

= God of War : Ascension =

God of War : Ascension is a third @-@ person action @-@ adventure video game developed by Santa Monica Studio and published by Sony Computer Entertainment (SCE) . The game was first released on March 12 , 2013 , for the PlayStation 3 (PS3) console . It is the seventh installment in the God of War series and prequel to the entire series . Loosely based on Greek mythology , the game is set in ancient Greece with vengeance as its central motif . The player controls the protagonist Kratos , the former servant of the God of War Ares , who tricked Kratos into killing his wife and daughter . In response to this tragedy , Kratos renounced Ares , breaking his blood oath to the god . Kratos was therefore imprisoned and tortured by the three Furies , guardians of honor and enforcers of punishment . Helped by the oath keeper Orkos , Kratos escapes his imprisonment and confronts the Furies to be completely free of his bond to Ares .

The gameplay is similar to previous installments , focusing on combo @-@ based combat with the player 's main weapon ? the Blades of Chaos ? and other weapons acquired by the new World Weapons mechanic . It continues the use of quick time events and adds a new , promptless , free @-@ form system . Four magical attacks and a power @-@ enhancing ability can be used as alternative combat options , and the game features puzzles and platforming elements . Ascension is the only installment in the series to include online multiplayer features for both competitive and cooperative play . It also features a redesigned combat system , new gameplay mechanics , and downloadable content . A graphic novel prequel to the single and multiplayer modes launched as Rise of the Warrior prior to the game 's release .

God of War : Ascension received generally favorable reception from critics , who praised its fundamental gameplay and spectacle , which they said were true to the series . Some reviewers said the story was not as compelling as previous installments , with IGN stating that in comparison to Zeus and Ares , " the Furies don 't quite cut it " . The game 's multiplayer element received a mixed response . Although reviewers said the gameplay translated well into the multiplayer element , they criticized the balance and depth of combat . Edge magazine , however , approved of the multiplayer element , calling it an " evolutionary step " with " some fine ideas ... that will form part of this genre 's future template " . In terms of sales , Ascension did not perform as well as its predecessors , and unlike them it won no awards . It received several nominations from various media outlets , including the Writers Guild of America Videogame Awards 's " Outstanding Achievement in Videogame Writing " and the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences award for " Outstanding Achievement in Sound Design " .

= = Gameplay = =

In both of God of War : Ascension 's single @-@ player and multiplayer elements , it is primarily a third @-@ person video game viewed from a fixed camera perspective . Some scenes in the single @-@ player campaign feature a first @-@ person camera view . In single @-@ player mode , the player controls the character Kratos in combo @-@ based combat , platforming , and puzzle games . The enemies are an assortment of creatures , most of whom are drawn from Greek mythology , including cyclopes , cerberuses , empusas , Sirens , Gorgons , satyrs , harpies , and centaurs . Several other monsters were created specifically for the game , such as the juggernauts (elephantaur) , wraiths , and manticores . Many of the monsters also appear in the multiplayer . Platforming elements require the player to climb walls and ladders , jump across chasms , and slide down walls to proceed through sections of the game . The game features a variety of puzzles , ranging from simple to complex .

= = = Combat = = =

Kratos ' main weapon is the Blades of Chaos , a pair of blades attached to chains that are wrapped around his wrists and forearms . In gameplay , the blades can be swung offensively in various maneuvers . A new weapons mechanic called the World Weapon system allows Kratos to pick up

weapons scattered throughout game locations or to take them from defeated foes , and to use these for a limited time . There are five World Weapons (sword , club , javelin , sling , shield) that can be collected randomly , although Kratos may possess only one at any time . When a World Weapon is not equipped , Kratos may punch or kick foes as part of the new combat system . Another new addition is that Kratos can tether enemies , referred to as grappling ; he can hold an enemy in place with one blade while he attacks other enemies with the other blade , and he can throw the tethered enemy .

Four magical disciplines are acquired , including the Fire of Ares , the Ice of Poseidon , the Lightning of Zeus , and the Soul of Hades , which , depending on the magic equipped , imbues the Blades of Chaos with that elemental property . For example , the Soul of Hades imbues the Blades with purple flames and can unleash souls of the Underworld to briefly attack enemies . The Ice of Poseidon also enables Kratos to breathe underwater , a necessary ability as substantial time is spent there . The Rage ability , Rage of the Gods , featured in previous games is included and unlike them , its meter is filled by landing attacks on enemies and the ability is automatically activated once the meter has reached maximum capacity . It remains activated until Kratos is attacked or stops attacking for an extended period of time , then the meter must be refilled . The Rage ability is also affected by the magic equipped , allowing Kratos to use different Rage attacks , such as the lightning @-@ based Rage of Zeus .

Three relics , the Amulet of Uroborus (Life Cycle mechanic) , the Oath Stone of Orkos , and the Eyes of Truth , are acquired and needed for game progression . The Amulet of Uroborus allows Kratos to manipulate time by decaying or healing an object ; examples include reconstructing broken pathways and using it during puzzle @-@ solving . Construction can be paused or reversed if needed . The amulet can also be used against enemies to briefly slow their movements . The Oath Stone of Orkos gives Kratos the ability to create a " shadow " duplicate of himself that can depress plates , hold levers , or attack enemies . The Eyes of Truth remove illusions created by the Furies and casts a blinding light on enemies . In addition to the quick time event (QTE) mechanic featured in the previous games , a new , promptless , free @-@ form system has been added , allowing players to choose when to attack or dodge based on the enemy 's actions . When certain foes , such as a cyclops or a juggernaut , have been sufficiently weakened , the player may jump on its back and briefly force it to attack other foes .

