

What Should a Christian Think About Astrology?

Isaiah 47.12-13 *Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.*

The horoscope to the Western mind is harmless, and is not astrology innocent gazing into the stars? *Hasting's Bible Dictionary* in its weighty entry *Magic, Divination And Sorcery* describes one of the epochs in its rich history whereby Israel came into contact with the advanced dark arts of Babylon.

(c) *The Captivity brought Israel into contact with a much more fully developed system of magic and divination than they had known before. In Babylon, not only were illicit magical practices widely indulged in, but the use of such arts was recognized by their being entrusted to a privileged class (Dan 2:2). The officials are here denominated 'magicians' (chartummîm, scribes who were acquainted with occult arts), 'enchanters' ('ashshâphîm, prob. a Bab. word meaning 'those who used conjurations,' but its derivation is uncertain), 'sorcerers' (mĕkashshĕphîm, in its root-meaning perhaps indicating those who mixed ingredients for magical purposes [LXX pharmakoi], but this is not certain), and 'Chaldæans' (kasdîm, a name which, from being a national designation, had come to mean those who were skilled in the occult lore of Babylonia and could interpret dreams). Recent discoveries have revealed that the Babylonians believed in a vast number of demons who could be compelled by proper spells; also they practised astrology (Isa 47:12-13), augury from the inspection of victims (Eze 21:21), the tying of magic knots, and the designation of fortunate and unfavourable days.*

Astrology found its way into the satanic traditions of the elders, against which Jesus had no little complaint in Mark 7.9. *Hasting's Bible Dictionary* again offers, *Haggadah* (from the root meaning 'to narrate').—*This includes the whole of the non-legal matter of Rabbinical literature, such as homilies, stories about Biblical saints and heroes; besides this it touches upon such subjects as astronomy, astrology, medicine, magic, philosophy, and all that would come under the term 'folklore.'* This word, too, was originally used in the plural *Haggadoth*.

Haggadah is also used in a special sense of the ritual for Passover Eve. By and by, these forbidden arts were sadly no stranger to the Hebrews, for Josiah the prophesied king arose as an expression of Jehovah's indignation against this forbidden practice. The uprightness of the boy king's heart the scripture records, And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant. Surely there was not held such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah. But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, in which this passover was held to the LORD in Jerusalem. Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. And like him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. Notwithstanding, the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, with which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations by which Manasseh had provoked him. And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will reject this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there (II Ki. 23.21-21).

Just Josiah, whose name *means the LORD heals*, began to seek the Most High at the tender age of eight, and by twelve, began to be zealous for the Lord, for the next six years the king waged an war against Israelitish iconoclasm in any variety according to the word of Jehovah. It is of no little minute to recollect the absolute defection of Josiah's day; the law of Moses was utterly forgotten until the priest Hilkiah found the roll in the disregarded house of the LORD left in shambles. The entirety of the just king's heart, not only his garments (Joel 2.13-17) rent. According to the commands to the monarch in the law, *When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination to the LORD: and because of*

these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened to observers of times, and to diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do (Deut. 18.9-14), the great reforming king filled with God's Spirit of truth purged out the dead, deceitful works of Israel. Dr Gill gives insight into astrology in his comments on the Isaiah passage the reader encountered at the genesis of this article. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels,.... Taken of astrologers, diviners, and soothsayers; who were never able to give any satisfactory answers to questions put to them, or to give good advice in cases of emergency; as appears from Nebuchadnezzar's consultation with them about his dream; and Belshazzar's about the handwriting upon the wall, which was the very night that the city was taken, Dan 2:2,

let now the astrologers; or, "viewers of the heavens" (s); not that look upon them, and consider them as the work of God's hands, in order to glorify him; but that examine the face of the skies, and the position of the heavenly bodies, their conjunctions with, and aspects on each other, in order to foretell what shall be below: or, "the dividers of the heavens" (t), as it may be rendered, from the use of the word in the Arabic language; who divide the heavens into so many parts, or houses; who, as Kimchi (u), from the same use of the word, fix and determine things according to the stars; and who next are called "the stargazers"; that look at them, and, according to their position, conjunction, aspect, and influence, judge what will come to pass among men. So Cicero observes (w), that the Chaldeans, by long observation of the stars, were thought to have formed a science, whereby they could foretell what should happen to everyone, and what fate he was born to:

the monthly prognosticators; or "that make known months", or "for the months" (x); what shall be in every month; what weather it will be, and what things shall happen; such as our almanac makers. Let these now all meet together,

and stand up and save thee from those things that shall come upon thee; which they were never able to do; for if they could not foretell these things by their art, it could not be thought they could give any directions how to escape them, or put upon any methods that would secure from them. (s) הוֹבְרֵי שָׁמַיִם "speculantes coelos", Pagninus, Montanus, Tigurine version; "contemplatores coelorum", Vitringa. (t) "resecuit, amputavit", Golius, Castel. (u)

*Sepher Shorash. rad. הבר (w) De Divinatione, l. 1. c. 1. (x) מודיעים לחדשים "cognoscere faciunt menses", Pagninus; "facientes", Montanus; "qui notas faciunt in menses", Junius & Tremellius, Piscator; i.e. "praedictiones suas notificantes in menses", Cocceius; "indicantes novilunia", Vitringa. Well does pithy John Wesley remark on the word weariness, *Wearied - Thou hast spent thy time and strength in going from one to another, and all to no purpose.* Albert Barnes in his remark on the text gives insight as to the nature of this esoteric practice, *Let now the astrologers - Call in now the aid of the various classes of diviners on whom thou hast relied to save thee from the impending calamity and ruin. The words rendered here 'astrologers' (שמים הברי) hoberēy shâmayim mean properly "the dividers of the heavens;" those who divided, or cut up the heavens for the purpose of augury, or to take a horoscope (Gesenius). What this art was is not certainly known. It is probable that it referred to their designating certain stars, or constellations, or conjunctions of the planets in certain parts of the heavens, as being fortunate and propitious, and certain others as unfortunate and unpropitious. At first, astrology was synonymous with astronomy. But in process of time, it came to denote the science which professes to discover certain connections between the position and movements of the heavenly bodies, and the events which occur on the earth.**

It was supposed that the rising and setting, the conjunction and opposition of the planets, exerted a powerful influence over the fates of people; over the health of their bodies, the character of their minds, and the vicissitudes of their lives. Some regarded, it would seem, the positions of the stars as mere signs of the events which were to follow; and others, and probably by far the larger portion, supposed that those positions had a positive influence in directing and controlling the affairs of this lower world. The origin of this science is involved in great obscurity. Aristotle ascribes the invention to the Babylonians and Egyptians. Ptolemy concurs in this opinion, and Cicero traces it to the same origin. Lucian says that both these nations, as well as the Lybians, borrowed it from the Ethiopians, and that the Greeks owed their knowledge of this pretended science to the poet Orpheus. The science prevailed, it is probable, however, much more early in India; and in China it appears to be coeval with their history.

The Arabians have been distinguished for their attachment to it; and even Tycho Brahe was a zealous defender of astrology, and Kepler believed that the conjunctions of the planets were capable of producing great effects on human affairs. It is also a remarkable fact that Lord

Bacon thought that the science required to be purified from errors rather than altogether rejected. Those who wish to inquire into the various systems of astrology, and the arts by which this absurd science has maintained an influence in the world, may consult the "Edin. Encyclopedia," Art. "Astrology," and the authorities enumerated there. The thing referred to in the passage before us, and which was practiced in Babylon, was, probably, that of forecasting future events, or telling what would occur by the observation of the positions of the heavenly bodies. Finally, the French reformer Jean Cauvin remarks, 13. Thou hast wearied thyself. He now declares still more plainly what he had formerly expressed in somewhat obscure language; that all the schemes which Babylon had previously adopted would lead to her ruin; for she nourished within herself a vain confidence arising from a belief of her power and wisdom, as if nothing could do her injury.

