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Lore Overview

Dark Souls Lore Overview

The Lore of Dark Souls is as rich as it is complex, revealing itself through a tapestry of in-game events, worldbuilding, character interactions and item descriptions. The narrative is divided into key events in history, which include the Age of Ancients, the Age of Fire, and the age-defining choices of the player. This document provides an overview of these events, the history leading up to the player's journey, and the possible outcomes based on the player's decisions.

The Age of Ancients

The Age of Ancients was a time before disparity, when the world was unformed and shrouded by gray crags, arch-trees, and everlasting dragons. There was no distinction between life and death, warmth and cold, or light and dark. This timeless state persisted until the emergence of the First Flame within the depths of the earth. The Flame brought disparity and gave birth to concepts such as heat and cold, life and death, and most notably, Light and Dark.

The Flame also revealed powerful Souls, which were claimed by four beings:

- Gwyn, Lord of Sunlight, who wielded the power of the Sun to control lightning.
- The Witch of Izalith, who mastered fire sorcery.
- Nito, the First of the Dead, who governed death and decay.
- A being later known as the Furtive Pygmy, who discovered the Dark Soul.

With their newfound power, these beings rose against the dragons. Gwyn and his knights used lightning bolts to peel away the dragons' stone scales, while the Witch's fire sorcery engulfed them in flames. Nito unleashed miasma and death, while Seath the Scaleless, a dragon who betrayed his kin, revealed their weaknesses. This conflict marked the end of the Age of Ancients and the beginning of the Age of Fire.

The Age of Fire

The Age of Fire was ushered in by Gwyn's rule. The Lords established their dominions:

- Gwyn built the city of Anor Londo, a beacon of prosperity and power, where he ruled alongside his children and Silver Knights.
- The Witch of Izalith founded Izalith, where she continued her research into fire sorcery.
- Nito retreated to the Tomb of the Giants, presiding over the dead.

Humanity, tied to the Dark Soul inherited from the Furtive Pygmy, began to thrive in the shadow of the gods. However, as the First Flame began to wane, the Lords grew desperate. Gwyn feared the coming of the Age of Dark, which he believed would plunge the world into chaos. The Witch of Izalith attempted to recreate the First Flame using her soul, but this act resulted in catastrophe, giving birth to the **Chaos Flame** and the demons that plagued the world. Meanwhile, Gwyn decided to sacrifice himself to rekindle the Flame, prolonging the Age of Fire.

The Rise of Undeath

As the Flame continued to fade, a curse emerged among humans, branding them with the Darksign. This curse marked individuals as Undead, beings destined to return to life after death. Over time, Undead lose their sanity and become Hollow. To contain the growing threat, kingdoms like Lordran imprisoned Undead in asylums, including the player character.

The player, referred to as the Chosen Undead, escapes their confinement and embarks on a journey to fulfill an ancient prophecy: to link the First Flame or usher in a new age.

Key Events of Dark Souls

The Chosen Undead's journey is marked by the following significant events:

1. Ringing the Bells of Awakening:

The prophecy dictates that the Chosen Undead must ring two Bells of Awakening: one in the towering church of the Undead Parish and another deep beneath the surface in Blighttown. This action awakens Kingseeker Frampt, a primordial serpent who guides the player toward their destiny.

2. Acquiring the Lordvessel:

To access the Kiln of the First Flame, the Chosen Undead must acquire the Lordvessel and fill it with the souls of powerful beings who inherited fragments of Gwyn's power: Seath the Scaleless, Gravelord Nito, the Four Kings, and the Bed of Chaos (a corruption of the Witch of Izalith).

3. Entering the Kiln of the First Flame:

After filling the Lordvessel, the Chosen Undead gains access to the Kiln of the First Flame, where Gwyn awaits as a Hollowed husk of his former self. The player defeats Gwyn to confront the First Flame.

Endings and Their Implications

The game offers two endings, each shaping the fate of the world:

Linking the Fire

In this ending, the Chosen Undead sacrifices themselves to rekindle the First Flame, continuing the Age of Fire. This act perpetuates the dominance of the gods and delays the inevitable arrival of the Age of Dark. While this choice preserves the status quo, it does so at great cost, as it requires a continuous cycle of sacrifice.

