

Astrology—Part Three

Alleged Biblical Evidence for Astrology

By Dr. John Ankerberg, Dr. John Weldon

We now turn to another area which astrologers claim supports their views: the Bible.

Joseph Goodavage, author of *Astrology: the Space Age Science* and *Write Your Own Horoscope*; says, “The Bible is full of the philosophy of astrology.”¹ Jeff Mayo, founder of the British “Mayo School of Astrology,” remarks, “The Bible is full of astrological references.”² This view is shared by many other astrologers as well.³

The following are views of the Bible commonly held by astrologers. We have supplied a brief comment after each.

1. The Bible is not the Word of God but the words of great men of history. (What is forgotten is that the Bible claims to be the divinely inspired Word of God; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; cf. *A Course in Miracles Volume 3, Manual for Teachers*, Huntington Station, NY: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1977.)
2. The Bible has been corrupted over the years; thus, many of its alleged astrological and reincarnation teachings have been deleted. (Where is the slightest bit of evidence that shows such material was once in the Bible?)
3. Parts of the Bible were written plainly “in code” and only astrologers understand that code. (Most scholars believe the Bible was written plainly in Hebrew and Greek, since the nation of Israel and the early Christians would have had a hard time deciphering a foreign “code.”)
4. Because the Bible was written by great men and because it has been so influential throughout history, some of these men must have been astrologers. Astrology itself is so important and influential, it is difficult to believe none of the biblical authors practiced this great art. (This is still an argument from thin air. Not only that, it completely ignores the fact that Moses, Isaiah, and other Old Testament prophets condemned astrology.)

Now let us take some examples from the Bible itself. In the material below, we will quote the Bible passage alleged to teach astrology; second, we will examine the astrologers’ claim about the passage; third, we will give the Christian response to that claim. (Note: all references in this section are from the NIV.)*

Genesis 1:14. “God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years.’”

By teaching that the word “signs” here indicates heavenly bodies (planets), given by God as astrological signs, astrologers claim the Bible is affirming astrology. Some astrologers assert that the “signs” here refer to Aries, Taurus, Gemini, etc. However, the word “signs” here cannot refer to the astrological signs. In Genesis 1:14-15, the word “signs” is described and defined: “To separate the day from the night,... [and] to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” (See also Genesis 1:16.)

*The authors would like to thank Dr. Sherman Kanagy of Purdue University for some helpful comments in this section.

Genesis 37:9-11. “I [Joseph] had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and 11 stars were bowing down to me:”

Astrologers believe the reference to the sun, moon, and 11 stars proves that Joseph and his brothers believed in astrology. However, there is not the slightest indication that they have anything to do with astrology, or even with astronomy. The sun, moon, and 11 stars are used symbolically to refer to Joseph’s parents and his brothers. This is the clear statement of the text itself. (See also Genesis 49:3-27.)

Numbers 24:17. “A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.”

Astrologers claim that the star coming out of Jacob proves there was astrological belief in the days of Moses. But the reference has nothing to do with astrology. The word “star” is metaphorical for a person, the Messiah, who will be a descendant of Jacob. Additional proof of this interpretation is that the text refers not only to a star but to a scepter (a ruler), who will rise out of Israel. In other words, the same person who comes from the line of Jacob will also be a ruler.

Judges 3:20. “From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera.”

Astrologers claim this is a reference to the influence of the stars on Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army. But to do this, they must interpret a poetic or figurative passage literally. These words occur in the “Song of Deborah,” which is a poetic victory song describing Israel’s victory over her enemies. (See Judges 4:7; 5:20-21; Joshua 10:11-14.)

Job 9:9-10; 38:31-33. “He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be numbered.”

“Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God’s dominion over the earth?”

Astrologers claim that the mere mention of the constellations here is evidence that the Bible supports astrology. But this is nonsense. Job 9:9-10 refers to God as the Maker of various constellations. The ancient Israelites had limited astronomical knowledge, but they were nonetheless aware that it was God who had created the constellations and who was in charge of the universe.

Isaiah 13:10; cf. Joel 2:31; Luke 21:25. “The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light”

Astrologers believe that these references to the sun and moon being darkened, not giving their light (turning to blood), prove the Bible supports astrology. But all of these references refer to the day of the Lord, the second coming of Jesus Christ. These events have nothing to do with astrology. If astrologers claim them for today, it is obvious that the sun and the moon are not darkened and have not turned to blood. Also, Isaiah 13:7 points out that in that day of the Lord the stars and constellations will not show their light. Would any astrologer claim this occurs today?

Jeremiah 10:2. “Do not learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by signs in the sky, though the nations are terrified by them.”

Astrologers claim the reference to “signs in the sky” is an astrological reference. We agree that this passage is speaking about astrology; the problem for astrologers is that the passage rebukes trust in astrology. The Bible condemns “the ways of the nations,” which refers to their astrological practices. The text also says the nations were terrified by *literal* signs in the sky, not *symbolic* signs in astrological charts. The ancients were terrified by eclipses, since they thought the moon was being “eaten” by demons. Meteors and comets were also seen as portents of evil. In the Bible God tells His people not to be terrified by literal events in the sky, because they are merely things that He has made. He is in control over all things. The context of Jeremiah 10 is to exalt the true God over the idols and the superstitious fears (such as astrology) that control their lives.

Daniel 4:26. “Your kingdom will be restored to you when you [Nebuchadnezzar] acknowledge that Heaven rules.”

Astrologers claim that this passage reveals that “Heaven” (the stars and planets) “rules” (influences) over the affairs of men. But it teaches no such thing. Daniel was no astrologer (see the following). The word “heaven” here is used as a symbol for God. Thus, in Daniel 2:37-38, Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that it was the God of heaven, not the stars, who gave him dominion over the Babylonian empire.

