

Genesis 1:14 – 19

¹⁴ And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

¹⁵ And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

¹⁶ And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *he made* the stars also.

¹⁷ And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

¹⁸ And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that *it was* good.

¹⁹ And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

Astronomy vs. Astrology

This is a study of good and bad. A study looking at Astronomy and Astrology, their likes and differences, and why one is right and one is wrong. Like I said, this is a study of good and bad. So, in the interest of ending up with good, we will start with the bad. Yes, it is bad because God has proclaimed it to be bad. We will start with Astrology.

Astrology

Astrology, as defined by the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* is a “pseudoscience dealing with the supposed influence of the heavenly bodies on human character and destiny.”

Astrologers base their readings on the apparent movement of the sun and planets through the zodiac. The zodiac is arbitrarily comprised of 12 segments of the sky as defined by 12 constellations. As the sun moves across the sky on what is called the ecliptic, it looks like it moves through these zodiacs in various locations. Astrologers believe that it is these locations the sun hits as it passes across the zodiac that determine different patterns or aspects of a person’s character or destiny.

Now, each of these 12 segments of the zodiac are called “houses.” The constellations associated with these houses are called “signs.” A person’s date of birth determines which sign that person is born under. From this, a celestial map or “horoscope” is drawn up by some kind of elaborate scheme that we as just mere mortals would never understand. One would have to become a professional con man...er, astrologer to be able to know how to do this.

Thus the term pseudoscience, which I have no problem calling by a better descriptive name, weirdo-science; or as Paul would call it, science falsely so called. This is what astrology is these days. It portrays itself as a harmless pastime meant only as a means of entertainment. Horoscopes are in a majority of the papers these days and if you’re in the checkout line at the grocery store, you’ll find horoscope magazines and booklets there. Astrology has its place in the Bible, too. But as we’ll see, God is not entertained by it and does not give it His blessing.

While it is rightly believed that astrology did not have its roots in Babylon, it certainly flourished in Babylon. If you do a search of the word astrologer you will come up with 9

occurrences in two books. Eight of these happen in the book of Daniel and once in Isaiah, but all are addressing times in Babylon. In Daniel, the astrologers are put to shame by four young men who worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob without compromise. In Isaiah, God himself mocks Babylon telling it to call on its astrologers and other councilors it counted on to see if they could save Babylon from God.

Astrology is nothing more than idolatry. It is looking to the creation to predict what the creator is doing with no concern for the creator at all. Isaiah 47, of what we just mentioned as one of the 9 occurrences of astrology, makes it clear that God will have no dealings with those like the Babylonian idolaters. Romans 1:20 – 32, while it does not mention astrologers by name, makes it clear the same worshippers of creation instead of the Creator are completely carnal in nature, have refused to retain God in their knowledge and God has given them over to satisfy the lusts of their hearts. Galatians 5:21 tells us that they which practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now, we did not go into much depth with the story presented in the book of Daniel, but it would be a good exercise to read through it and see what following astrology did for Nebuchadnezzar.

Astronomy

We just looked at the subject of astrology and will now take a look at the subject of astronomy. Let's start off with a definition of astronomy. Astronomy is defined by *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* as "science dealing with the phenomena outside the earth's atmosphere but especially concerned with the observable arrangements, motions, and characteristics of the heavenly bodies. The word 'astronomy' is based on two Greek words meaning 'the law of the stars.'" The article on astronomy that this definition was taken from spoke of astronomy in terms that equate it with astrology. Apparently these scholars have melded the two together in the beginning and then somewhere along the way, there was a separation of the two. I'm not a scholar, so I'm not smart enough to elaborate on that! While the use of mathematics was included in the astrology of ancient Babylon and others, this does not make it a science, but as previously defined before as a pseudo-science. God, while He does not come out and call it astronomy, gives us what astronomy is used for in the fourth day of creation. Baker's Encyclopedia did have it right in the definition, but it is not used a means to foretell future events without God being involved. We shall see an example of this shortly, but first let's take a look at the fourth day of Creation in Genesis 1:14 – 19 again. God tells us those things that, by this definition, astronomers are concerned with are for signs, seasons, days, and years. Astronomy therefore should be for the study of signs, seasons, days, and years! Now, there are things in the observable universe that are rather beautiful to see, and it is easy to understand why people would want to study them. I personally believe that is alright, too, because as Psalm 19:1 says,

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."

