

*astrological-cultural-spiritual-political  
views & commentary...*

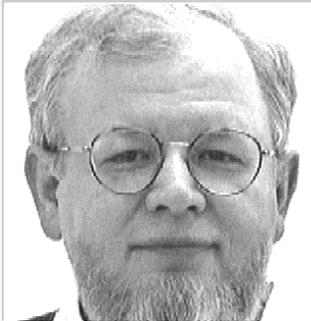
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# THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



Thoughts, dates, & reminders about our lives as members of the craziest species on this lovely planet. Like a message in a bottle washing up on the sandy shores of consciousness...

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Dear friends,

Each of us has a unique life and an individual path, separate and distinct from those of others. At any moment, some of us are happy, others sad; some rush toward new beginnings, while others trudge toward endings. An amazing diversity of spirit and matter is always present. And yet, beyond our lives as individuals, we also experience a collective, shared identity that binds us together—sometimes for better, other times for worse. This month's commentary concerns the coming summer and its unprecedented astrological implications for all of us in the collective we call America.

## HITTING BOTTOM

In June and July of 2004, America and President Bush will hit bottom.

The American nation was "born" on July 4th, 1776. Astrologically, this put the Sun in America's astrological birth chart in the middle of the sign Cancer. President George W. Bush was born on July 6th, 1946. The Sun in Bush's birth chart is also in Cancer, in the same degree as the USA Sun.

Between October, 2003, and June, 2004, Saturn in the heavens will move over the Sun's position in both the USA birth chart and that of President Bush. This event—called the Saturn-Sun conjunction—is the most critical passage in all of astrology. The transit kicks off a 29-year cycle that structures the expression of core life-purpose over the three decades to come.

The nine-month gestation of this cycle's beginning represents the most serious and challenging of all the recurring rebirths we experience in life. The Saturn-Sun conjunction symbolizes a time where our basic power and vitality (Sun) confront the harshness of cold, unyielding reality (Saturn). Whatever ideas or beliefs we hold that are not in sync with reality are suddenly exposed as shams; the more we cling to those fictions, the harder our collision with reality will be.

Any previous momentum is stalled as we are stopped dead in our tracks at this crossroads. Life becomes heavy at this low-ebb in our personal energy field, like slogging through jello. The particular lessons that

are custom-tailored to each of our lives emerge as pressure and doubt from inside, accompanied by trying circumstances from outside. Optimism wanes under an onslaught of troubles. The shadow of failure engulfs us. Under attack, we retreat into a defensive shell and work mainly to persevere, since that's all we can manage, but we often end up creating the very results we most hope to avoid. Errors in perception and judgment cause painfully crude mistakes, the repercussions of which often haunt us throughout the rest of the cycle.

When Saturn reaches the Sun's position in the birth chart of a nation, the entire country confronts the reality of its collective misconceptions and mistakes.

The last time this event occurred in the USA chart was between August, 1974, and April, 1975. The Watergate scandal culminated in President Nixon's resignation, and the Vietnam misadventure finally ended in humiliation, America's first defeat in war. Before that, Saturn conjoined the USA Sun in June, 1945. President Roosevelt had just died, and, despite victory over Germany, the subsequent atomic bombings of Japan ushered in the terrors of nuclear annihilation in the Cold War that followed. We won the war, but lost the peace.

Now, as Saturn once again passes over America's Sun while Pluto confronts America's Mars and Neptune, we find ourselves bogged down in another tragic quagmire, the ill-fated war in Iraq. Proponents of regime change through military invasion promised a cakewalk, with assurances that we would be greeted as liberators. Both history and astrology clearly predicted the opposite.

As a nation, America has undergone seven Saturn-Sun cycles in our 228-year history. The Saturn-Sun conjunction this June kicks off our eighth purpose cycle. This time, however, is different. Never before has the Sun in any President's natal chart occupied exactly the same degree as the USA Sun, and never before has the country as a whole gone through a Saturn-Sun conjunction at the same time its President also goes through that event. So this coincidence is quite literally unprecedented. Symbolically, the implications of these simultaneous transits are sobering to say the least.

