

A main idea of zeus' plan in the iliad

Religion



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The Plan of Zeus

In the Iliad, we see the huge impact the gods make on the development of events, especially regarding the life of Achilles. The biggest impact is made by Zeus and his supreme plan which dictates what the other divinities can or cannot do. What is Zeus' plan in the story? Zeus' plan, in the Iliad, is to restore Achilles' honor but to bring this about in a certain way. Zeus sees that Achilles looks on himself as godlike in nature; this is manifested in his godlike anger against Agamemnon and later Hektor. Zeus decides to show Achilles that he is not godlike by having the death of Patroklos be a direct consequence of Achilles' lust for honor. This view is further verified by the conclusion of the Iliad.

Zeus' plan starts to form after Achilles implores Zeus, through his mother Thetis, to cause military defeats among the Achaeans so that they will plead for Achilles to come back and fight for them, thus giving Achilles back his honor. The catch with this is that even though Zeus agrees to the proposal, he sees an opportunity to put Achilles in his place. This is why Zeus has such a strong resolve for Patroklos' death. By having Patroklos die in battle against the Trojans at the hand of Hektor, Zeus effectively hits two birds with one stone. Namely, by fulfilling his promise to Thetis on Achilles' behalf and punishing Achilles at the same time.

To further show the logic behind this plan we can look at what Achilles thinks and does after Patroklos' death. First of all, Achilles' godlike anger evaporates into thin air, gone is any rage against Agamemnon. There is no room for that any longer in Achilles' heart for he is consumed with immense

grief over his beloved fallen comrade. All Achilles can think about now, in addition to his sorrow, is his burning need for revenge against the Trojans in general and Hektor in particular. While mourning for Patroklos, Achilles' mother Thetis comes to inquire the reason for his lamentation. Achilles explains that his best friend has just died, Thetis, still confused, asks him: you have honor and glory among the Achaeans now for your heroic actions, isn't this what you wanted? For Achilles, it is a bittersweet victory, he is too consumed with sorrow that he can't enjoy the honor he now possesses; keep in mind that honor is the only reason Achilles came to Ilion. In giving Achilles what he wanted most, Zeus has taken it away at the same time.

The end of the Iliad, especially the events portrayed in book 24, is a very fitting conclusion to Zeus' overarching plan. He achieves his goal completely for Zeus' plan throughout the epic is that Achilles must win back his honor but at the same time Zeus seeks to let Achilles know that he is not a god. Book 24 demonstrates the effectiveness of Zeus' plan by showing how Achilles thinks and acts after his ordeal. Gone it seems is his godlike wrath and hatred. Zeus prompts Priam to travel to the Achaean camp to ransom the body of his dead son, Hektor. The consent of Achilles to ransom the body to Priam signifies the wrath and hatred finally leaving Achilles. Achilles shows his new respect for Hektor by agreeing to a ten day truce with Troy that allows Priam enough time to put on a very grand and suitable funeral. In Addition, while Priam is begging Achilles to let him ransom Hektor's body, he tells Achilles to think of his own father and how he will never again see Achilles alive. This brings Achilles to tears and somewhat humbles him. By the end of the Iliad, Achilles seems to be at peace with himself and those

around him as well as incredibly more respectful and even tempered. He accepts life for what it is and his place in it, even though Achilles knows his death is near.

It is now clear why Patrokles' death was so vital to Zeus' plan. His plan was not merely to punish Achilles but to make him better as an individual. In fact, all the immense martial prowess and achievements of Achilles in tandem with Zeus' care of the events in the Iliad prove that Zeus actually possesses a fierce love for Achilles and cares for his wellbeing. Thus, we can see that in the end, Zeus' plan is successfully and effectively accomplished with godlike precision.