

The Celestial Bodies Associated with the Greek Pantheon **By Demetra George, M.A., 2008**

The following deities are among the most important of the Greek pantheon. We have noted planets and asteroids that share names with these gods and goddesses. They are being listed in the order of their appearance according to the genealogy of Greek creation myths. This may suggest something about their rank in the hierarchy of Greek gods.

The First Dynasty: The Titan Gods

Uranus: *Ouranos* is the Greek name for the planet Uranus, the personification of the Sky who mated with Gaia, Mother Earth to produce the first dynasty of Greek gods, the Titans. Uranus was disposed by his youngest son Cronos who castrated him. The planet named Uranus was discovered in 1781 was unknown to the ancients. Rick Tarnas argues a case that the modern attributes of Uranus as rebel and liberator are more suited to the mythic archetype of Prometheus. There is an asteroid named Prometheus.

Saturn: *Cronos* is the Greek name for Saturn, who ruled the world along with his sister Rhea. He swallowed their offspring as they were born – Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus. Cronos also fathered the centaur Chiron on the nymph Philyra. Some traditions say that his sickle refers to his attributes as an early god of agriculture, rather than to the tool of mutilation. There is planet named Saturn, considered a malefic by the ancient astrologers.

Venus: *Aphrodite* is the Greek name for the Venus. Aphrodite was born from the sea-foam of the severed genitals of Ouranos, carried upon a shell by waves to the island of Cyprus where she was welcomed into the Olympic pantheon. It was said that as the most beautiful of the goddesses, she was loved and desired by all. Her many lovers included had many lovers included Ares, Hephaestus, Dionysus, Hermes, Poseidon, Anchises and Adonis. There is a planet Venus considered a benefic by ancient astrologers and an asteroid Aphrodite.

Sun: *Helios* is the Greek name for the god of the Sun who was born from a union Titan parents Hyperion and Theia. Helios was depicted as driving his four-horse chariot through the sky during the day, observing everything that happened on the earth. He was and was regularly invoked as a witness to oaths. Later the Olympian god Apollo was conflated to Helios, and took over many of his attributes. There is a star the Sun known to the ancients and an asteroid Helio.

Moon: *Selene* is the Greek name for the goddess of the Moon, sister of Helios. Similar to her brother, she was portrayed as very beautiful, bearing wings, crowned with a diadem featuring horns in the shape of a crescent moon, and driving a chariot pulled by snow-white steeds across the night sky. Later tradition associates the Moon with the goddesses Artemis and Hecate. The Moon was known to the ancients, and there are asteroids named Selene, Luna, Artemis, and Hecate.

The Second Dynasty: The Olympian Gods

Vesta: *Hestia* is the Greek name for the goddess Hestia, who was the eldest of the legitimate heirs born from the Titan ruling couple Cronos and Rhea. A virgin goddess, she was the guardian of hearth and its fires, and by extension the guardian of the home and the community. In Roman culture, Vesta was the presiding deity of the Vestal Virgins who tended the sacred flame believed to ensure the safety of the Roman Empire. The asteroid Vesta was discovered in 1807, and there is also an asteroid named Hestia.

Ceres: *Demeter* is the Greek name for the goddess Ceres. The second child of Cronos and Rhea, Demeter was the goddess of agriculture and the fertility of the earth. Along with her daughter Persephone, she presided over the Eleusinian Mystery Rites which spoke to death and renewal as portrayed in the mystery of the seed that sprouts anew each year. The asteroid Ceres was discovered in 1800, and there is an asteroid Demeter.

Juno: *Hera* is the Greek name for the goddess Juno. Hera was the most powerful Queen of Heaven, sister and lawful wife of Zeus, daughter of Cronos and Rhea. As goddess of marriage, she represented the idealized wife and was the protector of women of all ages. The asteroid named Juno was discovered in 1801, and there is also an asteroid Hera.

Neptune: *Poseidon* is the Greek name for the god Neptune. The first son of Cronos and Rhea, brother of Zeus, Poseidon was given rulership over the fresh and sea waters when the Olympian gods came to power; as Earth Shaker he also controlled earthquakes. His wife was Amphitrite. Unknown to the ancients, the planet Neptune was discovered in 1848, and there is an asteroid Poseidon.

Pluto: Hades is the Greek name for the god Pluto. Son of Cronos and Rhea, brother of Zeus, husband of Persephone, he was given rulership over the Underworld and the souls of the dead. He rarely left the subterranean realms, and on the few occasions he ventured to the upper world, he wore a helmet of invisibility. Unknown to the ancients, the planet Pluto was discovered in 1930.

Jupiter: *Zeus* is the Greek name for the god Jupiter. Youngest child of Cronos and Rhea, he was secreted away in Crete shortly after his birth. When he came of age, he liberated his siblings from the belly of his father and waged a war to become victor, ushering in the reign of the Olympian Gods. He became the king of Heaven and Earth, the supreme god of law, order, justice, and wisdom, and he fathered many children to whom he dispersed power. The planet Jupiter was known to the ancients, and there is an asteroid Zeus.