Throughout much of his Presidency, George W. Bush seemed bullet-proof. Quite simply, Bush got everything he wanted—tax cuts for the rich, gutting of social programs and environmental protection, and a cowboy War on Terror. Even the scandals of corporate cronyism and massive federal deficits could not tarnish Bush in the polls. The President lived a charmed life under the benefic influence of Jupiter and the comforting illusions of Neptune.

Then came Iraq. For the many millions of us in America who opposed this absurd and unnecessary war, it appeared that both the President and the nation had finally succumbed to madness. One did not have to be a CIA agent to realize that Saddam Hussein posed no threat to America. Twelve years of devastating economic sanctions and ongoing military pummeling had reduced Hussein to a paper tiger and left Iraq a crippled society.

At every stage of the unfolding tragedy—from the initial revelations in August, 2002, of Mr. Bush's violent intentions for a "pre-emptive invasion," through the bogus diplomacy and jingoistic beating of war drums in the media that fall, into the shock-and-awe maelstrom of the actual invasion in the spring of 2003, and onto the unbelievable incompetence of the occupation over the past year—those of us who are committed to peace and compassion shook our heads in sadness. How long could a deluded President continue to get away with this insanity? And would the American public ever wake up?

Right on schedule astrologically, Bush's Midas Touch ended last October as Saturn neared his Sun. Slowly at first, but with increasing momentum as each month passed, cracks appeared in the Presidential armor. Bush's proclamation of "victory" in Iraq proved as false as Saddam Hussein's imaginary WMDs. A jobless economic recovery that pads corporate coffers but leaves millions of ordinary Americans unemployed eroded Bush's popular support. A compliant mass media finally roused from its slumber to question the specious arguments for invading Iraq. A Greek Chorus of former insiders emerged from the shroud of secrecy to critique the policies and challenge the practices of the Bush administration.

With a Cancer Sun and Saturn both positioned in the 12th house of his birth chart, the President is extremely well-defended against criticism by others. He has admitted in interviews that he pays no attention whatsoever to dissenters. At his core, George W. Bush lives in the Neptunian dream world where the superconscious meets the subconscious and archetypal images trump ordinary reality. Inner doubts are kept at bay by his born-again religious faith. Setbacks such as alcoholism and business failures that might crush regular people barely touch Dubya. Time and again, he has escaped the repercussions, emerging unscathed from his troubles. No wonder Bush ignores reality; he's had no reason to pay any attention to it.

Bush's chart suggests that he can no longer count on his luck as Saturn's siege of the White House comes to a head in June and July. I don't pretend to know what events will transpire over the summer, but as an astrologer I can assert that they will be hard on the President. Bush's unyielding intention to "stay the course" in Iraq—no matter what the cost in blood, treasure, or increasingly virulent hatred of the U.S. by the rest of the world—may turn out to be his Waterloo, and ours as well.

Can Bush weather his time of trouble? Can he perform the Houdini escape act and win a second term in November? Pragmatically, the President has the powerful advantages of his incumbency, a solid base of support on the political and evangelical right-wing, and a huge war chest of campaign funds. All these lobby for the possibility of his re-election.

Astrologically, however, the picture is much less optimistic for Mr. Bush. The summer's travails in his chart do not lessen as the election approaches. Saturn moves past Bush's Sun, relieving that pressure, but then moves on to form other challenging chart alignments that bear directly on his personal ambition and public prestige. These coming transits, which include his second Saturn return, are daunting at best and damning at worst. All in all, the heavens do not favor President Bush.

More relevant than any prediction about the outcome of the election, however, is the unavoidable acknowledgement that these remain deeply trying times for the nation as a whole. In 2004 and 2005, even after Saturn passes beyond our national Sun, the USA chart continues its run of drastic and dangerous Plutonian cycles that ushered in the new century. These cycles carry the symbolic meanings of death and transformation through confrontation with the dark shadow of human nature—not merely that of others, but our own as well.

In addition, the charts of both President Bush and Democratic challenger John Kerry contain significant Uranus-Mars transits in 2005 that indicate unexpected and erratic violence, with extreme changes in the use of force. Uncertainty and dramatic shocks are likely continue no matter who occupies the White House.

What can we do as individuals to restore hope and preserve sanity? Each of us does what we can from where we are. Some work actively for social or political reform. Others keep love alive by small acts of kindness and compassion. Still others take refuge in the spiritual realm to find the solace of inner peace and harmony.

Do whatever feels right to you.



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