

EPISODE 12 – Odysseus takes charge

CD 3 tracks 5-7

total running time: 13:51

Odysseus' big idea (⊕ 4:29)

Next day, no sign of mother or son in the Greek camp. King Odysseus called a meeting in the gathering place. He said, "He is dead. If he, Achilles, could not breach these walls, if the greatest warrior in the greatest army in the history of the world could not break down these walls, then force of arms never will!

5 "I have a plan. Years ago, when we Greek kings first heard of Helen's beauty, we gathered in the palace of her foster father in the hope that we could win her hand. He slaughtered a stallion before us, laid out the severed pieces across the floor and made each of us stand upon a piece of that stallion and swear that, when Helen made her choice, we would accept it. And, if ever she was stolen from her husband, we would come to his aid. And so this business will
10 end just the way it began."

The next morning, Odysseus' men set to work. They cut down trees and, with the wood of those trees, they carved. They carved great legs, great flanks, a long neck, a mane, a long head, a tail. They set it on a huge platform. Then Odysseus and six of the bravest of his men climbed into the belly of it and a secret trap door was closed behind them. The whole thing was
15 painted black. Golden words painted along the side. Then the men outside burned the whole camp, the palisade, the huts. Then they dragged their ships down to the sea and sailed out of sight of the city of Troy.

The next morning, as the dawn took her golden throne, the people of Troy, from the walls, from the turrets, from the towers, they saw that the Greeks were gone. The Greek ships had
20 disappeared. Where the camp had been there was smoke rising up into the blue sky. They looked at one another. They said "Achilles is dead and now the Greeks have gone! The Greeks have gone home! The war is over!"

They rubbed their eyes. They looked again. And, in the smoke, there was something else dark against the blue waves of the sea. It was a horse, an enormous horse. The great bronze
25 Scaean gates were thrown open. The people of Troy poured across the plain to the seashore. They made their way between the burning fires and there was the great horse, stretching high above them. They walked around it, staring at it, amazed. There were letters written in gold, 'a gift for the goddess Athene'.

And the priests and the wise men, they looked at one another and they said, "We must take
30 the horse into the city. We must set it in front of the temple to Athene, the goddess of war and wisdom, and then we will have a celebration. The war is over at last!"

And the people of Troy lifted the great platform up onto their shoulders. They carried the horse across the plain, through the gates, into the city. They set it outside the great temple of Athene. And then trestle tables were loaded with food and the people of Troy sat down and they ate
35 and they drank and they drank and they ate, until their bellies were hanging over their belts,

until their heads were swimming with wine. And then they went to their beds and they lay down and they fell into the sweet, oblivious balm of sleep.

***A couple reunited* (☉ 4:34)**

When even the dogs were asleep, the belly of the wooden horse swung open and down tumbled a rope ladder. And down that ladder climbed Odysseus and his six men. And they crept from shadow to shadow to the bronze Scaean gates. They slit the throats of the guards who slept there and then they opened up the gates of Troy from the inside.

5 Meanwhile the rest of the Greek fleet had sailed back from where they'd been hiding. They sailed back under cover of darkness. And the ships, they reached the beach, and the armies poured forth over the battlefield and into Troy. And, every time they found a house, they put it to the torch.

And, running through the burning street Menelaus, red-haired Menelaus, king of Sparta,
10 running this way and that way, until he found the palace of Paris. He threw open the doors; he cut the throats of the servants who tried to block his way; he ran up the stairs, pushed open the door of the bedchamber.

And there was Paris, lying asleep in Helen's arms. Menelaus lifted his spear above his shoulder and, with all the strength of both arms, he brought the point of it down. And the
15 blood spread out across the sheet. And high overhead, Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was watching. And, as she saw Paris die, she remembered that beautiful youth, that beautiful young man on the slopes of Mount Ida, all those years before. She remembered beautiful Paris choosing her.

