

ASTROLOGY AND THE BIBLE

F. Aster Barnwell

I can still remember the disappointment I felt when, during the early 1980s, I tried to share with some of my Christian colleagues, the discoveries I was making about the astrological theme underpinning the *Book of Revelation*. I had recently undertaken a study of Revelation because I felt that it had to have something pertinent to a spiritual seeker today, even though, to my knowledge, no one had been able to offer interpretations to its symbolism that did not seem to reflect some sort of personal, religious, or political bias.

The Christian colleagues with whom I tried to share my discoveries were unanimous in their reaction: “Don’t you know,” asked one incredulously, (as if I should know better,) “that astrology is condemned in the Bible?” He later took the time to compile a long list of Bible passages (mostly from the Old Testament) to support his case for Biblical censure of astrology.

What I found hard to comprehend was that not one of these persons—all intelligent, career professionals—ever showed any intellectual curiosity, or presented any arguments to counter my claim. It was enough for them that it was “condemned in the Bible.” Or so they thought!

Astrology in the Book of Revelation

I related in my book, [*Meditations on the Apocalypse*](#), the surprise I felt at discovering that one of the most prominent sets of symbols in *Revelation*—the “Four living creatures” (referred to as the “four Beasts” in the King James Version) around the throne—was so obviously astrological in nature. When we first encounter them, the author of Revelation states:

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”

(Revelation 4:6-8 ESV)

These “four living creatures”, with features of a Lion, an Ox, an Eagle, and a Man, respectively, represent the four zodiac signs of Leo (Lion), Taurus (Bull), Scorpio (Eagle¹) and Aquarius (Man).

¹ Scorpio is alternatively represented by a Scorpion.

Once I became aware of this association, I consulted several acclaimed commentaries on Revelation, hoping to find an acknowledgement of this astrological connection, but without success. At the time, what I found astonishing was the extent biblical scholars and commentaries on Revelation go to NOT acknowledge this most obvious and elementary of connections. Instead, the most common interpretation they offered for these four symbols was that they represent the “Four Evangelists” of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—the alleged authors of the New Testament Gospels. To me, this association was weak at best, and nonsensical even, since in my view, the only thing connecting the “Four Creatures” and the so-called “Four Evangelists” was the number FOUR.

It also became obvious to me that, once these various scholars ensured that the door was firmly closed on any astrological association, they were inadvertently ruling out any possibility of making sense of Revelation in a manner that can have any meaning for the reader of this most mysterious book. Indeed, with the key provided by astrology, we are able to re-discover Revelation as a commentary on the subtler aspects of the process of transforming our consciousness to higher levels. Not being aware of this, our Christian preachers and evangelists have for millennia, been subjecting their listeners to endless sermons and prophecies—that have proven false—on the infamous “666,” the “number of the beast” and of the so-called Antichrist. Indeed, missing out on the true nature of Revelation, they find in this particular symbol an inexhaustible source from which to conjure up whatever suits their prejudices, fears and even political agendas.

Once we open our eyes to the astrological nature of most of Revelation’s symbols, we find that even the infamous “666” is astrologically derived, along with another important, though less sensational, number in Revelation. This is the number 1,260, which is also represented as three-years-and-a-half, (based on a 360-day year), forty-two months (30-day month) and “a time and times and half-a-time”. Both 666 and 1,260 each represents a particular psychological stage, or phase, in the process of the transformation of consciousness. Thus, the number 1,260 can be shown to represent the completion of the transformation process, while 666 represents a subversion of the process on account of the persistence of egotistical or self-serving dynamics in an individual’s consciousness.²

Astrological Influence in the Gospels

Despite the astrological linkages I uncovered in Revelation, the presence of additional astrological content elsewhere in the New Testament came as a surprise to me. For instance, even though I had long suspected that there had to be some significance to the naming of Jesus’s disciples in the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, I was

