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## Greek Mythology #18—POSEIDON by Joy Journey

God of: The Sea, Earthquakes, Storms and Horses  
 Home: MOUNT OLYMPUS or the Sea  
 Symbols: Trident, Fish, Dolphin, Horse and Bull  
 Parents: Cronus and Rhea  
 Consorts: Amphitrite  
 Siblings: Hestia, Hades, Hera, Zeus, Demeter  
 Children: Theseus, Triton, Polyphemus, Belus, Agenor, Neleus, Atlas  
 Roman Counterpart: Neptune

Poseidon was the second son of Chronus and Rhea. Like his other siblings, he was swallowed by Cronus at birth then later saved by his brother Zeus. Poseidon is second in power only to Zeus.

Poseidon is most often shown in a chariot pulled by horses or hippocampus—beasts with the front half of a horse and the back half of a fish tail. Poseidon is associated with dolphins and his trident, a three-pronged spear. His beautiful palace on the seafloor was made of coral and gemstones.

Poseidon had a strong and difficult personality, and was known for his greed. He was often at odds with other gods as his eyes often rested upon their possessions, which he wanted to make his own.

Athena and Poseidon competed for the city of Athens, resolving to settle the issue by each offering the Athenians a gift and letting the city determine the best gift. Poseidon struck the ground with his trident and water sprang forth, but it was salty. Athena offered them an olive tree, which gave them wood, oil and food, and won to become the patron goddess of the city.



**Poseidon from Milos.  
 2nd Century BC.  
 National Archaeological  
 Museum of Athens.**

**RIGHT & BELOW CENTER: A common depiction of Poseidon, both of stamped brass. The above is a small open-work button that shows Poseidon standing in a large scallop. Courtesy of Connie & Bud Weiser.**

**Large twinkle border button with Poseidon in the same pose, but his left foot rests on the head of a dolphin and the scallop shell is shown smaller and behind him. Collection of Claudia Chalmers.**



**LEFT: Division I wood background buttons with Poseidon (Neptune) holding a trident. The buttons are ringed with a white metal collet inside the brass twisted rope inner border and the outer border. Large and small.**



**CENTER LEFT: Poseidon in the same general depiction of stamped brass, without the wood background. Dark original tint. Collection of Claudia Chalmers.**



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Like the other gods, Poseidon also had a lustful, wandering eye and it soon fell upon his sister Demeter. To distract him, she asked that he make the most beautiful animal possible, and Poseidon created the horse. Spurning his advances Demeter turned herself into a horse, but Poseidon became a stallion and took her, producing their child, the talking horse Arion.

All told, Poseidon had at least 80 consorts, of both sexes, and 134 known children. His beautiful wife Amphitrite was a nymph and sea goddess.

Poseidon once angered the volatile Athena by having intercourse with a very beautiful woman, Medusa, on the floor of Athena's temple. Athena changed Medusa into a monster, giving her a grotesque face with snakes for hair. This can be confusing on our buttons, which most often show Medusa with a "pretty, womanly" face and the snake hair. We allow artistic license for the buttons not being true to the sequence of the myth, combining "before and after" aspects of Medusa.

When Medusa was later beheaded by Perseus, Chrysaor and Pegasus emerged from her neck. You will remember that Pegasus is the flying horse.

It was inevitable that Poseidon would at some time challenge the power of Zeus. Poseidon joined Hera and Apollo in an unsuccessful revolt against Zeus. They were able to enlist the rest of the gods except for Hestia.

Zeus was bound while he slept and, awakening, he threatened them all. They only laughed. As the gods debated who should become the new king, the Titaness Thetis summoned the hundred-armed giant, Briareus, to use his 100 hands at once to loosen the 100 knots that bound Zeus.

Hera was punished by being hung upside down. Poseidon and Apollo were punished by having their divinity stripped. Zeus sent them to serve the king of Troy as mortals, where they built walls around the city. Zeus promised to reward them, but then failed to fulfill the promise. In retaliation Poseidon sent a sea monster to attack Troy, and the monster was later killed by Heracles.

Poseidon hated Odysseus for blinding his son, the Cyclops Polyphemus. After his exploits, when Odysseus turns towards home, Poseidon retaliates by delaying his voyage for many years.



***Pierced steel flat disk with stamped brass dolphin and trident, held on by two cut steel rivets. Medium. Div. I.***



***Division III white metal button with blue paint. The button has Poseidon's trident and two dolphins with crossed tails. Medium***



***Brass escutcheon on pearl. Poseidon rides in his chariot pulled by his hippocampus.***



***Stamped brass buttons of Poseidon riding his hippocampus (sea horses) and brandishing his trident. TOP CENTER & RIGHT: Dark original tint and white metal rims are part of these two buttons (large and small) from Louella Yeargain. CENTER: Small button of the same image. Courtesy of Connie & Bud Weiser.***