Other extra features include ten artifacts hidden in the game world that provide additional abilities like unlimited magic during New Game Plus . New Game Plus also allows players to change Kratos ' costume , but trophies are disabled in this mode . A new feature absent from previous installments is " Chapter Select " , which allows players to select and replay previously completed levels . Unlike previous installments , in which behind @-@ the @-@ scenes videos are unlocked after completing the game , these videos are already available from the main menu .

= = = Multiplayer = = =

God of War : Ascension offers an online multiplayer feature for up to eight players ? a first for the series ? with a small story element . The main objective for players is to take control of a map to earn rewards from the gods . Before entering multiplayer battles , players are introduced to a warrior , who like Kratos , is an oath @-@ breaker and is imprisoned in the Prison of the Damned ? the warrior 's backstory is explored in Rise of the Warrior . The player takes control of the warrior and aligns with one of the four deities : Ares , Hades , Zeus , or Poseidon . Each god offers a unique combat play @-@ style and in @-@ battle abilities . The attack style of the god with whom the player aligns is critical to their warrior 's path . Players can create up to three more warriors and have a champion representing each god .

Players can unlock special magic abilities , new and upgraded armors , weapons , relics , and other treasures as they earn experience points (XP) to level @-@ up their warrior . Players may also complete " Labors " , which are challenges from the gods that rewards armor and weapons . Throughout multiplayer matches , players receive buffs and debuffs , and there is a color @-@ coding system , called flashes , where a player 's character will flash a certain color indicating a

special property , such as vulnerability or invulnerability . A prestige feature called " Ascension " , added in the June 10 , 2013 update , allows players to reset their allegiance progression when they reach Level 40 , and receive in @-@ game currency for " Godly " armors and weapons ? the " most valuable and powerful items in the game " . They are classified as a Hero the first time they ascend and then a Demigod the second time and keep that title from then on .

There are five multiplayer modes : Team Favor of the Gods , Match of Champions , Trial of the Gods , Capture the Flag , and Bout of Honor . Team matches randomly assign players to compete on either the Spartan or Trojan team . The " signature " multiplayer mode is Team Favor of the Gods , in which two teams of two @-@ to @-@ four players try to accumulate a target quantity of points to win . Points , known as Favor , are earned by killing and other methods . When players are not on the offensive , they may help their team earn points by capturing altars , collecting red orbs from chests , and setting traps for opposing players . The non @-@ team version , Match of Champions , is a four @-@ to @-@ eight @-@ player deathmatch with a similar goal to Team Favor of the Gods . Trial of the Gods is a two @-@ player , cooperative (co @-@ op) , time @-@ trial mode in which the duo faces five waves of mythological monsters concluding with a boss fight . A single @-@ player version is also available . In Capture the Flag , two teams of four players battle to capture the opposing team 's flag and return it to their base until a target number of flags have been captured . In Bout of Honor , added in the July 11 , 2013 update , players test their skills in a best @-@ of @-@ seven @-@ rounds one @-@ on @-@ one fight .

All but two of the fifteen multiplayer maps are based on locations explored throughout the God of War series , with eight of those based on locations explored in Ascension ; for example , Desert of Lost Souls is from God of War , Bog of the Forgotten is from God of War II , and Labyrinth of Daedalus , Forum of Hercules , and Chamber of the Flame are from God of War III . The two original maps are the Coliseum of Persia and the Walls of Troy (which features the Trojan Horse) . Every map features several special power @-@ ups awarded by the gods for earning points , such as the Boots of Hermes for acceleration and running attacks . Maps also have environmental obstacles or objectives to complete for more points . For example , on the Desert of Lost Souls map , the cyclops Polyphemus may attack nearby players and killing him with the Spear of Olympus will grant bonus points for that team .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting = = =

As with previous games , God of War : Ascension is set in an alternate version of ancient Greece populated by the Olympian Gods , Titans , and other beings from Greek mythology . Game events are set six months after Kratos killed his family , which takes place before Chains of Olympus (2008) and ten years before God of War (2005) . The narrative takes place over four weeks ; it shifts several times between the present (the fourth week) and past (the preceding three weeks) , while the player controls Kratos in both . Several locations , including the Prison of the Damned and several real @-@ world locations ? including the village Kirra , the city Delphi , and the island Delos ? are explored in the game .

The Prison of the Damned is the Furies ' massive prison to house all oath @-@ breakers . Kirra is an abandoned village that lost its water supply after its water wheel and aqueduct were destroyed . Other than monsters , the only life is in its harbor , where the tamed Harbor Master guides vessels in and out of the port . Delphi is located in the snowy mountains north of Kirra and features the Tower of Delphi . After activating three massive , mechanical pythons , the Tower allows access to the Temple of Delphi , home of the Oracle . Delos features a Titan @-@ sized statue of Apollo , constructed by the inventor Archimedes to honor the god .

