
Hercules Vs. Prometheus: Differences And Similarities

It is no secret that in most cases many of the main characters we encounter in Greek mythology share certain similarities, as well as differences to one another this idea, goes especially for Prometheus in Aeschylus' "Prometheus Bound" and Heracles from Apollodorus' "Heracles and Heraclids". At first glance, one might think that these two prominent characters are very different from one another. However, that would be only a mere surface interpretation of both characters. For instance, one similarity is that both characters suffered greatly at the hands of the gods. Prometheus was ever bound to rock tortured for an eternity by having his liver constantly picked at by an eagle as it regrows. Heracles was cursed by Hera who even went as far as to try to murder him when he was very young. She later in life made him go into a fit of madness that resulted in the death of his wife and children that resulted in him having to go through the labors. Another clear similarity is that both, Prometheus and Heracles, helped humanity. Prometheus sacrificed his freedom and body in exchange for a better life for mortals. His love for humanity outweighed his love for himself making him very selfless. He helped humanity by stealing the flame that we now know as the flame of Prometheus from Zeus giving it to humanity despite him knowing that Zeus will be outraged by his actions. Needless to say, it's no secret how significant fire is in our current society. One could even go as far as to say it is a necessary aspect of our lives to this very day.

Back in the days of old people would use fire to cook, keep warm light up the dark, etc. needless to say fire is a very important element. However, what the flame represented is infinitely more significant. As we know Prometheus's flame also represents technology as well as advancement. In his own words, he proclaims in the text that "I will tell you this, not because I would blame men, but to explain the goodwill of my gift. For men at first, had eyes but saw to no purpose; they had ears but did not hear. I will tell you this, not because I would blame men, but to explain the goodwill of my gift. For men at first, had eyes but saw to no purpose; they had ears but did not hear. Like the shapes of dreams they dragged through their long lives and handled all things in bewilderment and confusion they did not know of building houses with bricks to face the sun, they did not know how to work in wood. They lived like swarming ants in holes in the ground, in the sunless caves of the earth. Needless to say throughout Prometheus bound Prometheus is portrayed as a very intelligent being with the gift of foresight into the future. Prometheus states "oh woe is me! I groan for the present sorrow, I groan for the sorrow to come", hinting to us that he sees a bleak future. Prometheus is very fond of humanity so once he found out that Zeus intended to destroy humanity Prometheus felt obliged to help save them. Prometheus gifted humanity with great inspiration in regards to architecture, math, navigation agriculture and much more. He influenced humans so much so that one could even argue that he is the very foundation of human culture and civilization which played a major role

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in regards to humanity's development.

Similarly to Prometheus Heracles also benefited humanity but in a different way. In his journey becoming immortal Hercules benefited people too. Throughout his 12 hard-fought labor's, he defeated a great number of monsters and tyrants bringing order, justice and even a form of peace for the inhabitants. In his second labor, he defeated the Lernaean hydra who was known to frequently destroy villages, country sides and taking cattle. Hercules also killed a tyrant by the name of Bousiris, who often caught unsuspected strangers brutally sacrificing them to Zeus. Based on what we have discussed thus far we can deduce that both Prometheus, as well as Hercules, are very brave. In Prometheus's case, he is brave because he knows the past and future yet he'd fear to change doesn't fear Zeus's absolute power siding with humanity. While in contrast, Hercules demonstrated his bravery, courage, and craftiness by challenging beasts and completing his labors. Conclusively both characters are benefactors of humans and humanity as a whole.

When it comes to their differences Prometheus and Hercules are different in two key ways. First of all both Prometheus and Hercules are very different regarding their identity. Prometheus is not human, in fact, he was part of an immortal and powerful race known as the titans. Meaning he is part of an immortal race. Besides, this Prometheus was already worshiped by people while Hercules was not. Heracles is a demigod born from a union of a god and a human. In order for Hercules to be immortal, he had to go through the labors. Hercules had to go through 12 labor's in order to earn the faith and trust of the people. Only after the completion of the labors could Heracles become immortalized physically and in the eyes of the people. The second major difference between the two is how the god's attitude towards them. When Prometheus betrayed Zeus by disobeying and tricking him, Zeus punished him with little to no mercy. Although Prometheus assisted Zeus before in regards to Krone's destruction. In short its needless to say Prometheus received a much harsher punishment then he was supposed to. This is in part due to the fact that Zeus favoured other gods over Prometheus clearly demonstrating that he disliked him. The moment Prometheus betrayed Zeus he was seen as a traitor by all the other gods and goddesses resulting in him being ostracized by them.

Hercules, however, shows us another side of the gods and goddesses. Although he was greatly disliked by Hera the other gods and goddesses clearly favored him. When Hercules was young Hera tried to have him killed by sending two serpents after him. He, however, was able to kill the two serpents despite only being eight months old. Clearly for him to be able to have pulled off such a feat must not have been possible without help from Zeus. As we already well known in ancient Greece it was very important to worship the gods and to never challenge them. For if people ever did challenge and offend them the gods would often punish quickly and strictly. The punishment can also last over a span of several generations creating heretical curses. This means that the curse will be inherited by the next generation. Hercules throughout his twelve

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labor's did a number of things that would definitely offend the gods. Such as killing Aeries son Cynus who challenged Heracles to a duel. As well as slaying, not one but over four of Poseidon's sons. Needless to say, if anyone else would have done this he or she would have been greatly punished by the gods. On his third labor, Hercules even went as far as to anger Atriums yet he walked away from the encounter unscathed with Cerynitian. While when Agamemnon offended Artemus he had to sacrifice his own daughter to earn Artemus's forgiveness. In addition to this as I mentioned earlier, Hercules went as far as to even kill over four of Poseidon's sons yet Poseidon did not demand vengeance on him. Unlike Odysseus who merely blinded only one of Poseidon's sons named Polyphemus in order to escape being eaten alive. However, despite his reasoning, his actions resulted in him being cursed by Poseidon for 10 years delaying his journey home by at least a decade. Zeus would even intervene helping Hercules defending him and assuring he will not get hurt. This would make sense why Hercules was often so bold and sure of himself throughout his labors. Some of his labors were even impossible to accomplish yet he was not afraid and accomplished them. One could say that Zeus' protection is what truly made him a hero.

In summary, needless to say, what truly set the two apart were there relationships as well as their interactions with the gods. Hercules was clearly favored and loved while Prometheus was loathed and even hated by a number of gods. However, despite this key difference, they do share certain similarities. Such as both benefiting humanity in some way, shape or form. They are also both considered brave to some degree Prometheus is brave for going against Zeus despite him knowing that this will most likely result in his wrath. Hercules, on the other hand, can be considered brave for going through the infinitely difficult and even sometimes impossible labors. They also both demonstrate their craftiness as well as their ability to outwit opponents. Prometheus demonstrated this by outwitting Zeus while Hercules outwitted Atlas into assisting him with one of his "impossible labor". Hercules struck a bargain with Atlas in exchange for his assistance. Hercules agreed to carry the Earth in exchange for Atlas's help. Once the deed was done Hercules asked Atlas if he could hold the earth for a little while longer while he returns the item in order to complete the labor. Atlas then agreed and was stuck continuously holding the earth. Demonstrating his ability to outwit and trick ancient beings like Atlas. Regardless both characters definitely demonstrate the importance of worshiping and respecting the gods. Therefore demonstrating its importance in Greek society and culture. Both beings demonstrate a very different relationship with the gods. They also demonstrate a very different metaphysical relationship with the gods considering Prometheus was a titan and Hercules in a mortal demigod prior to his labors.

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