

The God of the Flies (Essay on The Lord of the Flies)

As mankind has progressed throughout history, his idea of god has changed with his domination of nature and nature's elements. When man made the transition from a Paleolithic to a Neolithic lifestyle, his mastery of nature attained a higher level because of the bow and arrow. With the bow and arrow, man could now control animals, because the bow became an extremely efficient way of dealing with animals before they could come close enough to kill. The gods of the Paleolithic tribesmen, and even gods of the first primitive civilizations were animals.

As mankind mastered the animals, however, his idea of god changed to become people, as is shown in the Greek and Roman myths. These gods, however, lived on earth and were accustomed to the same pleasures and desires and led the same lifestyle as the Greeks and Romans.

First proposed by the Hebrew prophet Isaiah, god became a higher being, as mankind had mastered something within themselves to have a need for a higher god. This first god was still immoral and like the humans, except that he could live forever and did not dwell on the same surface as the humans, but god still lived in heaven, which was thought of as a tangible place in the sky, and still was thought to be in the shape of a man.

This idea was challenged by another Hebrew prophet, Jeremiah. He was the first to convey the message that god was holy, apart from the world, and did not meddle in mortals lives. This change was brought about by the change in morality by the monotheistic Hebrews. With the ascension of David's son Solomon to the throne, the Hebrews became a very moral people. After the Hebrews had mastered temptation and sin, their god could not be an immoral being. The change in that god did not care about his people, and was above them was brought about because the Assyrians destroyed Israel. The natural reaction of the people was that their god had abandoned them.

Jeremiah was challenged by a third prophet, Jesus of Nazareth (Christ) . He taught the people to master the part of them that would think god too proud to help them. After overcoming their pride (mastering it) that was brought on by losing Jerusalem to the Romans, the Hebrews saw their God no longer as a proud man, but as a humble loving god.

In The Lord of the Flies, the change of their god, from animal to superhuman being, is reflected by their mastery of nature and nature's elements, and mankind can never be equal or above god. In the beginning, the boys' god is in the form of a snake. This is because the boys have not yet mastered animals. "He wants to know what you are to do about the snake-thing?" he said" "Tell us about the snake-thing" Ralph said" "Now he says it was a beastie"" "A snake-thing ever so big. He saw it." - Golding pg 33 "The pause was only long enough for them to realize what an enormity the downward stroke would be. The piglet tore loose from the undergrowth and scurried off. They were looking at each other with terror." -Golding pg 29 This last quote shows that, by not killing the pig, the boys did not have mastery over animals, so their god, the snake, is an animal. The boys then mastered animals and their god changed to that of a ghost. "Look! We've killed a pig! We stole up on them, got in a circle, it squealed and..." -Golding pg 62 "Perhaps that is what the beast is- a ghost" -Golding pg 81 The beast ceased to be an animal because the boys had conquered and defeated an animal, they did not believe they could defeat ghosts, however, until they found the courage to pronounce that they did not exist.

After the mastery of ghosts, the boys had not yet killed anyone, so their god changed to that of a man. "I don't believe in no ghost- not ever!" - Golding pg 82 "However he thought of the beast, there rose to his mind the image of a human" - Golding pg 93 After the boys mastered humans by killing them, the beast could no longer be something human. The beast must always be above- never equal nor below, never killable nor reachable. "Simon came running, yelling something about a dead man on a hill...The boys made a horseshoe and struck the beast again and again with their spears...as the body floated away, they saw what small a beast it was" - Golding pg 139 After the murder of Simon the boys knew that they had the power to kill man, so the beast must change to that of some thing above man. "This pig's head is a sacrifice, a gift to the beast" Jack said...The lord of the flies just sat on his stick and grinned" - Golding pg 125 The Lord of the Flies, the pig's head, was a sacrifice to the beast. The Lord of the Flies is the direct translation of the Hebrew word, Beelzebub. Thus the boys were sacrificing to an immortal godlike being, the devil, Satan, Lucifer, Moch the monarch of hell.

The boys vision of god changed as they mastered different elements of themselves. Just as the Paleolithic tribesmen and the Hebrews idea of god change as they progressed both morally and physically and could defeat more and more, they kept setting their goal of god higher than them. In the Chinese culture, for example, it was the goal of all emperors to become gods. However, with each progressive step they took, they raised their idea of god as well.