

THE OCCULT (1 Cor. 10:20)

“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.” -- 1 Corinthians 10:20

INTRODUCTION: Have you noticed that in recent times there is a renewed interest in Satan and the occult? Researcher and best selling author Brad Steiger, himself a New Age leader and practicing occultist, makes this interesting statement:

“Nearly every observer of the contemporary spiritual scene seems to agree that there is some kind of new *Pentecost* going on at this time, some kind of spiritual awakening process at work. And a good many of these observers feel that this growing mystical consciousness may have something to do with these Last Days.”

This reference to "Pentecost" and the "Last Days" is interesting because these terms come from the Bible, most of which is incompatible with Steiger's convictions. In fact, the Bible records that shortly before his death, Jesus Christ declared that an explosion of *false* religious beliefs involving unprecedented *spiritual deception* would be the primary sign of the "last days," indicating that his second coming was near.

Mt 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

The nature of that deception is spelled out fairly clearly in the Bible and corresponds in remarkable detail to much that accompanies today's New Age mysticism. However New Age mysticism is in reality age old occultism.

WHAT IS THE OCCULT? The word occult literally means "hidden." According to movie star Shirley MacLaine, the occult is simply the methods by which one brings "hidden truth" to the conscious mind. In an interview on "The Phil Donahue Show," Shirley MacLaine said, "I am what you call a good witch." God, however, sees no such thing as a "good witch" In his sight, all witches are evil because they derive their power from Satan. God told Old Testament Israel, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex 22:18). While 21st century America is not under the Mosaic Law which governed ancient Israel, God's displeasure with those involved with any sort of witchcraft is clear.

WHY ARE PEOPLE FASCINATED WITH MAGIC AND THE OCCULT? *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Superstition* says, "Magic has kept its long hold on the human mind because of the promise of power, which it holds out, however delusively, to each one of us, the prospect of spiritual mastery in the shape of the all encompassing divine power which religion reserves of Almighty God alone" (p. 14)." This is exactly the same appeal that Satan used in the Garden of Eden when he tempted Eve:

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" --Gen. 3:2-5.

AUTHENTIC SIGNS AND MIRACLES MAY BE PERFORMED IN THE POWER OF SATAN. In addition to appealing to man's sinful pride, Satan also solicits men and women to follow him by demonstrating his supernatural power and promising that he will share it with them. The Bible tells us that the antichrist will be able to perform supernatural feats in the power of Satan.

"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." -- 2 Thessalonians. 2:8,9

The Lord Jesus warns us of those individuals who perform supernatural deeds, even claiming to do them in His name, saying He will deny any association with them, because they are not genuine believers. Obviously, if they are not performing these supernatural deeds in the power of God, they are performing them in the power of Satan.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." -- Matthew 7:22-23.

DIVINATION AND FORETELLING THE FUTURE DERIVE THEIR APPARENT SUCCESS FROM DEMONIC SOURCES. *Divination* is the practice of foretelling future events or discovering hidden knowledge by occult means. This is usually accomplished by astrology, palmistry, card laying, visions, Ouija boards, crystal balls, and an assortment of magic objects.

According to *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Superstition*, "The Babylonians and Assyrians connected their gods with the planets, and in the later classical world the universe as a whole was generally believed to be alive and divine, and the sun, moon, and planets were regarded as deities." Man was viewed as a microcosm of this divine universe. Therefore, since the gods were believed to "have their counterparts in human beings . . . their movements in the sky were believed to influence human character and behavior." Thus was born the ancient practice of astrology.

In Deut. 4:19, the Lord declares the practice of astrology to be the worship of other gods. He warns the Israelites to avoid practices which will turn them away from Him and says,

Deu 4:19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

Isaiah 47:13-15 tells us that astrologers are powerless to save anyone, and cannot even save themselves:

Isaiah 47:13-15 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. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

INVOLVEMENT WITH OCCULT THINGS BRINGS GOD'S DISFAVOR ON HIS PEOPLE - Manassah, the son of King Hezekiah became involved in the occult and brought upon himself the Lord's disfavor.

