

# Under the Authority of another Master

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As a teenager and youngster I studied or dabbled with, several different cultic practices. I saw things that were odd and questionable that I did not understand at the time and those things caused me to question God and His place in the world and my life. It was evident that there were numerous entities both benevolent and malevolent within our dimensions of existence in which we live, and most wanted somehow to control mankind. Which should I follow, if any? I needed this question answered before I could go much further with honest intent in my life.

The Christian God of the Bible, in His own wonderful way eventually showed Himself and His love for me to be real and from that, I received direction, I never looked back after I knew this truth. Within the cultic practices that I had observed and studied was astrology. At the time, it made a lot of sense to me as I heard many testimonies from people that claimed you could depend upon it to tell you the times and the seasons of your life and various decisions that you can make based on position and alignment of the stars. Even



in our Christian Bible, in Genesis 1:14 it says: *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:* Many people even today use this as a justification to seek guidance from the stars but they're being misled. It wasn't until I read and made a study in Deuteronomy 18:10, 11, & 12 about divination, observers of times, enchanters witches, charmers, wizards, and necromancers that I understood why. Deuteronomy 18:10 *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, 11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. 12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.*

Astrology is a tool used by several of these cultic practitioners to predict the future and cause people to not trust in God, this is why we shouldn't use it as God wants us to trust in Him. In Isaiah 47:13 God challenged the Hebrew people: who were about to be overrun by the armies of king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon: *13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.* Then in Isaiah 47:15 it declares at the end of the verse, "*none shall save thee*". God had placed His people in a position where they would need to trust in Him, obey Him, and live but sadly, they placed their faith in those false profits, their astrology and the people of Israel lost big-time.

Now for my story, with an understanding of astrology based on the above scripture, I had discarded it with several other cultic practices when I had dedicated my life to serving God. In obedience

to Him, I'd divorced myself from those things. I had just come home from serving in the military; I was completing my formal education and becoming a practicing landscape architect, working for the City of Dallas, Parks and Recreation Department. At first, I had thought that God had called me into active ministry and that I was supposed to be a missionary to Mexico and South America but God, through a series of lessons and events caused me to know that my ministry was to be in my practice of building public facilities such as parks and other beautification projects as a landscape architectural project coordinator. I had begun by forming a group of technicians to put plans and specifications together then we would, advertise for bid and build projects of anything that you can put into a park or in a public place, this was a wonderful calling and I loved it. We called ourselves the Landscape Group and our efforts quickly caught on. One of my workers, Shah was a man from India. He was a highly educated man that spoke 5 languages and two dialects. He had been an engineer and a college professor at the university in Bombay, India (today known as Mumbai) before bringing his family to the United States, his values were high values and he was one of my better employees, I respected his abilities and dedication. He quickly became a good friend and for some reason, he was interested in me and my faith in Christ and I considered it an opportunity to witness Christ to him. Being a Hindu, Mr. Shah, however, was a dedicated practitioner of astrology and he wanted to do my astrological chart. Based on what I knew about astrology and my promise to God, "not to ever pick it up again", I had told him, "no that, as a Christian, I did not practice this kind of thing", with no explanation other than that.



Mr. Shah, being a persistent man, did not understand my reasoning, he felt that he had knowledge that I needed and that, I would appreciate it if he did my chart anyhow so without my knowledge and in secret, he proceeded on, meaning to do me a favor that he felt for sure, I would eventually appreciate. Once he jokingly, asked several of us in my office what time of day we had been born, and as part of his conversation with us, we each told him what we knew, not thinking that he had an ulterior motive. One day, several weeks later Mr. Shah came to me and asked me if I was sure about the time of day that I had been born. I asked him why that was important. He then, told me that as part



of a hobby he had, he was doing everyone's astrological chart and that he was exact and successful in all of them except mine. He said that, something was wrong with mine. He showed me everyone's chart and how it matched up with all of the events that had happened to them in each of their lives. It was amazing to me and the others of my office crew, just how accurate those charts that he had done were. He insisted that I must be wrong about the time of day that I was born and asked me to check and see. I explained to him that I do not do astrology and that most



dedicated Christians do not. I told him what my time of birth was on August 9, 1941 and that was what my birth certificate had recorded on it and that, my mother had told me that it was correct. Mr. Shah then went over my chart with me life event by life event. You were born in Dallas, Texas August 9, 1941. You were raised by someone other than your birth parents for your first 5 or 6 years (my grandmother), you grew up with a strong love for spiritual things because of that influence in