= = = Characters = = =

The game 's protagonist is Kratos (voiced by Terrence C. Carson) , a Spartan warrior who broke his blood oath to the god Ares after being tricked into killing his family . The main antagonists are the three Furies : Megaera (Nika Futterman) , Tisiphone (Debi Mae West) , and the Fury Queen , Alecto (Jennifer Hale) . The Furies are the guardians of honor and bane of traitors who punish those they deem guilty and were spawned from the eons @-@ long war between the Primordials , the beings who created the Earth . Other characters include the oath keeper Orkos (Troy Baker) , the son of Ares and Alecto who was disowned by the god as he was not the perfect warrior that Ares sought ; Aletheia (Adrienne Barbeau) , the Oracle of Delphi with prophetic sight ; the corrupted Prophet Castor (David W. Collins) and his conjoined twin Pollux (Brad Grusnick) , who usurped the oracle , deciding who can consult her ; and the Scribe of Hecatonchires (Robin Atkin Downes) , the first mortal imprisoned by the Furies who has been keeping records to maintain sanity . Kratos ' wife Lysandra (Jennifer Hale) and his daughter Calliope appear in an illusion created by Alecto , and the King of Sparta (Crispin Freeman) and the Village Oracle (Susan Blakeslee) appear in an illusion created by Tisiphone with the help of her familiar , Daemon . Zeus (Corey Burton) , the King of the Olympian Gods , Ares (Steven Blum) , the God of War , Poseidon (Gideon Emery) , the God of the Sea , and Hades (Fred Tatasciore) , the God of the Underworld , appear in the multiplayer mode . Castor and Pollux , the demigod Hercules (Kevin Sorbo) , the Titan cyclops Polyphemus , the Gorgon Stheno , and the giant scorpion Skorpis also appear in the multiplayer as bosses and / or environmental obstacles .

= = = Plot = = =

Gameplay begins with Kratos , who is imprisoned , chained , and tormented by the Furies for breaking his blood oath to Ares . Megaera tortures Kratos , but accidentally facilitates his freedom . Chasing the Fury through the prison , he discovers that the prison itself is Aegaeon the Hecatonchires , the first traitor of the Furies who had broken a blood oath to Zeus ; he was turned into the Prison of the Damned as punishment . Overcoming an illusion created by Tisiphone and Daemon , he finds and kills Megaera , retrieving the Amulet of Uroborus , which the Furies had confiscated from him in a preceding week .

The narrative shifts to three weeks before Kratos ' imprisonment . Confronted by Orkos in the Village of Kirra , Kratos is advised that the visions he has been experiencing are mind tricks created by the Furies , and instructs him to find the Oracle of Delphi . Upon arrival at the Temple of Delphi , he overcomes Castor and Pollux , who tried to kill the Oracle . In her dying breath , the Oracle instructs Kratos to travel to Delos to retrieve the Eyes of Truth . Taking the Amulet of Uroborus from the now @-@ dead Castor and Pollux , Kratos travels to Kirra 's harbor , where he again encounters Orkos . The oath keeper reveals that Ares wanted a perfect warrior to help him overthrow Zeus , so Ares helped Kratos against the barbarians to make him into a perfect warrior . Orkos became the oath keeper and did not question the Furies until Ares tricked Kratos into killing his own family . Armed with this knowledge , Kratos takes a ship to Delos .

A week later , Kratos arrives at the island of Delos and explores the ruined statue of Apollo . He is attacked by all three Furies and is eventually captured . Orkos appears and frees Kratos , transporting him to another location . Orkos gives Kratos his Oath Stone and reveals that he and Aletheia tried to warn Zeus of Ares ' and the Furies ' plan . In retaliation , the Furies took the Oracle 's eyes , the objects Kratos seeks . After a perilous journey , Kratos uses the Amulet of Uroborus to restore the statue in order to retrieve the eyes . After completing the Trials of Archimedes , however , Kratos is ambushed and captured by the Furies .

Back in the present time , Tisiphone and Daemon cast another illusion to deceive Kratos , who overcomes it and retrieves the Oath Stone of Orkos . He encounters the Scribe of Hecatonchires , who reveals that the Furies were originally fair in their punishment , but devolved into ruthless beings because of Ares . Continuing his pursuit of the Furies , Kratos reaches the door to Alecto 's Chamber , but seemingly returns home to his wife and daughter ; another illusion , this time cast by Alecto . She tries to convince Kratos he can live within this illusion if he rejoins Ares , but he denies her . Enraged , Alecto and Tisiphone attack Kratos , who retrieves the eyes , and Alecto transforms

into a giant sea monster . After a brutal battle , Kratos uses the eyes to break through the Furies ' illusions before killing them both , which destroys the prison .

Kratos returns to Sparta , where he is met by Orkos . He praises Kratos ' victory over the Furies , but reveals that Kratos will not be free from Ares ' bond unless he kills Orkos . He begs Kratos to give him an honorable death , which will free them both from Ares . Kratos initially refuses but Orkos ' continuing pleas ultimately force Kratos to kill him . Afterward , Kratos experiences the first of many nightmares ? previously masked by his bond ? and discovers his path to redemption through continual service to Olympus . Kratos burns down his house with the corpse of Orkos inside and leaves , beginning his path towards becoming the champion of the gods .

