



STATEMENT DG205

THE “GOSPEL IN THE STARS” THEORY

The so-called “Gospel in the Stars” theory (hereafter, GIS) teaches that the twelve zodiac signs (as allegedly pictured in the constellations) visibly display the Gospel message for all people to see. Each of the signs is said to depict a specific phase in God’s plan of salvation, beginning with humanity’s fall into sin to its ultimate redemption to God’s eternal kingdom by a Savior. The sign of Cancer, for instance, is believed to signify the Savior’s redeemed possessions, with the attendant minor signs — Ursa Minor, Ursa Major, and Argo — supposedly representing the redemption of Jews and Gentiles as one flock.

Miss Frances Rolleston, a nineteenth-century English classicist and linguist, is credited as having formulated GIS. She popularized the theory with her book, *Mazzaroth — The Constellations*, published in 1863.

Later that same century, Anglican minister E. W. Bullinger (1837-1913) produced two books that enhanced GIS’s credibility and popularity. The first, titled *The Companion Bible*, contained nearly 200 appendices advancing such speculative or erroneous ideas as numerics, ultradispensationalism, Ussher’s date for the beginning of creation (4004 B.C.), and, of course, GIS. Bullinger’s other book, *The Witness of the Stars*, focused exclusively on GIS, and for that reason was responsible for generating an even higher level of interest with the subject. Both books are still published and read widely today.

Other well-known GIS advocates, past and present, include Joseph Seiss, Bertha Carr-Harris, Duane E. Spencer, William D. Banks, and Chuck Missler.

Though GIS continues to hold a certain fascination for a number of Christians, some of whom tout its alleged apologetic value, it remains fraught with significant weaknesses that deliver a critical blow to its overall soundness. Among its problems are the following:

- 1) There is no uniform zodiac constellation. Some claim there are twenty-four zodiac signs, while others count eight, ten, or fourteen. The oldest Babylonian charts do not even contain the complete zodiac constellation. And unlike the popular Western view, the Chinese interpreted their constellation charts with characters such as the rabbit, mouse, and dog. Moreover, the zodiac signs do not even appear above the Arctic Circle (66 degrees latitude) — which means that there is no “Gospel in the Stars” for many Eskimos, Siberians, Greenlanders, and Scandinavians. This, of course, poses a serious dilemma for GIS, according to which the stars serve as a witness to all people.
- 2) There is no uniform message behind the stars. As in the case of astrology, the star-formed zodiac signs can be assigned whatever meaning the interpreter decides upon; the purported messages behind the signs are completely arbitrary. In their interpretation of the constellations, for example, the Jews did not include any reference to the fall of Adam and Eve or their future seed who would become humankind’s Deliverer. They believed the sign of Scorpio represented Israel as a scorpion, drastically differing from Bullinger’s understanding of Scorpio as a sign depicting the conflict between the Deliverer and the serpent.
- 3) The message of the stars is out of sequence. To take one example, the sign of Virgo (representing a virgin conceiving the Deliverer, the “seed of the woman”) comes before the sign of Libra (which symbolizes the fact that humankind has sinned). Yet, in the Book of Genesis the promise of the “seed of the woman” (Gen. 3:15) comes after humankind sinned (Gen. 3:1-14).
- 4) There is no biblical evidence to support GIS. Bullinger cites a number of Bible verses that have nothing to do with stars revealing the gospel. For instance, he interprets the word “constellation” (*Mazzaroth* in Hebrew and *Lucifer* in the Latin Vulgate) in Job 38:32 as the twelve signs of the zodiac when, in fact, the precise meaning of the term remains uncertain. But even if this verse were undeniably proven to refer to the zodiac, it does not follow that Job understood there to be twelve signs in the zodiac, or that the twelve signs are the same twelve signs we know today, or that Job believed the star signs spelled out the gospel. Other

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

passages offered as proof for GIS only demonstrate that some heavenly bodies had been given names and were used in calculating time (e.g., Gen. 1:14; Job 9:8-9), or else simply deal with inferring the existence of the invisible Creator from the existence of the visible creation, the universe (e.g., Ps. 19; Rom. 1:19; 10:18).

Certainly, there are Bible passages that speak to the notion of deriving messages from the stars; however, these all pertain to the practice of astrology, which is sternly condemned (Isa. 47:13-14). Moreover, GIS runs contrary to the Bible's assertion that no one understood God's complete plan of redemption before Christ came (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:7-8; Eph. 3; Col. 1:26-27; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Indeed, Romans 10 makes it clear that the gospel is proclaimed by "preachers" (v. 14) who are "sent" (v. 15), referring not to the stars in the sky but to the Christians on the earth.