Matthew 2:1-11. “After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.’... After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.”

Astrologers claim that this means the Bible supports astrology. But a careful examination of this passage reveals:

- The star actually moved because it preceded the Magi.
- In some unknown manner the star was able to indicate the exact place Jesus and His parents were staying.
- The star apparently was lost from sight for a period of time, and then became visible again.
- The star seems to have been visible only to the Magi.

This was not a normal star but a miracle from God to guide and direct the Magi to Jesus. This was a temporary phenomenon and had no other purpose than stated. Certainly it had no astrological meaning. If the only purpose for the star was to lead the Magi to Christ, this would also explain why they alone appeared to have seen it.

Astrologers have claimed these Magi were astrologers, but their conclusion is not proven. That these men are mentioned favorably, and that God deals with them especially in relationship to His Son, indicates that they were probably not astrologers. The term “magi” primarily means “wise men,” and astrology was part of the practice and interest of some “wise men,” but certainly not of all. Nothing in this passage condones or approves the practice of astrology.

The Book of Daniel. Astrologers cite the book of Daniel as proof of God’s acceptance of astrology because God made Daniel the head of the astrologers and magicians in

Babylon (Daniel 2:48). If Daniel was the head of all the Babylonian wise men, it is assumed that he was proficient in astrology. After all, Babylon was widely known for its astrological practices.

There are several astrological misconceptions here. First, the biblical account of Daniel explicitly attributes all of Daniel's success to God alone, not to his alleged practice of astrology or devotion to the stars (Daniel 1:17; 2:27-28; 4:17-18). Second, Daniel was a godly man who, according to his own testimony, abhorred the idolatrous and evil practices of Babylon (Daniel 1:8; 4:27). Third, it is unthinkable that God would have permitted Daniel to engage in the very practices He condemned, and for which the nation itself was now under judgment. Fourth, that Daniel did not embrace astrology is seen in the fact that he exposed the failures of the Babylonian astrologers with the true knowledge given by God.

Far from endorsing astrology, Daniel rejected it and pointed men to the counsel of God. The entire book of Daniel reveals the uselessness of astrology and stands against it. In Daniel, astrologers have a 100 percent failure rate when compared with the words of the one true God (Daniel 2:27-28; 4:7; 5:7-9,12-13,15).

Here is a list of biblical passages that strongly condemn astrology. (Note: In several of the passages, the pagan gods Molech, Astarte (the Asherah pole), and Baal were associated with worship of the heavens as well as human sacrifice.) Leviticus 18:21; Leviticus 20:1-6; Deuteronomy 4:19; Deuteronomy 17:2-5; Deuteronomy 18:9-11; 2 Kings 17:16; 2 Kings 21:5-6; 2 Kings 23:4,11; 2 Kings 23:24; Isaiah 47:13-14; Jeremiah 7:18; Jeremiah 8:1,2; Jeremiah 19:13; Ezekiel 8:10-11,16; Amos 5:25-26; Zephaniah 1:4-6; Acts 7:42; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 2:8,20.

Astrology is rejected in the Bible because it is futile and worthless, because it includes involvement with occult powers, and because, as we will see, it is a form of idolatry (worshiping the creation rather than the Creator). Thus, astrology is seen to have no power to save men from their sins; it opens people to demonic deception, and it robs God of the glory that is due Him alone.

The assessment of Drs. Bjornstad and Johnson are correct: "Absolutely NO scriptural passage supports astrology, although several indicate awareness of its existence and that of the accompanying astral worship. Moreover, not a single reference even indicates tolerance of this art."⁴

The Astrologers' Responses

Many modern (especially "Christian") astrologers agree that God condemns *worshiping* the stars, as that would be idolatry, but they claim that they are not advocating worship of the stars; rather, they are simply taking advantage of the help and information God has made available through the stars. Let's examine this view.

In Exodus 20, the Ten Commandments are listed. Astrology violates the first two commandments: "You shall have no other gods before me," and, "You shall not bow down to them or worship them." Throughout history, astrologers have actually bowed down to the stars and worshiped them, and even today this occurs in various non-Western nations. But those astrologers who do not literally bow down before the stars nevertheless serve them, which violates the second commandment

By definition, worship includes the idea of religious devotion and reverence for an object, whether living (a god) or dead (an idol). Many astrologers are pantheists, people who believe the universe is living and that it is divine. The stars and planets are revered as part of the larger divine universe. The alleged power of the stars and planets over their

lives evokes feelings of religious awe and devotion. To serve means “to perform duties for, to give obedience and reverent honor to, to wait upon.” All astrologers serve the heavens in this manner. That is, the positions of the stars are dutifully recorded and the information derived from them is carefully analyzed and religiously obeyed. The heavens are honored for their power as the obedient astrologer trustingly waits upon their “advice.” And as the apostle Paul tells us, we become a slave to the thing we obey (Romans 6:16).

Notes:

1. Joseph F. Goodavage, *Astrology: The Space Age Science*, New York: Signet, 1967, p. XI.
2. Jeff Mayo, *Astrology*, London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1978, p. 7.
3. Sherman P. Kanagy II, and Kenneth D. Boa, *Astrology—Scientific, Philosophical and Religious Issues*, ms., 1986, p. 197; Nicholas deVore, *Encyclopedia of Astrology*, Totowa, NJ: Littlefield Adams & Co., 1976, p. VII.
4. James Bjornstad, Shildes Johnson, *Stars, Signs and Salvation in the Age of Aquarius*, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1976, p. 43.