= = Development = =

= = = Pre @-@ E3 2012 = = =

In January 2010 , Santa Monica 's studio director John Hight advised video @-@ gaming blog Joystiq " while God of War III will conclude the trilogy , it won 't spell the end of the franchise " and said " We 're going to be really careful about what we do next . " From April 2011 until April 2012 , several sources claimed that a fourth main entry would release sometime in 2012 and would feature an online component . On April 12 , 2012 , Sony released a teaser image on its official PlayStation Facebook page , which was followed by the game 's announcement on April 19 , though Amazon leaked the announcement the day before . The trailer announced Todd Papy , who had worked as a designer on God of War and God of War II and as Design Director on God of War III , as Game Director . David Jaffe confirmed that God of War III Game Director Stig Asmussen did not return to direct this game because he was working on another project at Santa Monica . The announcement trailer was narrated by Linda Hunt ; it refers to a time before Kratos became the Ghost of Sparta and was not " bound in blood " . The announcement officially confirmed the game 's title as God of War : Ascension . Papy said the game was not titled God of War IV to avoid confusion because it is a prequel , rather than a sequel , to the trilogy . The name was chosen because it compliments the story and the additional multiplayer component ; according to Papy , in this mode , players are " basically ascending from an unknown hero to a god " .

The game features a retooled God of War III engine , enabling online multiplayer battles for up to eight players . Papy said to allow customization , Kratos and other known gods would not be included as playable characters in the multiplayer modes because the developers did not want " red Kratos , blue Kratos , yellow Kratos " , and selecting gods would lock players into established roles . This decision was made " to balance the game when players are pitted against each other " . Papy also said there would be no female characters because each character in the multiplayer mode is based on Kratos ' animation model . The first demonstration of the game 's multiplayer element featured the Team Favor of the Gods mode running on the map Desert of Lost Souls , which features the Titan cyclops Polyphemus . The decision to add multiplayer came about from curiosity , according to Lead Combat Designer Jason McDonald . He said the team asked themselves , " can it be done ? Is there fun to be had ? " The multiplayer was first tested using Kratos , and McDonald said the testers had " a lot of fun " . Seeing their reaction made the team feel that the multiplayer had value . They then began to put the " God of War spin on it " .

The development team faced a number of challenges in adding multiplayer to an established single @-@ player franchise . It was a difficult task , and the team felt that they had to prove to critics that their multiplayer would not be " tacked on " (since sub @-@ par multiplayer performance in other established , single @-@ player franchises has been criticized) . To tackle this , Santa Monica had to hire new staff specializing in multiplayer , engineering , and design . During development , multiplayer required several rewrites which took longer than expected and delayed their production schedule . The player navigation code had to be changed for online play , which was initially designed for co @-@ op . Since multiplayer was new to the team , they did not realize the amount of work required for the experience they had envisioned . Although the original idea for multiplayer was

exclusively co @-@ op , as development progressed , the team realized it was not what they wanted . Before the first press show , the team found the experience they wanted . Because of their focus on preparing multiplayer for the first press announcement , single @-@ player received less attention . When single @-@ player was reemphasized , its production was accelerated , resulting in less focus on multiplayer . Development focus shifted between single @-@ player and multiplayer throughout its entire course . Local co @-@ op was also explored , but the team decided to keep multiplayer online @-@ only .

David Jaffe , creator and Game Director of God of War , said in an interview with NowGamer if he had worked on God of War : Ascension , he would have incorporated three specific elements : different myths , a co @-@ star , and " look to the Zelda structure as a jumping off point " . He said a cooperative mode , in which " player one [would] be Kratos and player two [would] be this stupid annoying sidekick that ? for some to be determined story reason ? Kratos is stuck with for the whole adventure and in the end , once the main quest is over , Kratos just snaps the poor kid 's neck " , " would be cool " . Jaffe also spoke with IGN about the multiplayer element , stating , " I think it looks cool . It looks like another great , impeccably executed Sony Santa Monica game " , and said , " If it turns out to be the case that the single player is watered down because of [the multiplayer] , then I think they have some justification . But I don 't see any evidence of that , and I don 't see evidence of that based on the team they are . "

== = Post @-@ E3 2012 == =

At Sony 's 2012 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) press conference , the North American release date was confirmed as March 12 , 2013 . A single @-@ player demo was shown , revealing new gameplay mechanics and combat systems . The demo showcased that Kratos would have an encounter with the sea monster Charybdis , but this sequence was cut from the final game . Charybdis was recast as the creature that Alecto transforms into during the final fight of the game . The same day , Papy confirmed on the PlayStation.Blog that a collector 's edition of the game would be released . He said God of War : Ascension was being developed to feature stereoscopic 3D , however , it was ultimately cut . At gamescom 2012 , new multiplayer footage was shown , followed by the announcement of a multiplayer beta .

At the 2012 Penny Arcade Expo (PAX) , Game Director Todd Papy , Lead Game Designer Mark Simon , Principal Character Artist Patrick Murphy , and writer of the God of War series Marianne Krawczyk , hosted the first God of War panel , discussing the origins of God of War : Ascension , and provided an overview of the evolution of Kratos . The Fury Megaera was revealed , and Mark Simon discussed the new combat system . Papy said he had considered using the goddess Artemis as a playable female character , which would have offered the player alternative combat options . Artemis would have been depicted as half @-@ human and half @-@ feline , with the head and torso of a woman and the legs of a lioness . Artemis was ultimately cut from the game , but Papy said he would like to explore the possibility of using other gods in the future .

