

The Flap About a New Zodiac by Gloria Star

Heaven help us ...! A group of astronomers in Minnesota announced on January 12, 2011 that the zodiac is out of date and must be revised. Starting with a local newspaper article, and growing into an internet buzz saw, there's been quite the kerfuffle. Unfortunately for the astronomers, their application of data is not exactly correct and *will not* result in a change of the zodiac.

The primary problem is that astronomers generally do not really know much about astrology. Over the years, certain "arguments" about astrology crop up, and the two arguments currently in the news are not new at all. In this instance, however, ... thanks mostly to the viral nature of the internet ... this story went wild. Within hours, hundreds of articles and newscasts were released about the change in the zodiac. I could not find a morning newscast on TV on January 14th that did not say something about "what's your sign."

Here's the skinny: According to Minnesota astronomer Parke Kunkle, changes in the Earth's alignment with the heavens has changed the zodiac. Additionally, the Minnesota astronomers brought up the old hoax about a "13th Sign," Ophiuchus. Both "new facts" lack credibility. Let's tackle these recurring inaccuracies.

- First, do keep in mind that astrologers do not rely on the simplicity of Sun Signs for their work. The position of the Sun is only one part of your personal horoscope. The zodiac is used to measure the positions of the planets. Astrologers study all the planets in our solar system, and more!
- Regarding the question of the signs being out of sync with the constellations, there's a major flaw. Western astrologers use a system called the *tropical zodiac* (that's what most everyone is familiar with) to create measurements using *celestial longitudes*. We do not use constellations to make these measurements. We calculate the zodiac beginning with the moment the Sun enters Aries (the Spring Equinox, and the Aries Point), the hour and day the Sun's rays meet the equator directly overhead. This continues through the equinoctial and tropical points (the four seasonal changes). This system employed by western astrologers uses a zodiac based upon signs, and their positions are determined by the Aries Point.
- There is also a system of astrology based upon the *sidereal* zodiac used by Vedic astrologers, and these two zodiacs, the tropical and sidereal, are out of sync by about 23 degrees. That's why your sun sign might be different if a Vedic astrologer calculates your chart. Both systems are valid, but the Vedic system uses a set of calculations called precessions that involve the wobbling of Earth on its axis, and accounts for the 23 degree difference. However, this is simply a different way of measuring the positions of celestial bodies. In the end, it involves an understanding of the conversion of those measurements from one

system to another ... much like the difference between inches and centimeters.

- Now to Ophiuchus ... the so-called "13th sign." There is a constellation by this name whose outlying stars are in a bit of a tangle with two nearby constellations -- Scorpius and Sagittarius. By the way, the boundaries of constellations are determined by a committee of the International Astronomers Union IAU. Despite this tangle, Ophiuchus is not recognized as a sign of the zodiac. In fact, the Sun enters the celestial longitudes of Scorpius and Ophiuchus at relatively the same time! So, this idea of adding a 13th sign does not hold water.

So, to put this in perspective, your "sign" is still your sign. All the positions of planets and points in your chart are still measured by the same signs. And astrologers have not redesigned the zodiac.

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