In the multitude of thy counsels. He calls them not only "counsels," but "a multitude of counsels," in order to declare that there is no good reason for being puffed up or exalting themselves, whatever may be the ingenuity or skill of their efforts to deceive; because their crafty counsels, the more numerous and the more plausible they are, will give them the greater annoyance. This is a general statement against those who, trusting to their own ability, contrive and form counsels of every sort, and, relying on their prudence, collect all the stratagems and annoyances that can be invented for oppressing others; for God scatters all their contrivances, and overturns their fraudulent designs, as he threatened that all unlawful means would be unsuccessful. "They dare," says he, "to take counsel, but not from me; they weave a web, but not from my Spirit." (Isa 30:1.)

Thus do the consultations of many persons altogether fail of success, because they do not ask counsel of God, from whom (Jas 1:5) all wisdom should be sought; for, the more they toil, the greater annoyance do they suffer, and they can obtain no advantage. Well does David (231) say, (Psa 127:2,) that "in vain do they toil who rise early in the morning, and go late to rest, and eat the bread of sorrow;" for he speaks of unbelievers, who do not cast their cares on the Lord, but, trusting to their industry, make many daring efforts. The Lord ridicules this confidence, and causes them to be at length disappointed, and to feel how worthless are all their wicked labors and efforts, and how in this way they are punished for their rashness; while at the same time "the beloved of God sleep pleasantly," as is said in that passage. Not that they are freed from all annoyances, but that they do not weary themselves with useless

labor, and they commit to God the result of all their affairs.

Let them stand now. Here we perceive what counsellors are chiefly meant by the Prophet, that is, those diviners who boasted to the people of the empty name of science; as if they understood, all future events by looking at the stars. But we have formerly spoken of that judicial astrology, and of its uselessness. If it be objected, that it was not in the power of those men to mitigate the dangers which were hanging over them, I reply, the Babylonians would have done it at their suggestion, if they had foreseen the calamity; and, since they did not foresee it, the conclusion is, that their art had no foundation whatever. It is idle to pretend, as some do, that the Prophet reproves unskilfulness in the art, and not the art itself; for he addresses the Babylonians, who were the authors of this science.

The binders of the heavens. He says wittily that they “bind the heavens;” because they utter their decisions as boldly as if, by binding and tying the stars, they held mankind in chains. Yet, if any one choose to render the term “inchanters,” the meaning will not be inapplicable, and both are denoted by the verb חָבַר (chabar). Although to observe the position of the stars is not in itself sinful, the Prophet says that it is carried farther than is proper by those who draw from it conclusions as to doubtful events, and appears indirectly to contrast those observers with the prophets, in order to make them more detested, because they extinguish all divine predictions; for, when men attach to the stars a fatal necessity, all the judgments of God must fall to the ground.

(231) In the Latin original the word is “Solomon,” and not “David;” but this oversight has been corrected in the French Version. — Ed.

Yet, when the believer turns to the New Covenant, he finds no greater condemnation of this form of occult science (Col. 2.8-9) than to find it cast out of the present heavenly city, blessed Sion, New Jerusalem. Dear friends, let us never be found to observe in the practice of the lady of kingdoms (Isa. 47.15; Apoc. 18.15), that fallen Babylonian Whore on seven hills uses to bewitch her merchant suitors! Hearken not to this miserable comforter, for it is weighed in the balance and found wanting! Turn to God who liberally gives wisdom to the hungry (Jas. 1.5), and have not pity on this gourd (Jonah 4.10-11). The Faithful and True, speaking of all things forbidden in His kingdom; the King is the law; gives three perfect darts

into its liver. All hail the words of King Jesus! *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them, and be their God. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things have passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said to me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said to me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and lewd men, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Apoc. 21.1-8, 27). And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they who are written in the Lamb's book of life (Apoc. 21.28).*

Perpend the final verses of the sacred Bible. *And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and*

Ryan La Fleur Psalm 60.4, 61.5, 100.5, 115.1, 130.5 AV & WEB

whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.