In the developmental transition from God of War III to God of War : Ascension , one of the graphics engineers , Cedric Perthuis , noted that the limits of the God of War III engine restricted artist creativity , so they " tried to remove or push those limits as far as possible without losing any performance . " An example noted was the number of UV sets used , which was increased to three sets per mesh . For a complex character model like Kratos , " independent textures are needed for body parts unique to him , each wrapping around the head , torso and limbs - all of which form an editable ' UV set ' when laid out flat . " Allowing more UV sets also made it possible to have a more natural look to the environment . Ascension did not have a graphical leap over its predecessor like God of War III did : " From a graphics ' technical ' perspective , to a large degree God of War : Ascension was more refinement on the graphics front " said another graphics engineer , Ben Diamand , who focused on optimization during Ascension 's development . The development team also added dynamic lighting , which allowed for development of the Life Cycle gameplay mechanic . Particle effects were greatly improved upon from God of War III : " the idea was to give artists more control to achieve better results with less particles " said Perthuis .

Terrence C. Carson , Linda Hunt , Corey Burton , Gideon Emery , Steven Blum , and Kevin Sorbo reprised their roles as Kratos , the narrator , Zeus , Poseidon , Ares , and Hercules , respectively . Jennifer Hale , who voiced two characters in the previous installment , voiced the Fury Alecto and Kratos ' wife , Lysandra , who was previously voiced by Gwendoline Yeo . Debi Mae West , Adrienne Barbeau , and Crispin Freeman , who have each done voice work on previous installments , voiced the characters Tisiphone , Aletheia , and the King of Sparta , respectively . Troy Baker voiced the oath keeper Orkos and is the announcer in the multiplayer mode . Series veteran Fred Tatasciore assumed the role of Hades , who was previously voiced by Clancy Brown . Susan Blakeslee reprised her role as the Village Oracle , who makes a cameo appearance as an illusion created by Tisiphone . Unlike previous games in which motion capture and voice recording were done separately , God of War : Ascension used " voice @-@ over motion capture " ; voice recording and motion capture were done at the same time , which allowed the voice actors to act out their characters ' scenes together . The voice @-@ over motion capture was done at House of Moves in Culver City , California .

= = = Multiplayer beta = = =

A global multiplayer beta was announced at gamescom 2012 . The beta included features that had previously not been publicly revealed . Players who participated in the Rise of the Warrior social challenge on GodofWar.com received early access to the beta in December 2012 . Players from SCE Europe also received an opportunity to access the beta early . The beta became available for PlayStation Plus subscribers on January 8 , 2013 . On January 19 , Santa Monica allowed all PlayStation Network users in North and South America access the beta via a redeemable voucher . The beta test ended at midnight Pacific time on January 21 . In the beta , players could choose to align themselves with Ares or Zeus . It featured the eight @-@ player Desert of Lost Souls map and the four @-@ player Forum of Hercules map . The beta included the Desert of Lost Souls map in the modes Team Favor of the Gods and Capture the Flag , and the Forum of Hercules map in the mode Favor of the Gods , renamed Match of Champions in final release . All participants of the beta received the Champion 's Armor and Blade for their multiplayer character when the game launched .

According to Santa Monica 's senior producer Whitney Wade and director of internal development Chacko Sonny , the beta made the team look at the game as an " evolving service " . The testing allowed the developers to validate that their system would hold up to the criticism and abundance of players once the game launched . Because multiplayer was new , the beta allowed the team to prepare for the final game . Wade and Sonny said the testing went as expected , " revealing successive layers of issues that we would address , deploy fixes for , and then monitor in a live environment . " The most important change from the beta , they said , was their planning in how to support the game post @-@ launch . The team designed a process that allowed them to " quickly iterate on fixes , deploy them through infrastructure (testing , certification , patching) , and coordinate with internal technology partners within Sony . " They also developed a system to allow them to monitor , log , and interpret any changes added , and the beta test gave insight on how to prioritize key features .

= = Release = =

At E3 2012 , a single @-@ player demo was showcased , showing new gameplay mechanics and combat systems . The demo revealed a redesigned quick time event mini @-@ game , which replaced some button prompts with a new , prompt @-@ less , free @-@ form system . It featured the World Weapons mechanic and Kratos was shown to be capable of swinging opponents through the air while simultaneously attacking . Other new features included the Fire of Ares magic and the " Life Cycle " mechanic . Several new enemies , such as the juggernaut (elephantaur) and the sea beast Charybdis , were also featured . The E3 2012 single @-@ player demo was included with early copies of the " Director 's Cut " Blu @-@ ray edition and Blu @-@ ray / DVD Combo Pack

versions of the film , Total Recall , which were released on December 18 , 2012 .

On February 26 , 2013 , a new single @-@ player demo titled the Prison of the Damned was released on the PlayStation Store to download . Participants of the Rise of the Warrior social challenge who were on the Spartan team received access to the demo on February 20 . The demo comprises the first 30 @-@ minutes of the single @-@ player mode . God of War : Ascension was released in North America on March 12 , 2013 , in mainland Europe and PAL regions on March 13 , in Australia and New Zealand on March 14 , and in the UK and Ireland on March 15 . In the US , it sold 570 @, @ 000 units in the first month of its release not including bundled sales , making it the fourth @-@ best @-@ selling game of March 2013 . The game 's sales were significantly lower than God of War III 's first month sales , which were 1 @. @ 1 million units . On October 15 , 2013 , God of War : Ascension was released as a digital download on the PlayStation Store in North America . The digital version was released in Europe and Australia on October 23 , and in Japan and Asia on October 31 . God of War : Ascension can be played from Sony 's game streaming service PlayStation Now , which is available on the PlayStation 3 , PlayStation Vita , PlayStation 4 , PlayStation TV , BRAVIA televisions , and select smart TVs of other brands . It became available during the service 's beta stage on September 24 , 2014 .