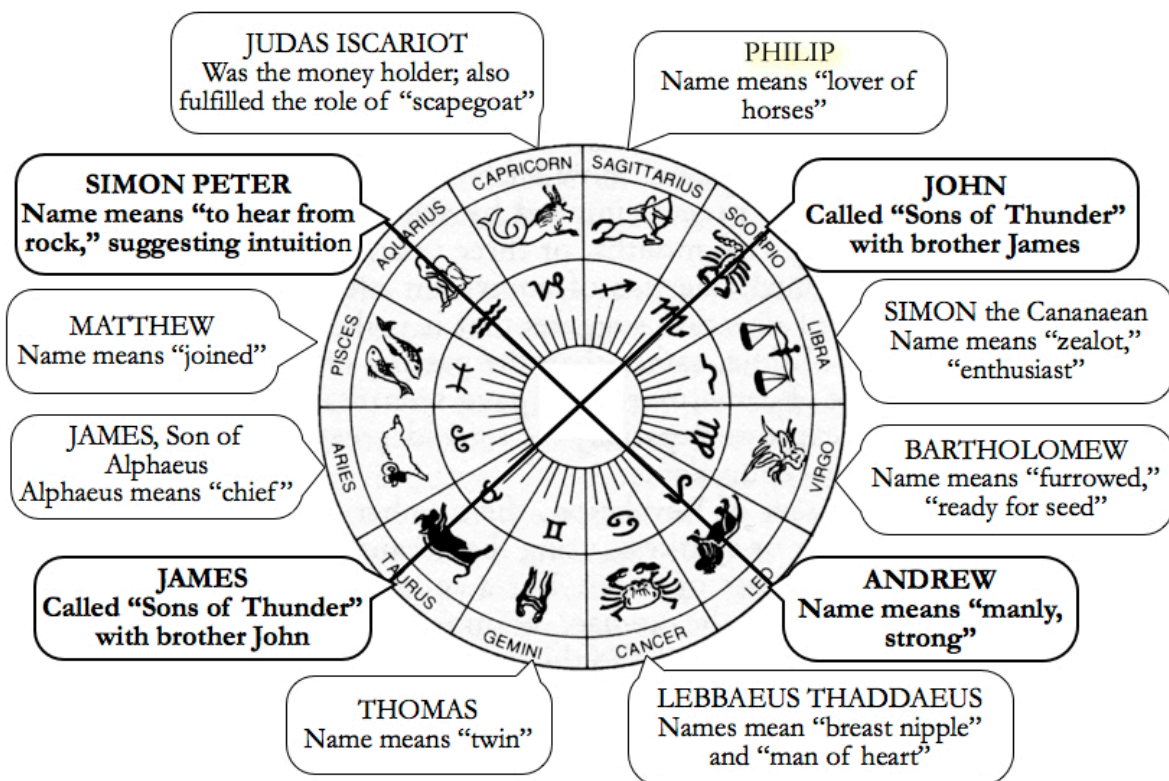
² Readers interested in verifying the astrological foundation of 666 and 1,260 can download a section from my book, *Meditations on the Apocalypse* by following this link http://www.asterbarnwell.com/files/moa_chp_6.pdf

shocked to actually find internal evidence in them that the 12 disciples represented the twelve signs of the zodiac.

The writers of the Gospels went to great lengths to ensure that the diligent students of these documents catch on to their meticulousness in naming the disciples in a ritualistic way (the same groups of four), inviting us to look deeper (See for example Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:14-19, and Luke 6:13-16).