The Dark Lord

By walking away from the First Flame, the Chosen Undead allows it to die, ushering in the Age of Dark. This ending aligns with the Furtive Pygmy's legacy, positioning humanity to rise as the dominant force in the absence of the gods. While the implications of this age remain ambiguous, it represents a break from the cyclical prolongation of the Age of Fire.

In-Game References

Dark Souls' lore is pieced together through item descriptions, dialogue, and environmental storytelling. Some notable references include:

- The Soul of Gwyn, found after his defeat, which describes his sacrifice to the Flame.
- The Darksign, which explains the nature of the Undead curse.
- Dialogue with characters like Frampt, Kaathe, and Solaire, who provide differing perspectives on the world's state and the player's role.

Dark Souls' story is a meditation on cycles, sacrifice, and the passage of time. Each ending leaves room for interpretation, but the narrative's depth ensures its legacy as one of gaming's most intricate and compelling tales.

More information

The Witch of Izalith ambitiously attempted to recreate the First Flame with her Lord Soul but instead spawned the Flame of Chaos. When she failed to control the new flame, it consumed her and molded her into a twisted being known as The Bed of Chaos, the source of all demons. Most of her followers and children were also consumed by the Chaos Flame and were similarly transformed.

In a last effort to preserve the Age of Fire, Gwyn ventured from the city of Anor Londo to the Kiln of the First Flame with some of his faithful knights and there sacrificed himself to the fire, hoping to rekindle it, however lacking all the Lord Souls, Gwyn's sacrifice was not enough and only "*embers remained*".

Concurrently, a curse appeared among humanity. Those cursed with Undeath were marked with the Darksign. Its bearers will be revived after death but they will lose their Humanity with each death. Those who lose all sanity eventually become Hollow, effectively losing control over their body and will. As such, over time, many Undead have acquired a variety of ways to either collect or steal Humanity from others, like the Darkwraiths who hunt down and drain Humanity from innocents.

Those cursed are brought to the Northern Undead Asylum, where they are locked away from the rest of the world, to "await the end of the world".

The protagonist wakes locked up in such a cell, but a nameless knight helps them escape. This knight then speaks of a prophecy:

“
*Thou who art Undead, art chosen...
In thine exodus from the Undead Asylum, maketh pilgrimage to the land of
Ancient Lords...
When thou ringeth the Bell of Awakening, the fate of the Undead thou shalt
know.*

Once the Chosen Undead has rung the Bells of Awakening, the **Primordial Serpent Kingseeker Frampt**, is awoken. He directs the Chosen Undead to reacquire the Lord Souls and succeed Lord Gwyn by defeating him and linking the Flame, thus undoing the curse. To complete this task, the Chosen Undead must first retrieve the Lordvessel from Anor Londo, the forsaken city of the gods:

“
*Chosen Undead. Your fate is... to succeed the Great Lord Gwyn.
So that you may link the Fire, cast away the Dark, and undo the curse of the
Undead.
To this end, you must visit Anor Londo, and acquire the Lordvessel.

Those who seek the Realm of the Lords must brave Sen's Fortress, a deadly
house of traps.
Many have gone before you, but none have returned.
Fate has chosen you, but proceed with caution.

As Kingseeker, I shall now instruct you, the Lord's successor in your next task.
To achieve your fate, fill the vessel with powerful souls,
commensurate to the great soul of Gwyn.
Scarce few possess such brilliant souls.
Gravelord Nito, the Witch of Izalith,
the Four Kings of New Londo, who inherited the shards of Gwyn's soul...
and Lord Gwyn's former confidant, Seath the Scaleless.
All of their souls are required to satiate the lordvessel.*

If the Chosen Undead refrains from placing the Lordvessel on the altar, they can instead meet **Darkstalker Kaathe** in the Abyss, another Primordial Serpent who opposes Frampt. He tells a different prophecy:

*Prove you must, that the truth becomes you.
Seek Anor Londo.
And claim Gwyn's heirloom, the Lordvessel.
Now go, Undead warrior.
Show the world that the truth becomes you.*