= = = Marketing = = =

God of War : Ascension 's marketing campaign initially focused on its multiplayer feature . Between October 22 , 2012 , and the day of the game 's release , there were four multiplayer trailers that featured each of the gods that players can align to , showcasing some of their abilities that players receive from them . On December 12 , 2012 , a multiplayer trailer titled " Evil Ways " was released , featuring Polyphemus . The first single @-@ player trailer since the initial one in April 2012 came on January 19 , 2013 . A live action trailer titled " From Ashes " was played during Super Bowl XLVII , which was followed by the last single @-@ player trailer on February 26 .

On June 4 , 2012 , Santa Monica Studio announced the release of God of War : Ascension ? Collector 's Edition , which was available for a limited time in North America . The package included a 6 inches (150 mm) statue of Kratos , a premium SteelBook game case , and exclusive downloadable content (DLC) available via the PlayStation Network (PSN) . The exclusive DLC included the official game soundtrack , a PS3 dynamic XrossMediaBar (XMB) theme , a PSN avatar pack , 48 hours of double XP for multiplayer , and a Season Pass to unlock all future DLC weapons and armor at no additional cost . On August 30 , 2012 , Santa Monica announced the release of the Collector 's Edition for European territories . The God of War : Ascension ? Special Edition was also announced for release in European territories and was available for the same price as the standard edition . It included the premium SteelBook game case and the DLC that was available in the Collector 's Edition , although not the Season Pass . The God of War : Ascension Legacy Bundle , which included God of War : Ascension , God of War Saga , a one @-@ month subscription to PlayStation Plus , and a 500 GB garnet red PS3 , was available for a limited time . Similarly , the UK received an exclusive PS3 bundle , which included a white 500 GB PS3 , the God of War : Ascension ? Special Edition , and a special God of War : Ascension DualShock 3 controller , which was released separately in Australia .

Pre @-@ orders for the Collector 's Edition commenced on June 4 , 2012 , in North America . Participating retailers offered the " Mythological Heroes Multiplayer DLC Pack " as a bonus for pre @-@ ordering the standard or Collector 's Edition of the game . The DLC pack included the armors of Achilles , Odysseus , Orion , and Perseus . Along with the DLC pack , GameStop offered an exclusive pre @-@ order bonus ? the armor and spear of King Leonidas , as depicted by Gerard Butler in the 2007 film 300 , for use in multiplayer mode , and a double @-@ sided God of War : Ascension poster measuring 22 by 28 inches (56 cm x 71 cm) . For a limited time , all copies of God of War : Ascension purchased from Best Buy included the multiplayer weapon Mjölhnir (the Hammer of Thor) , inspired by the television series Vikings , as DLC . Walmart offered the Blade of Judgment multiplayer weapon as an exclusive pre @-@ order bonus . All copies of God of War : Ascension included early access to the demo of Naughty Dog 's video game The Last of Us . In

North America , all copies included a voucher to download the characters Zeus and Isaac Clarke for PlayStation All @-@ Stars Battle Royale .

= = = Rise of the Warrior = = =

Rise of the Warrior was a graphic novel on GodofWar.com that featured a social experience that ran from October 22 , 2012 , until March 19 , 2013 . For the social experience of the graphic novel , players " [lived] out [their] warrior 's journey " and " [embarked] on a quest for redemption that [lead players] toward becoming the next Champion of the Gods " . Players were aligned with either the Spartans or the Trojans and competed via a number of social challenges , such as answering questions and solving riddles . In the first challenge , the teams competed to earn their army a week of exclusive , early access to the multiplayer beta test that began on December 12 , and 30 days of PlayStation Plus , which was won by the Spartans ; the Trojans received access on December 17 . The Spartans also won the next team challenge and received early access to the Prison of the Damned single @-@ player demo on February 20 , 2013 . Players could also earn early , in @-@ game unlocks for the final game 's multiplayer mode , including exclusive weapons and armor for all players who attained the rank of Champion of the Gods . Christopher Shy was the artist of the graphic novel .

Rise of the Warrior was a prequel story that tied into God of War : Ascension 's single @-@ player and multiplayer modes , and had 20 chapters . The story followed an unnamed warrior , also referred to as the champion or the redeemed warrior , who became the player 's character in the multiplayer mode . The warrior was a native of Kirra whose father was killed by a cruel general who poisoned the water supply of the village , killing many people . Before dying , the warrior 's father beckoned him to honor the gods and swear to never let harm come to their family . The warrior swore his father 's oath and was met by a cloaked figure known as The Giver , who guided him and followed him throughout his journey . Soon after , the warrior called upon Ares to save his people from the poisonous water ; the god destroyed the aqueduct and water wheel that supplied water to the village . The warrior then encountered the surviving soldiers who were under his father 's command . One soldier told the warrior that swords alone could not defeat the general . The warrior and his men traveled to the land of Aeaëa and recruited the witch Circe , who seemingly also sought revenge against the general . Circe granted the soldiers magical weapons to aid them on their journey , and suggested that they see the Oracle of Delphi to discover whether the general had any weaknesses . During this time , the warrior vowed loyalty to Poseidon and to protect his men .