your life. In 1959 you were married, but you had a very questionable relationship with this woman, you became very religious in early 1960 (Actually, February of 1960). Then, in 1966 you entered the military, in 1968 you adopted two foreign born children, in 1970 (May) your chart says that you went to war in a foreign country (Viet Nam) and should have died there. This is where we differ Mr. Underwood. Your astrology chart says that you should not be here now; you shouldn't be among the living. Are you certain about the time of day of your birth? At the time, I did not have an answer for Mr. Shah so, I told him that there are many strange things in this world and I would need to think and pray about it to understand this thing but I would give him an answer when I could. Within me, I knew that God would give me a logical answer to Mr. Shah's question because he had never failed to yet when I'd ask Him for about anything.



I have never believed that things and methods in cultic practices did not work for its practitioners, oh yes; I knew that some things were the work of phonies but I usually could spot those. In my thinking, my only motive was that I should not participate in occultism practices simply out of obedience to God so; with some regrets I quite simply, did not. I'd given up my studies of the metaphysical and practice of hypnosis, astrology, and observing mediums simply because God had once told me, "do not come to me through the powers of darkness and evil (His words, not mine), but when you come to me, come daily in faith and believing, and only through prayer and reading the scripture, this is the only way that you should ever come to me." I had obeyed His directions and never again, touched an occult practice after that time, and did not want to now, I only wanted to understand what was happening here so, I questioned God for understanding. It did not take long; God gave me a dream with an understanding of what had happened to me and what I should tell Mr. Shah.

In our serving God, He has a plan for all of us, Jerimiah 29:11, *For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope..* There is a



natural order of things physical and spiritual, when Christ came to save us, He saved us from more than most of us know about and understand. Before Christ came, mankind, because of Adam's sin, had been penalized. For his own protection, God had placed him under the law but we needed to practice it for it to be effective in our lives. Impossible?, Yes!, that's the reason for the sacrifice system God put together for us. God made it simple for early mankind In Deuteronomy, Chapter 28, when Israel was about to enter the promised land,

Moses gives the people of Israel a list of blessings and curses that will follow and overtake them if they will obey or disobey his Word and direction, you should read it, its direction is pretty clear. God says what He means and He means what He says. If you obey, certain blessings will follow and overtake you, or if you disobey, certain curses will follow and overtake you. This was an established spiritual law that was God's provision for Israel (actually all of mankind) to follow.



When Christ came, died, and delivered us, those of us that serve Him, were, by our obedience, were moved out from under any penalties that we were previously under and we were put under the authority of another Master, Jehovah God. When I, as a new Christian dedicated myself to begin obeying and serving God by practicing His Word, spiritually, I had automatically moved myself out of those things that I had been subject to in the old natural order of things. The natural direction may or may not have



been predictable with astrology or one of the other cults but now I was a part of God's kingdom, living and working under His authority. I was no longer within the natural physics and rules of this world so I was no longer subject to this world's crystal ball or rules, only God's. I was following a new plan that had been laid out by God for me. Or, in other words, I am now in God's kingdom and living under His authority. In the natural and under the old spiritual authority, I probably was supposed to die in Viet Nam and it was probably predictable in the occult.

From childhood, I'd had a reoccurring dream. In my reoccurring dream I would always be in an aircraft flying around, making an air-assault on an enemy position somewhere, and during the assault we would be hit by enemy fire, we would fall to the earth and crash at which time, I would wake up in a cold sweat in my bed. From my earliest memory as a child, I knew that when we crashed, I had died, and it was all over for me in this life. This dream had tormented me over and over, all of my life and when I had gone to Viet Nam, I figured that I would probably die there but because God had told me to trust Him, volunteer and go, I had trusted Him and went. While there, I had many opportunities to die, doing exactly what was in my reoccurring dream. I was Air assaulting enemy hills and shooting artillery off of the top of those hills while I was there. During my talk with God about Mr. Shah, he told me to tell him in a way that he would understand without a lot of theology and that I should keep it simple so that he could easily understand.

I explained to Mr. Shah that, under normal circumstances, I might have died in Viet Nam like my astrological chart had said that I should have done, except for the fact that, earlier in my life when I was very young, I had given my heart and life to Jesus Christ. Because of that and because of making my decision to totally dedicate myself to obeying and serving Christ in 1960, it had put me into another kingdom's authority and I was not under the authority of this world or its happenings anymore. Therefore, I had been permanently locked away, safe in Jesus's hands, and I would die only when my Lord was ready for me to die, meanwhile, I would be here until God was ready for me to go home and be with Him. I showed Mr. Shah Mark 16:17 & 18 in the scriptures *17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* Then, I showed him Romans 8:28, *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* And, finally, I showed him. Psalm 91:7, *A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.* And I explained that, I



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lived daily because of those promises of God given to me in His Word thus, I have the privileged life that I am living today.