Chiron: While the above children of Cronos were legitimate heirs to the throne, Chiron was an illegitimate child. Cronos disguising himself in the shape of a stallion to evade his wife fathered the half-horse half-human centaur upon the nymph Philyra who abandoned him at birth. Chiron became a teacher, foster-parent, and healer. The comet-like body Chiron was discovered in 1977 orbiting between Jupiter and Saturn.

The Third Dynasty: The Children of Zeus

Mars: *Ares* is the Greek name for the god Mars. Ares was the son of Zeus and Hera, and the cruelest figure of the Greek pantheon. He was the god of war, and always depicted in armor and wearing a helmet, ready for battle. He was associated with bloodshed, violence, combat, and strife. Mars was known to the ancients as a malefic planet.

Mercury: *Hermes* is the Greek name for the god Mercury and one of the most beloved deities. Hermes was the son of Zeus and Maia, and was the messenger of the gods and the guide of souls to the underworld. He was the patron of travelers, merchants and thieves, associated with speech, writing, astronomy, and mathematics, and presided over athletic contest. The planet Mercury was known to the ancients, and there is an asteroid Hermes.

Pallas Athena: *Athena* was the favorite daughter of Zeus, born parthenogenically fully grown from the crown of his head. She was the goddess of wisdom, patron of the arts and crafts, a virgin warrior queen, and protector of heroes. She triumphed over Poseidon in a bitter contest, and

became the titular deity of Athens. In one story, she took the surname of Pallas. The asteroid Pallas was discovered in 1802, and there is an asteroid Athene.

Apollo: *Apollo* was the son of Zeus and Leto, twin of Artemis, and father of Asclepius. He was the god of sun and light, music, healing, and prophecy. He alone knew the mind of Zeus, and his major cult site was at the Oracle of Delphi. There is an asteroid Apollo.

Artemis: *Artemis* was the daughter of Zeus and Leto, twin of Apollo. She was the virgin goddess of the hunt with her bow and arrow, and of childbirth and the Moon. Artemis dwelled in mountainous and wooded places, protected forest creatures, young girls, and the patron of the Amazons. The Romans knew her as Diana. There is an asteroid Artemis.

Dionysus: *Dionysus* was the son of Zeus and Semele, and the god of wine, fertility of the vineyard, intoxication, merry-making, and ecstasy. He was the patron of the theater. Dionysus was accompanied by Nymphs, Satyrs, Sileni, and Maenads, dancing, singing and placing music with drums, flutes, and cymbals. He was known to the Romans as Bacchus. There are asteroids Dionysus and Bacchus.

Hephaestus: *Hephaestus* was the son of Zeus and Hera, and was the god of fire, metal working, divine blacksmith, and presided over artisans and craftsmen. He was ugly, had a lame foot, and married to Aphrodite who was continually unfaithful to him. The Romans knew him as Vulcan. There is an asteroid Hephaestus.

Persephone: *Persephone* was the daughter of Zeus and Demeter. As a maiden, she was abducted by Hades and carried off to the Underworld where she became his bride and Queen. She guided over the souls of the dead and initiated them into the rites of rebirth. She returned to the Upperworld for part of each to join her mother Demeter and celebrate the Eleusinian Mysteries. The Romans knew her as Proserpina. There are asteroids Persephone and Proserpina.

Asclepius: Asclepius was the son of Apollo and Koronis, and raised and tutored by the centaur Chiron. He was a god of healing, and had many sanctuaries dedicated to him where he would appear to suppliants in dream visions. It was said that he could heal the living and raise the dead. His children included gods of healing such as Hygeia, Panacea, Podalirius, and Makhaon. There are asteroids for Asclepius, his four children mentioned above, and Aesculapia as the healing site.

The twelve Olympian gods are Zeus, Hera, Demeter, Hestia, Aphrodite, Poseidon, Ares, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, Hephaestus. Later Dionysus and Asclepius joined their ranks.

Cross-Cultural Names for Planetary Deities

Planet	Babylonian	Egyptian	Greek	Indian	Roman
Sun	Shamesh	Atum-Ra Kephri Horus	Helios Apollo	Surya Agni	Sol Apollo
Moon	Sin	Thoth Khons	Selene Artemis Hecate	Chandra Parvati Varuna	Luna Diana
Mercury	Nebu	Thoth Anubis	Hermes (Stilbon- gleamer)	Budha Vishnu	Mercurius
Venus	Ishtar	Hathor Nephys	Aphrodite (Phosphoros- light bringer)	Shukra Indrani	Venus
Mars	Nergal	Anhur	Ares (Pyroeis-fiery one)	Mangal Kuja Subrahmanya	Mars
Jupiter	Marduk	Amon	Zeus (Phaeton- bright one)	Guru Brihaspati	Jove
Saturn	Ninurta	Geb	Kronos (Phainon- shiner)	Shani Brahma Yama	Saturnus
North Node Dragons Head			Anabibazo	Rahu	Caput Draconis
South Node Dragons Tail			Katabibazo	Ketu	Cauda Draconis