

## The Darkest Side of Saturn: Odyssey of a Reluctant Prophet of Doom

**Tony Taylor**

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*Taylor delivers a worthwhile excursion for the sci-fi enthusiast looking for a different take on the stereotypical cataclysmic event.*

Tony Taylor has succeeded in making his unique mark on what might be classified as a science fiction subgenre: Earth being threatened with destruction by an object from space. A scientific prophecy propels this ominous Armageddon thriller; religious fanaticism rooted in the biblical era meets contemporary mayhem generated in an astronomy lab in *The Darkest Side of Saturn*.

Without question, this incredible story captures attention and sustains the constant doubt required to motivate the characters. The protagonists, Harris and Diana, debate the possible outcomes as they conduct extensive research on a predicted asteroid impact with Earth in sixteen years. Then they attempt to convince others of the danger it poses.

Just as orbits can cross and lead to collision, the subplots and peripheral activity in this book are a confusing labyrinth. Also, the characters rely too heavily on dialogue. The stream of scenes elicits immediate interest, but the shifts establish a choppy reading experience.

For those who enjoy this type of literary experiment, the book will not disappoint. Like an exploration rather than an itinerary, the plot veers onto a multitude of side roads, allowing a peek into humans facing life in vastly different ways. A gifted scientist struggles to convey what he knows; a disturbed preacher fights to convince a congregation of his disturbed beliefs. The novel presents an eccentric cast in innovative passages and messianic scripture. Those who get lost along the twisting path may not mind the temporary feelings of disorientation.

Detail-oriented and complex, Taylor's explanatory style investigates everything. At times, this need to address all elements of a situation at once tends to slow the pace. Hymns and pseudoreligious passages provide lengthy breaks in the narrative, allowing one to see the extent of a freakish fixation.

The psychological basis of this mind-spinning tale is a classic messiah complex: "Into the vacuum of malleable minds, into the vacuity of traditional religion, there had spun an asteroid and its prophet. The need to follow, believe, and worship was strong, the need to join the flock, irresistible."

Tony Taylor holds degrees from the US Air Force Academy and the University of Arizona. He has navigated spacecraft for NASA and worked for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, experiences that have provided technical detail for *The Darkest Side of Saturn*, his second novel.

The trip to the final page is filled with bizarre descriptions and poetic madness. Seemingly inspired by the Book of Genesis, Taylor presents a world teetering on the brink of the blackness of nothing and the lightness of life.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (June 16, 2014)

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