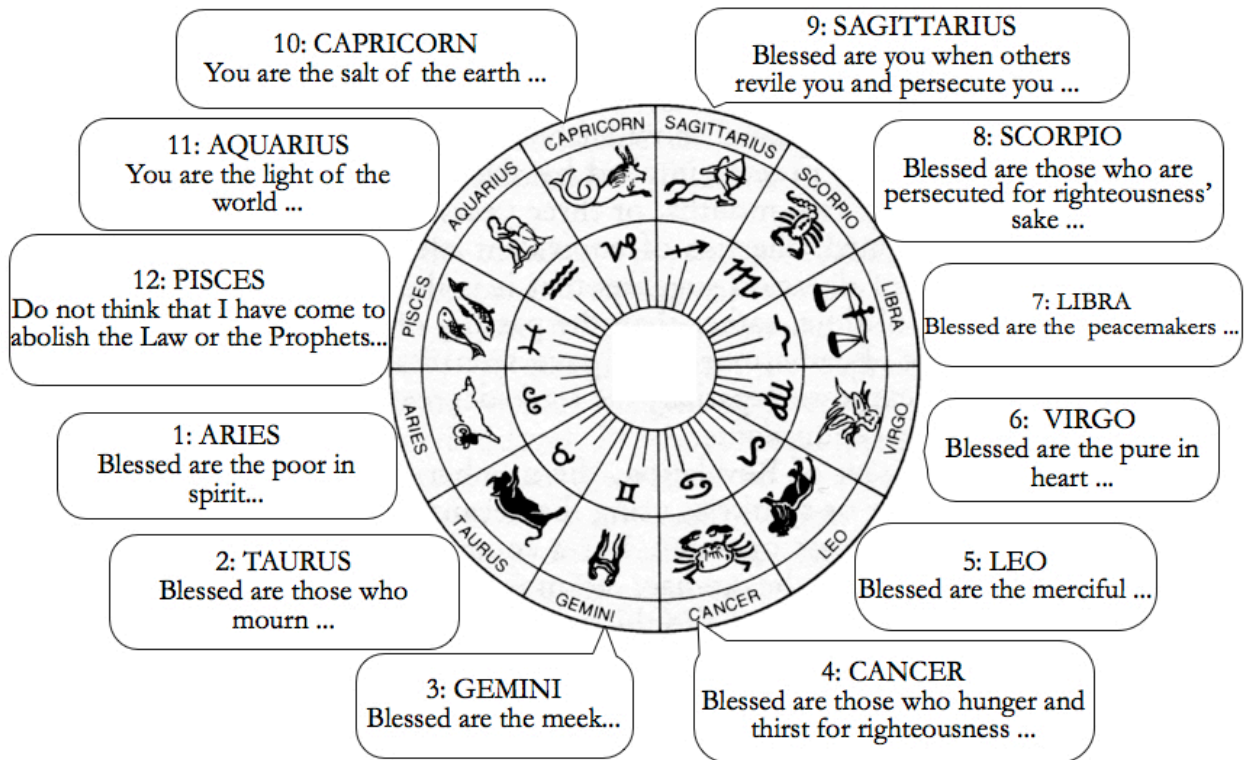
When we examine the etymology of the disciples' names, we discover that each name has a meaning which connects it with one of the twelve astrological signs. For example, among the more obvious correspondences, the name Philip means "lover of horses," representing the sign of Sagittarius; Thomas means "twin", representing the sign of Gemini; Matthew means "joined," representing Pisces, and so on, for eleven of the names. Although I could not find an obvious meaning to the name of Judas Iscariot, his astrological sign became apparent after the other eleven disciples were allotted to their signs. It was then easy to slot him into the remaining sign, Capricorn, the sign of the "scapegoat." The following chart shows how all twelve disciples fit on the wheel of the zodiac, as well as the meanings of their names.

The 12 Disciples and the Zodiac



I experienced my biggest surprise, at how saturated the New Testament is in astrological knowledge, in the discovery that the Beatitudes—a central part of Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount—are also patterned on the zodiac. The virtues they invite us to make a part of our inner life and character are patterned on the twelve astrological signs, as shown below.

The Beatitudes and the Zodiac



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Each of the familiar sayings in the Beatitudes appear, on the surface, to be a promise of a reward if we should uphold a particular virtue, as for example, the first Beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” However, under closer examination, a Beatitude is anything but a promise, but is really a description of *a state of being that will naturally occur in us* if we uphold a particular attitude or spiritual approach to life.

Each of the different spiritual values, or attitudes, the Beatitudes encourage us to uphold, represents a method we can employ to express the energy of an astrological sign in a more controlled, and refined manner. “*But how do we experience astrological sign energies?*” you might ask. We do this all the time when we feel and express most of our natural impulses without questioning their source, because we think they originate with us, that they are our own. It is only when we develop sufficient spiritual awareness that we

understand the impulses that give rise to our actions are not really ours, but are impersonal forces that can be “tamed” or refined. Sometimes, all it takes to filter, or refine such an impulse is a forethought, which would then enable us to express the energy of the impulse constructively, rather than destructively. It is in this sense that the Beatitudes help us to develop mastery over the energies of the zodiacal signs. In a sense, each one gives us an “antidote” to counteract the raw energy and power of astrological impulses.

It is therefore ironic that, in their fear of, and repudiation of astrology, our Christian brothers and sisters are throwing out the baby with the bathwater. For not only are they denying themselves a key which opens up the vault to greater depths of meaning of various parts of the Bible, they’re also denying themselves access to a powerful aid to their own psychological advancement and spiritual transformation.

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