Genealogy of the Olympic Gods

The Olympians are a group of gods who ruled after Zeus led his siblings in the overthrow of the Titans. They lived atop Mount Olympus, for which they are named, and are all related in some way. Many are the children of the Titans Kronus and Rhea, and most of the rest are children of Zeus. The original 12 Olympic gods include Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Hestia, Hera, Ares, Athena, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hermes, Artemis and Hephaestus. Demeter and Dionysus have also been recognized as Olympic gods.

The Olympic gods have generally been credited with the first Olympics. The actual historical origins of the ancient Olympic games are a bit murky, but one myth credits their origin to the deity Zeus, who began the festival after his defeat of his father, the Titan god Cronus. Another myth claims that the hero Heracles, after winning a race at Olympia, decreed that the race should be re-enacted every four years.

Whatever their actual origin, the ancient Olympic games were called Olympic after Mount Olympus, the mountain on which the Greek gods were said to live. The games were also dedicated to these Greek gods of Mt. Olympus for nearly 12 centuries, until Emperor Theodosius decreed in 393 A.D. that all such "pagan cults" should be banned.

Kronus & Rhea:
The Titan Kronus, sometimes spelled Cronus, married Rhea and together they had the following children. All six are generally numbered among the Olympic gods.

i. **Poseidon** - After overthrowing their father and the other Titans from power, Poseidon and his brothers drew lots to split the world between them. Poseidon's pick made him lord of the sea. He married Amphitrite, daughter of Neurus and Doris, and granddaughter of the Titan Oceanus.

ii. **Hades** - Drawing the "short straw" when he and his brothers split up the world between them, Hades became god of the underworld. He is also known as the god of wealth, due to the precious metals mined from the earth. His married Persephone.

iii. **Zeus** - Zeus, the youngest son of Kronus and Rhea, was considered the most important of all the Olympic gods. He drew the best lot of the three sons of Kronus to become the leader of the gods on Mt. Olympus, and lord of the sky, thunder and rain in Greek mythology. Due to his many children and multiple affairs, he also came to be worshipped as the god of fertility.

iv. **Hestia** - The oldest daughter of Kronus and Rhea, Hestia is a virgin goddess, known as the "goddess of the hearth." She gave up her seat as one of the original Twelve Olympians to Dionysus, to tend the sacred fire on Mt. Olympus.

v. **Hera** - Both the sister and wife of Zeus, Hera was raised by the Titans Ocean and Tethys. Hera is known as the goddess of marriage and protector of the marital bond. She was worshipped all over Greece, but particularly in the region of Argos.

vi. **Demeter** - The greek goddess of agriculture
Children of Zeus:
The god Zeus married his sister, Hera, through trickery and rape, and the marriage was never particularly happy. Zeus was well known for his infidelities, and many of his children came from unions with other gods and with mortal women. The following children of Zeus became Olympic gods.

i. **Ares** - god of war

ii. **Hephaestus** - god of blacksmiths, craftsmen, artisans, sculptors and fire. Some accounts say that Hera gave birth to Hephaestus without the involvement of Zeus, in revenge for his having given birth to Athena without her. Hephaestus married Aphrodite.

Zeus had the following children with the immortal, Leto:

iii. **Artemis** - Twin sister of Apollo, Artemis is the virgin moon goddess of the hunt, wild animals, fertility and childbirth.

iv. **Apollo** - Twin of Artemis, Apollo is the god of the sun, music, medicine and poetry.

Zeus had the following children with Dione:

v. **Aphrodite** - goddess of love, desire and beauty. Some accounts identify Aphrodite as the daughter of Zeus and Dione. Another tale says that she sprang from the foam of the sea after Cronus castrated Uranus and tossed his severed genitals into the ocean. Aphrodite married Hephaestus.

Zeus had the following children with Maia:

vi. **Hermes** - the god of boundaries and the travelers who cross them.

Zeus had the following children with his first wife, Metis:

vii. **Athena** - goddess of wisdom and unmarried girls, Athena is said to have sprung fully grown and fully armed from the forehead of Zeus. Many myths have him swallowing his pregnant first wife, Metis, so that she would not bear a child who could usurp his power - the child who later emerged as Athena.

Zeus had the following children with Semele:

viii. **Dionysus** - his mother, Semele, died before giving birth, but it is said that Zeus took the unborn Dionysus from her womb and sewed him inside his thigh until it was time for the child's birth. Dionysus (more commonly known by his Roman name Bacchus) took the place of Hestia as an Olympic god, and is worshipped as the god of wine.

From Kimberly Powell, *Your Guide to Genealogy.*