2Ki 21:6 And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

Involvement with the occult, and especially any form of witchcraft, is not consistent with the Christian life. In fact, witchcraft is listed as one of the "works of the flesh" which characterize those who are lost and without Christ.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

In addition to being a "good witch", Shirley MacLaine also admits to using magic stones and power crystals. Many New Agers believe that if you concentrate hard enough you can "program" crystals as you would a computer. Accordingly, both physical and spiritual problems can be healed through these "power rocks." Many celebrities jazz trumpeter and record producer Herb Alpert, for example have made fantastic claims for crystals' power to heal, to give inner tranquility, and even to affect erratic car engines. Crystals are a popular item in New Age book stores and in many department and jewelry stores. They have become a key symbol for the New Age movement. But using such objects is clearly prohibited in Deuteronomy 18:10-12. Such practices are contrary to God's ways.

Deu 18:10-12 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.

God tells us in Hosea 4:12 that to consult wooden idols and diviners' wands is to go “a whoring” after another god.

Hos 4:12 My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

Here, the Word of God lays down the principle that it is wrong for God’s people to trust in amulets, crystals, and even *lucky* rabbits’ feet. God says that when His people seek counsel from astrologers, diviners, and the like, they are committing spiritual adultery!

THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE LED BY “SPIRIT GUIDES” ARE SIMPLY DEMON POSSESSED. The Old Testament refers to these “New Age” spirit guides as “familiar spirits”. Throughout the last few centuries, they have been called “mediums.” The Bible clearly forbids God’s people to consult “familiar spirits” or “mediums.”

Le 19:31 Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

Le 20:6 And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.

IS THERE A CURE FOR DEMONIC POSSESSION OR DEMONIC OPPRESSION? - If an unbeliever is possessed by a demon, he or she must realize that the cure does not come from *Ghost Busters* but rather from trusting in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Col. 2 :15, “spoiling principalities” speaks of Christ’s victory over demonic forces.

Col 2:15 13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

The person who places his faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is protected from demonic ownership since we are eternally and securely indwelt by God’s Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

1Co 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

1Jo 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

But the unbeliever, without Christ, has no protection against demon possession. Jesus taught that a demon or unclean spirit can come and go as it wills. It may leave a man for a time, but it is able to return with even more demons.

Mt 12:43-45 43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. 44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. 45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Although never called “exorcism” in the Bible, the power to cast out demons was conferred by Christ on his apostles (Mt 10:8) and on the seventy (Lu 10:17-19) and was exercised by the Apostle Paul after Christ’s ascension (Ac 16:18).

Deliverance from a demon is a biblical function and should be done only in the name of Jesus as Paul did in Acts 16:16-18.

The first step for the unbeliever plagued by demonic *possession* is to trust in Jesus Christ for his salvation (John 1:12; Col. 1:13).

However, while believers may not be *possessed* by a demon or demons, Christians are still vulnerable to demonic *oppression*, just as we are still vulnerable to our own lusts and the enticements of the world (1 John 2:16; James 1:14-15). Scripture gives the believer several steps to take if he or she realizes they are caught up in occult bondage:

1. Confess your sin (1 John 1:9);
2. Renounce the works of the devil (2 Cor. 4:2);
3. Destroy occult objects. Even though it meant the loss of a large sum of money, many of the Ephesians "who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all" (Acts 19:17-20; 2 Chron. 14:25; 23:17).
4. Break fellowship with occultists. Paul advises us in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, 'Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?' After being firmly grounded in the Word, we should continue to witness to occultists, but not seek their fellowship. We should influence them, not the other way around.
5. While we should resist the devil (James 4:1), Scripture tells us to flee temptation (1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22). If we used to be in the occult, then we should not tempt ourselves by watching occult movies, playing occult games, or reading occult books.
6. Meditate on and apply the Word of God (Eph. 6:17; Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). We should live in accordance with biblical truth, not in the bondage of the Father of lies (John 8:44).
7. Pray about it with other believers (Eph. 6:18; Matt. 18:19). Our struggle against the powers of darkness is real and can be overwhelming. But we also have comfort in knowing that we will "overcome them; because greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).