a billowing cloak, lifted his trident and struck the earth.

The sky vomited, the world cracked and broke open. Every hidden spring burst forth, leapt to the light. Heaving walls of water crashed into city and town and village. Roads became rivers, fields became lakes. Any home that was not swept away was submerged in silence. The people tried to run – but where? They were ambushed from above and below. They scrambled up mountains, hills, trees, and watched the waters rise relentlessly about them. One by one they gave up their grip on life.

Zeus chose to save only one man and one woman. His name was Deucalion, hers Pyrrha. Their raft was tossed by the deluge, climbed white-crested mountains, sank into deep valleys. Then Poseidon blew his conch. With one sudden gesture he tore apart the clouds, banished the winds. Clear calm came.

With the light, Deucalion and Pyrrha saw wonders below them. They floated over cities; once-proud towers beneath them now, cloaked in weed; smiling dolphins in apple orchards; flickering fish passing through windows into bedrooms, kitchens. All about them were the corpses of men, women, children, beasts, birds, bobbing lifeless as leaves.

‘Look!’ Pyrrha pointed: two peaks, the glistening summits of Mount Parnassus. Husband and wife scrambled ashore, gave thanks to mighty Zeus, kissed the rocky slope. The rivers, the streams shrank back to their beds. Mother Earth was healed, pure again. The corruption of humanity had been swept away.

Deucalion and his wife washed off the brine in a stream of fresh water. Once they were clean, they prayed to Zeus: ‘Great cloud-compeller, you saved us. You must have some task in mind for us. Tell us your purpose.’

Zeus’ herald, bright Hermes, appeared before them. They shielded their eyes. ‘Descend the mountain. As you walk, throw the bones of your mother behind you.’ And he was gone.

‘Our mother’s bones are scattered,’ said Deucalion. ‘Everything, everything we had is lost.’

Pyrrha knelt, pushed her hands into the ground. ‘This is our mother.’ She pulled out a muddy stone. ‘These are her bones.’

As she descended the hill she threw stones over her shoulder and Deucalion behind her saw the damp earth become flesh; the stone, bone. He followed suit. His stones became men, hers women. The seams, the streaks of colour in the rock, became veins. This is why we are so strong, why we can dig, carry, toil for so long. We are the children of stones.