I told him that because of promises like this in the Holy Scripture that I could not be harmed nor would I die until my Lord was ready for me to die. Needless to say, Mr. Shah was very impressed and he didn't know how to respond to me. After that encounter, I prayed that the Holy Spirit would have His way in Mr. Shah's heart, and maybe even save him. At the time, Mr. Shah told me that I had a strong faith and we would need to talk more, later on. A couple of days later, Mr. Shah came to me and ask if he and his family could go to church with me. "Sure," I gladly said.

The following encounter at my home church, Gospel Lighthouse church in Dallas, Texas was very interesting but cannot be completely understood by some people because of their background, and unless I explain a point of doctrine that we practiced there. One of the main things that differ in Pentecostal/Full Gospel people from other churches, is the way in which we approach God's truth and understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Isaiah 28:11 says that, *11, For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.* We, in Pentecost believe that there are scripture that describes this prophecy in Isaiah being fulfilled with scripture such as, Acts 2:4, says that, *4, And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance* In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:10, the apostle Paul is describing different gifts within the church, *10, To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:* What does this mean? In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:21 & 22, it says, *21, In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. 22, Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.* There are many arguments for and against this belief but, this scripture immediately above in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians is what I believe happened to Mr. Shah that Sunday morning.

Mr. Shah and his wife met us in the parking lot of Gospel Lighthouse Church, as we were going inside, Mr. Shah's wife explained to my wife June Marie that she was glad to be there and that for years she had wanted to know and understand the Christian God, a pleasant surprise to us and an answer to prayer for her, I think. We went inside, sat down, and the sermon began. Pastor Headly preached a wonderful sermon, the people were blessed then, Brother Gee, a long-time Christian in our church, stood up and began to speak in an unknown tongue and when he did, Mr. Shah's eyes got big, he nudged me and asked, "Is it necessary for you to know Hebrew to go to this Church?" "No", I said, "Why do you ask that?" Mr. Shah said, "I understand Hebrew and that man is speaking an ancient Hebrew dialect. I was shocked, I had known Brother Gee for 21 years, I had sat in Sunday school classes with him all of those years and I know for a fact, that Brother Gee only spoke English. I had heard the Holy Spirit come on him before and I had always heard his



message in tongues interpreted, but I did not know the language that he was speaking, how surprised I was. Then, after Brother Gee finished his message in the ancient Hebrew dialect, Pastor Headly's wife (Joy Headly) stood up under the influence of the Holy Spirit and interpreted what Brother Gee had said.

“Ancient Hebrew dialect Shah?” “Yes”, he said, before I thought, I asked, “What did he say?” Then, Mr. Shah looked at me puzzled, “Weren't you listening,” he asked, “The woman up there on the platform with your preacher (Joy Headly, Pastor's wife) interpreted what he said, weren't you listening?” Then (I felt stupid), I remembered and realized, yes, that is what was happening, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:22 *Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not:* God had done this for Mr. Shah, a non-believer that needed to believe. I pressed Mr. Shah for a decision to join us and follow Christ, but he would not that day, saying that he would need to think about all he had seen and heard. Several times later, I pressed Mr. Shah again and each time he would only say, “I am pondering this, but will not make a decision now.” Later, when, he offered to come to Gospel Lighthouse Church and teach us a course on Astrology, I realized that either he didn't fully understand or his years of getting respect as a teacher in his culture wouldn't let Mr. Shah change his belief system.

I retired and left the City of Dallas shortly after that. Mr. Shah, a year or so later, did the same and returned to India to teach at the University again. He had a pension from his job here in the United States now and that along with his income from the University was enough, I suppose, to sustain him. I do not know if Mr. Shah or his wife ever got saved or not, my instinct is that Mrs. Shah did, as she was full of questions but I simply do not know. I do know that wherever you are and in whatever you're doing, if you call on my Jesus, He will save you. Like so very many other things in my life, I do not know how this story turned out in the end, but I do know that my Jesus invited Mr. Shah to serve Him, whether he did or not, I will only know when I get home.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Underwood". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Ron Underwood