*The truth I shall share without sentiment.
After the advent of fire, the ancient lords found the three souls.
But your progenitor found a fourth, unique soul.
The Dark Soul.
Your ancestor claimed the Dark Soul and waited for Fire to subside.
And soon, the flames did fade, and only Dark remained.
Thus began the age of men, the Age of Dark.
However...
Lord Gwyn trembled at the Dark.
Clinging to his Age of Fire, and in dire fear of humans,
and the Dark Lord who would one day be born amongst them,
Lord Gwyn resisted the course of nature.
By sacrificing himself to link the fire, and commanding his children to shepherd
the humans,
Gwyn has blurred your past, to prevent the birth of the Dark Lord.
I am the primordial serpent.
I seek to right the wrongs of the past to discover our true Lord.
But the other serpent, Frampt, lost his sense, and befriended Lord Gwyn.
Undead warrior, we stand at the crossroad.
Only I know the truth about your fate.
You must destroy the fading Lord Gwyn, who has coddled Fire and resisted
nature,
and become the Fourth Lord, so that you may usher in the Age of Dark!*

Kaathe offers a different path to end the Age of Fire and usher in the Age of Dark instead. He implies that the prophecy of the Chosen Undead is a lie, however upon careful examination of facts, it becomes apparent that both Frampt and Kaathe have been feeding the Chosen Undead half-truths in order to advance their own agendas. Indeed, there may be no prophecy at all and the Undead may be no more than one pawn among many in a greater game. The Chosen Undead must ultimately come to their own conclusions about which path will save the world and which might condemn it.

Once the Lordvessel is placed, the Chosen Undead must reacquire the Lord Souls: one from Seath the Scaleless, one from the Four Kings, one from Gravelord Nito and one from the Bed of Chaos.

Inevitably, the Chosen Undead must fight and defeat Gwyn. Once this is accomplished, a choice is presented: rekindle the Flame, thus prolonging the Age of Fire and the rule of existing deities by sacrificing their life to the Fire; or let the Flame wither and die, ushering in the Age of Dark where

humans would rule.

Prologue

Official English Prologue

“ In the Age of Ancients the world was unformed, shrouded by fog. A land of gray crags, Archtrees and Everlasting Dragons.

But then there was Fire and with fire came disparity. Heat and cold, life and death, and of course, light and dark.

Then from the dark, They came, and found the Souls of Lords within the flame.

Nito, the First of the Dead, The Witch of Izalith and her Daughters of Chaos, Gwyn, the Lord of Sunlight, and his faithful knights. And the Furtive Pygmy, so easily forgotten. With the strength of Lords, they challenged the Dragons.

Gwyn's mighty bolts peeled apart their stone scales. The Witches weaved great firestorms. Nito unleashed a miasma of death and disease. And Seath the Scaleless betrayed his own, and the Dragons were no more. Thus began the Age of Fire.

But soon the flames will fade and only Dark will remain. Even now there are only embers, and man sees not light, but only endless nights. And amongst the living are seen, carriers of the accursed Darksign.

Yes, indeed. The Darksign brands the Undead. And in this land, the Undead are corralled and led to the north, where they are locked away, to await the end of the world... This is your fate.

Official Japanese Prologue (With translation)

“ 古代の時代、世界はまだ区別がつかず、霧に覆われ、そこには灰色の岩、偉大な木、そして永遠の古代のドラゴンがいた。

In the Ancient Age, the world was still undistinguished, covered in fog, and there were only gray rocks, great trees, and everlasting ancient dragons.

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████████████████

But at some point the First Fire appeared, and with fire came difference. Heat and cold, life and death, light and dark.

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And then, some small animals born from the darkness were attracted by fire and they discovered the Souls of the Kings.

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The first dead, Nito. The Witch of Izalith and the Daughters of Chaos. Gwyn, the King of the Sun's light and his knights. And the pygmy that no one knows. They gained the power of Kings and challenged the ancient dragons in battle.

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Gwyn's lightning pierced the rock scales. The witch's flame became storms. A miasma of death was released by Nito. And because of the betrayal of the scaleless white dragon Seath, the ancient dragons were finally defeated. It was the beginning of the Age of Fire.

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...

But eventually the fire will fade and only darkness will remain. Now the fire is about to fade and doesn't reach the human world, and the night continues. And a Dark Ring has begun to appear among humans...

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Yes, indeed. The Dark Ring is the mark of a cursed Immortal. And in this land, all Immortals are captured and sent north. Sent into prison until the end of the world. And the same will happen to you.

Theories

Various community theories relating to the Lore of Dark Souls.

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