And high overhead, Hera, queen of heaven, Athene, the goddess of war and wisdom, looked
20 down at the blood welling out over the sheets. And they remembered the moment that Paris had chosen Aphrodite over them. And Aphrodite looked down and she saw Helen. She saw Helen waking up and she took pity on her. And, with one gesture of her hand, she drew the arrow, the invisible arrow, from Helen's heart, as though she was pulling the thorn out of a foot. Helen awoke then, as though from some dream. She slid her hand across the bed. Blood! The
25 blood of Paris! Paris was dead!

She felt nothing. She looked up. There was her husband, red-haired Menelaus, his face a mask of hate. She stood up. She stretched out her hands towards him and, as he looked into her face for the first time in ten years, all his hatred, all his resentment melted into love and longing for her. And they fell into each other's arms and the beauty returned to Menelaus' skin.
30 And Agamemnon, the high king of all the Greeks, ran through the blazing city, until he came to the palace of Priam. He ran up the stairs, he pushed open the door of the bedchamber. And there was the old king, the white-bearded father of Troy, lying asleep on his bed. Agamemnon seized the head in his arm, as though he was holding a sheaf of wheat. And he drew his sword

across the throat, as though he was cutting through dry stalks of corn. And he threw the blood-
35 dripping head down onto the floor.

And, from high high overhead, golden Apollo looked down at the dead king and he remembered the founding of the city of Troy, the city that he loved the best of all. And he remembered the gifts and the offerings that old Priam had made to him.

Outside Odysseus was running back and forth through the streets, shouting at his men. They
40 had gone mad. They had gone wild with the desire for revenge. Odysseus shouted at them as they dragged Hector's wife, Andromache, up onto the walls of Troy, as they wrenched from her grasp her baby boy, and threw the baby from the walls of the city into the darkness and down onto the rocks below.

The gods have the last word (☉ 4:48)

And from high overhead, great Zeus, the cloud-compeller, looked down, he looked down at the shattered baby on the rocks. And he remembered Astyanax in Hector's arms; he remembered the baby weeping and laughing. And, if I could sing, I would sing of the mighty gods and goddesses standing, staring, looking down at the city as it burned. And those gods and
5 goddesses, who had enjoyed every twist and turn of the battlefield, stared now, appalled. And they began to tremble with fury!

Zeus, father of the gods, loosed a sheaf of thunderbolts. Each one struck a turret or a tower, and the turrets and the towers came toppling down onto the Greeks. The god of the sea, Poseidon, clapped his hands. There was an earthquake then. Great cracks appeared in the
10 city streets. The city began to collapse in on itself.

And through the blazing, crumbling city, Greek soldiers were dragging women as slaves. They were dragging them by their hair through the streets, slippery with blood. They were dragging Andromache, Polyxena. And old queen Hecuba was dragged through the great bronze Scaean gates. And, as the old queen was dragged through the gates, she turned and she saw the city
15 blazing, like a burning torch with red flames and yellow flames like flickering snakes, rising up into the sky. And, in that moment, she remembered her dream and she knew that her dream had come true.

If I could sing, I would sing of how the Greeks ran across the battlefield, cowering from the gods' fury. They clambered aboard their ships and they set off out across the boiling sea.

20 And the weeks passed and the months passed and the years passed. And, if I could sing, I would sing of the mighty gods looking down from the high slopes of Mount Olympus. And all they could see where the city had once stood was a pile of rubble, shattered marble, shattered granite, scorched timbers jutting out of stone. And down there, on the soft grass, they saw a horse's skull, bleached white by the sun, crawling with black ants. And at the edge of one of
25 the rivers there was a reed, and around the stem of the reed was a golden ring in the shape of an arrow, whose sharp point touched its feathered tail. And down here, by this mossy stone,

there was a golden helmet. And inside the golden helmet, a field mouse had made a soft nest of human hair.

And then Eris, the goddess of strife and arguing said, "Just think! All of this because of one
30 golden apple!" And Aphrodite took the apple from her pocket, stared at it and said nothing.