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## ASTROLOGER? OCCULTIST? NEW AGE GURU?: Testing Nostradamus's Message and Method

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According to the prophetic test found in Deuteronomy 18:20–22, we know that Nostradamus was not a prophet of God because his prophecies failed to come to pass with 100 percent accuracy. We also have two other criteria by which we can evaluate the prophet and his enigmatic prophecies: his message and his method.

### MESSAGE

Deuteronomy 13:1–5 says that even if a prophecy comes to pass, if its message leads people away from God, then it was not from God. What is Nostradamus's message, and does it lead people away from God?

Though there is good reason to question his sincerity, Nostradamus stated that his predictions were in harmony with the Catholic faith and Scripture:

I protest before God and his Saints that I do not propose to insert any writings in this present Epistle that will be contrary to the true Catholic faith.... (Epistle, par. 9)

The eternal God alone, who is the thorough searcher of human hearts, pious, just and merciful, is the true judge.... (Epistle, par. 8)

From the time of David to that of our Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, born of the unique virgin.... (Epistle, par. 10)

These and other Christian and biblical themes are numerous and prominent in the prose sections in the *Centuries*, but they are not present in his quatrains.

**New Age?** Despite Nostradamus's statements, however, many current best-selling enthusiasts claim that non-Christian messages are hidden in his prophecies. John Hogue, for example, finds New Age Hinduism and the denial of the Christian hope:

Nostradamus has made it clear that the next great spiritual masters are coming from the East. Clearly he had to cloak his revelation so as not to be burned as a heretic. But if one gets the message between the lines of dozens of prophecies, it is clear that he is warning us not to look for the Second Coming of some gentile made-over blond and blue-eyed Hollywood Jesus, nor should we expect some dark-haired and kosher man from Galilee named Y'shua.... The *long awaited* projection of Jesus Christ we have created *will never return*.<sup>1</sup>

Enthusiast Peter Lorie identifies the late Indian Master Osho (AKA Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh) as the religious leader Nostradamus indicated would usher in the new enlightenment. He suggests that in Nostradamus's writings, "There is a general series of hints that show us the way towards concepts involving the East, reincarnation, love, the inner journey, and meditation, and we may read into this what Nostradamus was attempting to provide as a potential new direction."<sup>2</sup>

Psychic hypnotist Dolores Canon claims Nostradamus spoke the following pantheistic message through one of her patients: "I think people of this time cannot be satisfied with old religious and political views. They have traveled their own path and found their own truths that make them realize that all is connected — all is one, all is God."<sup>3</sup>

If the enthusiasts are correct about his message, then God did not speak through Nostradamus. It seems more plausible, however, that Nostradamus's predictions refer to, as stated in his somewhat less obscure prose, the visible Christian church on earth, a subject that greatly concerned France's king, Rome, and the battling religious factions in Europe. The contextual evidence for this conclusion far outweighs the enthusiasts' strained interpretations that turn this sixteenth-century French doctor into a New Age guru. Though the details of Nostradamus's predictions of end-time events do not entirely match biblical eschatology, his view presents an underlying literal Judeo-Christian understanding of history and biblical prophecy, as well as the eschatological hope of salvation by God. This in itself does not confirm Nostradamus as a prophet of God since he still fails other tests, but it does discount the theories suggested by his current ardent followers.

## METHOD

We can also test the validity of Nostradamus's prophecies based on his method of obtaining them. Nostradamus publicly claimed the source of his prophecies was God, but the methods he claims to have used included astrology and private occult rituals.

**Astrology.** Nostradamus stated, "I readily admit that all proceeds from God....All from God and nature, and for the most part integrated with celestial movements" (Epistle, par. 12). His claims about a divine source always included reference to astrology. Nostradamus left no explicit description of his astrological method, and wild theories abound among enthusiasts. Astrology goes beyond the mere observation of planetary positions in conjunction with space-time events; it presupposes some causal connection — whether direct or merely reflective — between them. It follows that if Nostradamus used astrology to predict future events, then he must have held this belief to some degree. Since the determinism underlying astrology is contrary to a biblical worldview (e.g., Isa. 47:13–14), any information based on this view is unreliable and certainly not from God.

**Occult.** Deuteronomy 18:9–14 condemns divination (which includes astrology) and all occult practices and instructs the Israelites not to listen to those who practice such things. Several times Nostradamus described what appear to be occult practices by which he conjured "spirits of fire," "angels of fire," and "flaming missives," who gave him his prophecies. The first two quatrains in the *Centuries*, in fact, describe a divination ritual:

Being seated by night in secret study,  
Alone resting on the brass stool:  
A slight flame coming forth from the solitude,  
That which is not believed in vain is made to succeed.

With rod in hand set in the midst of Branchus,  
With the water he wets both limb and foot:  
Fearful, voice trembling through his sleeves:  
Divine splendor. The divine seats himself near by.

These words are very similar to the divination ritual described by Iamblichus in an ancient mystical book on magic:

The sibyl at Delphi received the god...sitting on a brazen seat with four or three feet...exposed on two sides to the divine influx, whence she was irradiate with a divine light...the prophetess of Branchus holds in her hand a rod...or moistens the hem of her garment with water...and by this means is filled with divine illumination, and having obtained the deity, she prophesies.<sup>4</sup>

Though Nostradamus was not explicit about his methods of divination, and his enthusiasts make more of his allusions to it than is actually warranted, nevertheless, evidence suggests he used occult rituals in obtaining his prophecies. For that reason believers are instructed not to listen to him.

— Steve Bright

## NOTES

1. John Hogue, *Nostradamus: The Complete Prophecies* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1997), 802.
2. Peter Lorie, *Nostradamus: The Millennium and Beyond* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1993), 180–82.
3. Dolores Canon, *Conversations with Nostradamus: His Prophecies Explained*, vol. 3 (Huntsville, AR: Ozark Mountain Publishers, 1994), 215–16.
4. James Randi, *The Mask of Nostradamus: The Prophecies of the World's Most Famous Seer* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993), 82.