After traveling through Delphi , the warrior obtained the venomous blood of a cerberus . Eventually , both Circe and the warrior encountered the general , who was revealed to be the warrior 's uncle . The general revealed that he killed the warrior 's father because he refused to join the general . Circe was then revealed to be the general 's lover who had only aided the warrior so he would reach the general , who planned to offer the warrior a chance to serve him in his warmongering conquests . The warrior refused , and Circe offered him with a choice ; to serve the general and his men would be spared from Circe 's wrath , or to kill the general and his men shall die . The Giver , who followed the two , reminded the warrior that if he were to kill the general , who was a member of his family , the oath he made to his father would be broken , yet if he killed Circe , his men would perish and the oath he made to protect his men would be broken . The warrior declared that he would not slay Circe and defended the lives of his men . He tricked the general into drinking from a cup he had secretly filled with the cerberus 's blood , which killed the general . Circe was aghast at the warrior 's vengeful act and retreated . Because the warrior killed his own uncle , the oath he made to his father was broken . The Giver revealed himself to be Orkos , the oath keeper of the Furies and the warrior was imprisoned by the Furies in the Prison of the Damned .

= = = Downloadable content = = =

In addition to the downloadable content (DLC) included in the Collector 's Edition , the pre @-@ order bonuses , and DLC from Rise of the Warrior , the developers released several multiplayer

DLC packs after the game's release. All multiplayer maps that were released post @-@ launch are free, and players who obtained the Season Pass from the Collector's Edition received all DLC weapons and armors at no additional cost. DLC weapons and armors can be purchased separately or in bundles. Other DLC, such as XP boosters, are available; these were not covered by the Season Pass. On May 7, 2013, the first set of DLC armors and weapons, including the "Armors of Anarchy" and the "Blades of Darkness", were released for purchase together with the free Chimeran Armor. Several other DLC packs, such as the "Primordials Pack", the "Champions Pack", the "Marks of the Gods Pack", and the "Legendary Spears Pack", were released.

In June 2013, Santa Monica announced the "Community Cape Design Contest", in which the God of War community could create and submit original cape designs. The winner's cape design was released as DLC. From July 3 until July 7, Sony allowed players to access all available DLC weapons for free, after which, they were required to purchase the DLC if they wished to continue using it. All experience gained per weapon during this trial was retained if the DLC was purchased. Some of the last sets of DLC released included co @-@ op weapons, the "Mantles of the Gods Pack", several gauntlets, and the "Fury Capes Pack". On October 11, 2013, Santa Monica announced that no further DLC maps, weapons, armors, or marks would be produced, but multiplayer gaming would still be supported with patch updates. All DLC items received special pricing options for the release of the digital version of God of War: Ascension. To celebrate the one year anniversary of the game's release, from March 25 through April 2, all DLC armor and weapons were available to download for free, XP boosters were discounted by 50%, and the developers released a Santa Monica Studio cape and a "Marked One" mark, allowing player's warriors to have Kratos' red tattoo when equipped.

The first maps were released via patch 1 @.@ 06, called the "Hunter" update, on May 23, 2013. The "Tower of Delphi" and a modified version of the "Coliseum of Persia", which added Trial of the Gods mode, were included in this update. Because of technical difficulties experienced by some players who downloaded the patch, it was retracted and re @-@ released via update 1 @.@ 07 on June 3. Players who lost all online progress due to 1 @.@ 06 received two 48 @-@ hour voucher codes granting five times the amount of XP earned, the Season Pass, 50 weapon and armor shards, and a special voucher code for the "Ascension" feature that ascended these players to "Hero", giving them immediate access to the Godly weapons and armors. The second set of maps were released via update 1 @.@ 09 on July 11. This update included four maps for the Bout of Honor mode: "Canyons of Kirra", "Chamber of the Flame", "Landing at Delos", and "Streets of Sparta" and a four @-@ player map, "The Whirlpool of Alecto". On August 1, update 1 @.@ 10 was released and added Trial of the Gods to the "Labyrinth of Daedalus" map. The last multiplayer map, the eight @-@ player "Furnace of Archimedes", was released via update 1 @.@ 11 on August 27.

= = Soundtrack = =

God of War: Ascension (Original Soundtrack) was composed by Tyler Bates and was released on iTunes on March 5, 2013 by SCE and La @-@ La Land Records. It was included as DLC in the God of War: Ascension Collector's Edition and Special Edition. On October 15, the soundtrack was made available for free on PSN for a limited time. A notable feature of Ascension's soundtrack is that it was scored by only one composer; all the previous games had multiple. Tyler Bates previously scored the similarly themed film 300 and game Rise of the Argonauts. Recorded at Abbey Road Studios with top musicians and vocalists, Bates said "My goal was to create a sound that supported the timeless dark age of God of War, while expanding the parameters of the 'Sword and Sandals' genre." He said that although the game's story is linear, he approached the project as if he were scoring a novel as opposed to a film. Bates did not play any of the previous games and chose not to in order to take the score "to new places without being overtly aware of the great music that is emblematic of the first three installments of this storied franchise". Rafe Pearlman and Ciscandra Nostalgia helped Bates and contributed their voices to the score; Pearlman provided thematic voices and Nostalgia created the voice of the Furies.

Throughout the score , Bates uses a combination of techniques " to increase the drama of the game " said Emily McMillan of Game Music Online , who gave the album a 4 out of 5 stars . She said one of Bates 's signature techniques is " an intense and simultaneous crescendo and glissando . " All of the themes take place on a harmonic minor scale . On the track , " Warriors ' Truth " , Bates used Gerard Marino 's main God of War theme and " twists it for the prequel setting " , " taking the harmonic ascending scale and reverting it to a downwards pattern with a harsh choir / brass combination . " The track " Visions of Ruin " features the cimbalom , which is rarely used in video game soundtracks . She said overall " The music is powerful , rich , and pulsing " , though listening to the whole album can seem repetitive .