If you've ever seen pictures of things like galaxies and especially nebulae, then you would certainly appreciate how awesome these sights are and how wonderful the

handywork of God is! But, for the most part astronomers are keepers of calendars! The last three items in the list are seasons, days, and years. These are calendars. A study of the stars will show when it is best to plant, water, and harvest a crop, for instance. They are markers of time held in place by God. Colossians 1:16-17,

“¹⁶ For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:
¹⁷ And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

I think most folks can see this to be the case. The confusion comes in however with the term, signs. One thing that can be used with the term, signs, is the use of the stars for navigation. History records the use of the stars as a means to sail or travel from one place to another. But the real confusion comes in with a different use of the word signs. Signs being the harbinger of an event. This is where the astrologers of old practiced their craft and what drives current astrologers today. But, this is meant for astronomers, not astrologers. Remember, astrologers make up the signs to suit themselves, but this is talking about signs given by God; He is the one that created the sun, moon, and oh yes, the stars. Therefore the signs come from him, not man or any other part of creation. They originate from God if they are truly signs. Two examples come to mind immediately on this subject of signs. God tells Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that he will multiply their seed as the stars of the heaven. The example that really stands out for me is in Numbers 24:17,

“I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.”

Another mention of a star, except this time that star is capitalized! This is the sign that was told of by the wise men to Herod at the birth of Jesus and the example mentioned earlier. Keeping Numbers 24:17 in mind, let's look at Matthew 2:1 – 16.

“¹ Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
² Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
³ When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
⁵ And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
⁶ And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.
⁷ Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

⁹ When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

¹¹ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

¹² And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

¹³ And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

¹⁵ And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

I wanted to read this entire section because it brings out a contrast of what happens when you follow a sign given by God, and when you would rather not follow a sign given by God. This is a good place to contrast the two subjects of this study; astrology and astronomy.

Comparison And Contrast

We just read an account in Matthew that fulfilled the sign given in Numbers. We had a group of wise men from the east and we had a group of from Jerusalem. The wise men from the east recognized the star as the sign given of the coming Messiah and they desired to worship him. Herod and all those in Jerusalem did not recognize it and were troubled. The chief priests and scribes knew the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah because they were able to answer Herod's question of where the Messiah would be born. The wise men from the east can be called astronomers because they knew of the exact time the star appeared. I like how God's word calls these men wise. We know from Scripture that wisdom begins with fear of the Lord. This is shown to be true, because when they found the child, the Messiah, Scripture records they rejoiced with exceeding great joy when they saw the star that came to rest over where the child was. They rejoiced with exceeding great joy before they even saw the child!! When they did see the child, they worshipped him and gave him expensive gifts. Interestingly, these wise men also listened to the warning given to them by God in a dream. They were not to go back the same way to Herod. Now Herod when he enquired diligently of the time

of the appearance of the star from the wise men (the chief priests and scribes apparently couldn't give him this information; Herod had to get it from foreigners!) told the wise men to come back to let him know where the child was so he could worship him, too. I'm left wondering why Herod didn't send someone along to travel with the wise men. But that's not what God had planned! Herod's response to the birth of the Messiah was to have every child from the age of 2 and under slain. His response was to try to keep the Messiah from fulfilling his purpose and he received absolutely no debate on the subject from the chief priests and scribes or anyone else in Jerusalem. These chief priests and scribes remind me of the astrologers from Babylon. Even when they knew the story before hand, they refused to retain God in their knowledge. They were completely filled up with themselves and no one else mattered.

Conclusion And Call To Salvation

So, what do we have here. Astrology vs. Astronomy. I believe Astronomy in its purest sense is ordained of God as described in the fourth day of creation. Astrology, on the other hand, is prohibited by God and those who practice it will be dealt with harshly. Will you be like the astrologers or the chief priests or scribes and be turned over to a reprobate mind by God. Remember, the Bible tells us these people will not inherit the kingdom of God. Or, will you be like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah and the wise men from the east. These men followed God's word without compromising it in any way. They were led of the Spirit and inherit the kingdom of God.

The Bible tells us that we will inherit the kingdom of God by believing on him whom God has sent. That if we will believe that Jesus died on the Cross, was buried and rose again three days later, according to Scripture, that we shall be saved from God's wrath. The wrath that those who do not believe on Jesus' atonement as their sole source of salvation will suffer. Will you be like the astronomer who carefully studies the sun, moon and stars according to the word of God? We quoted Psalm 19:1 earlier, but verses 2 and 3 continue on with,

² Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

³ *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*"

Romans 1:16 – 22 continues on with this idea of contrasting astronomers with astrologers, in the sense of what we have looked at,

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

Don't be foolish especially concerning things that affect you eternally. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!