= = Reception = =

God of War : Ascension received a generally favorable reception upon release . Aggregating review websites GameRankings and Metacritic gave it an average review score of 79 @.@ 34 % (based on 58 reviews) and 80 / 100 (based on 89 reviews) , respectively . Critics praised the fundamental gameplay and spectacle , but were critical of the lack of new ideas and gave a mixed response to the additional multiplayer mode . Alex Simmons of IGN said the redesigned combat system adds a source of depth : " Learning how to use each power effectively ... provides a strategic lifeline when there ? s no energy re @.@ gen chest nearby " . Although he initially found the World Weapons useful , he felt that they became unnecessary after upgrading the Blades of Chaos . He praised the magic system , stating that since magic attacks are unlocked at a later time , " It 's a positive step " because players cannot rely on them as much as they may have done in previous installments , and it encourages players " to think wisely about where to allocate experience points rather than being the ultimate badass from the outset " .

Dale North of Destructoid praised the new gameplay mechanics , saying , " God of War has never looked or played better than this " . Xav de Matos of Joystiq said the combat is simpler than God of War III 's , and it rarely required much adjustment . Matos also said , " Combat always looks impressive and chaotic " . Simmons said the majority of the gameplay is balanced , and that Ascension " is probably the easiest " in the series , with the exception of the large amount of enemies in some sections where dying " feels cheap and frustrating " . He said the Trial of Archimedes will likely frustrate advanced players , and " is tougher than anything I 've played in a God of War game before " . Hollander Cooper of GamesRadar was critical of apparent shifts in difficulty at certain points , saying it " [tests] your patience , rather than your skills ? including one that 's easily the most difficult section in any God of War game to date , for all the wrong reasons " .

Simmons said the story is not as compelling as previous installments , stating that in comparison to Zeus and Ares , " the Furies don 't quite cut it " . He said although the narrative is " meticulously delivered " , it " felt a bit incidental " . Matos said , " the narrative fabric woven throughout the franchise has begun to split " , and Ascension does little to enhance its characters " in any meaningful way " . According to Matos , the plot framing does not work and the narrative structure " is just too chaotic " with little room to process it . He did say though that the game provides the " distinct God of War flair " known to the series .

North noted the enhanced graphics engine stating , " from the glossy textures , slick animations , and ultra @.@ realistic lighting , there 's a shine and polish that runs throughout the game that makes it a perfect send @.@ off for the PS3 " . Similarly , Cooper wrote , " Kratos battles some of the most impressive foes he 's ever fought " , going on to say the visuals " are not only the best the franchise has seen , but some of the most impressive on the PlayStation 3 " . Edge magazine said , " Aesthetically , it 's a great fit for PS3 's twilight years " , but they had frustrations with the visual approach , such as some camera angles .

Matos was critical of the game 's multiplayer mode . He felt that the connection to the single @.@ player mode was " a weird narrative tie @.@ in " , and that although the gameplay translates well into the multiplayer element , " the entire experience may be too chaotic to enrapture a large audience " . He also worried that balance may be an issue over time . He praised the maps , stating they were well designed and approved of the elements that can give players an advantage . He said

although the multiplayer mode can be fun and satisfying , " it doesn 't feel deep enough to command much more than a furiously dedicated fan following " . Simmons said the multiplayer mode is " a genuinely fresh addition ... that successfully carries over many of the hallmarks of the much @-@ loved single @-@ player [game] " . Of the multiplayer modes , he most enjoyed Team Favor of the Gods , but said that the combat does not offer enough depth " to make [multiplayer] a truly engaging experience " . He said as a result of experience points being easily acquired , " multiplayer feels more like a curiosity that provides a few hours of enjoyment rather than being an essential addition " . Edge said the multiplayer element is an " evolutionary step " with " some fine ideas ... that will form part of this genre ' s future template " . Although " chaotic at first " and options being overwhelming , it " [starts] to make sense " as players learn the levels . Edge also said the fixed camera system is an asset because " you can always see exactly what ' s going on and fight your opponents instead of the viewpoint " , and that the biggest success is the color @-@ coding system , which " effectively lets you know when you have an opening and when to run " .

= = = Controversy = = =

Some reviewers issued complaints about the title of one of the game 's trophies , named " Bros before Hos " , which is received after graphically face @-@ stomping a female villain . In response to the criticisms of misogyny , Santa Monica released a patch changing the name of the trophy to " Bros before Foes " .

= = = Accolades = = =

Unlike previous installments , God of War : Ascension won no awards , however , it received nominations in several Best of E3 2012 categories from various media outlets . These nominations included " Best Action / Adventure " and " Best Multiplayer " from Game Rant , " Best PS3 Game " and " Best Action / Adventure Game " from G4 , " Best PlayStation 3 Game " from Destructoid , and " Best PS3 Game " and " Best Action Game " from IGN . The game was a nominee for " Best Visual Design " at the 2013 Golden Joystick Awards . At the 2014 Writers Guild of America Videogame Awards , it was a nominee for " Outstanding Achievement in Videogame Writing " and during the 2014 D.I.C.E. Summit , it was a nominee for the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences award for " Outstanding Achievement in Sound Design " .