

THE DARKNESS OF THE OCCULT

Introduction

- 1) **Deuteronomy 18:9-22** – God warns Israel not to listen to or involve themselves in the abominable practices of the false religions of the nations in Canaan, but to listen only to His true and revealed word (cf. 12:29-32)
- 2) The problem then was, as it is now, that many seek different and secret sources of “knowledge” to answer their questions about the mysteries of the mind, life, death, and the universe.
- 3) This has led to human beliefs and practices that are deceptive and dangerous (Col. 2:8)
- 4) One dangerous and dark manifestation of this today is what is known as the “Occult”

I) What is the Occult?

- A) **Occult** = (Latin *occultus*) covered over, concealed; “beyond the range of ordinary knowledge; mysterious, secret; disclosed only to the initiated” (*Random House Dictionary of English Usage*, p. 996; quoted in *Astrology, Witchcraft, and Satanism*, John Clark).
- B) **Occult Science** is “of or pertaining to magic, astrology or other alleged sciences claiming use of knowledge of secret, mysterious, or supernatural agencies” (*Ibid*). Deals with hidden things that go beyond the natural senses into the realm of the supernatural.
 - 1) Includes Satanism, witchcraft, black magic, fortune-telling, tarot cards, ouija boards, spiritism, demon possession, crystal balls, astrology, etc.
- C) Need to be careful about the subtle influence in our society of these “alternative” ways and the deceptions of Satan on the undiscerning (2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Thess. 5:22; Rom. 16:19)
 - 1) Horoscopes, occult books, television shows and movies about witches/demons/vampire/werewolves/ghosts, board and video games, record albums and song lyrics
- D) We should be knowledgeable enough about real occult beliefs and practices to recognize its evil nature and why we must expose and avoid it (Isa. 8:19-20; Eph. 5:11)

II) Occult Groups and Practices

A) **Satanism**

- 1) Most well-known group is the *Church of Satan*; grew in mid-1960’s, with strong momentum from the film “Rosemary’s Baby” (1968)
- 2) *Anton Szandor LaVey* (1930-1997) played the role of the devil in the film
 - a) Founded the Church of Satan in San Francisco in 1966 (known as the “Black Pope”)
 - b) Wrote *The Satanic Bible* (1969); *The Devil’s Notebook* (1992); *Satan Speaks* (1998)
 - 1) Satan is a metaphor/symbol of material world and carnal human nature (selfishness)
- 3) Other Satanic groups – e.g. The Satanic Temple, Order of Nine Angles, devil-worshippers
 - a) Individuals who self-identify as Satanists are often involved in criminal activities

B) **Wicca** (Witchcraft)

- 1) Modern movement became popular in 1950’s, with increase in 1970’s
- 2) Origins trace back to ancient times; now organize in *covens*
- 3) Claims power and control through spells and incantations
- 4) Festivals – winter, spring, summer, harvest (Halloween – “All Hallow’s Eve”)
 - a) **Halloween** – a sacred and deadly time, a night Satan and his witches are believed to have their greatest power. Goes back to Druids (ancient Celts; 2500 years ago) when spirits of dead were thought to return and visit the living (festival of *Samhain*). If the living did not provide food, spirits would perform terrible tricks (“trick or treat”); living would protect themselves with disguises of departed spirits

C) ***Astrology***

- 1) Position of the stars and planets will influence people and events
- 2) *Horoscope* – chart to determine position of stars at one’s birth (influence life and destiny)

D) ***Demon Possession***

- 1) Fact in Bible times – Jesus and others cast out demons (Matt. 12:22-30)
- 2) Passed away with the cessation of miracles (Zech. 13:2; Mk. 16:17, 20)
- 3) Modern claims have much hype and hysteria (movie *The Exorcist* 1973); confusing effects and causes, much of which are physically and psychologically based

E) ***Magic***

- 1) Not illusionary magic, but arts that attempt supernatural thoughts and control
- 2) Used by witchcraft practitioners (white, black, and sympathetic magic)
 - a) Lycanthropy – turning humans into animals (werewolf stories)

F) ***Ghosts*** (poltergeist activity)

- 1) Visitations from the dead (séances – medium conjures up spirit of dead)

G) ***Palmistry, Ouija Board, Tarot Cards, Crystal Balls, Psychics, Spiritualists, Voodoo***

- 1) All attempts to determine future, contact dead, or divine a mystery

III) **Why People are Interested in The Occult**

- A) ***Alternatives to Reality*** – beyond the normal human senses; an escape into the mystical and hidden realms – seek supernatural powers/forces to control and use
- B) ***Curiosity*** – hidden, secret things heighten human curiosity and pride
- C) ***Lack of Bible Teaching*** – evil feeds on the ignorant, gullible, rebellious

IV) **The Teaching of the Word of God**

A) ***Old Testament***

- 1) Exodus 8:7, 18-19; Dan. 2:27-28 – pagan sorcerers cannot equal God’s power and wisdom
- 2) Deuteronomy 18:9-14 – divination, soothsayers, sorcery
- 3) Leviticus 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27 – occult practices forbidden and punished
- 4) Isaiah 47:12-15 – occult powers useless
- 5) Isaiah 8:19-20 – God’s word is the only guide to see the light of truth
- 6) Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 – dead have no more knowledge “under the sun,” [of this world] (cf. 12:7)
- 7) 1 Samuel 28:3ff – medium of Endor (vv. 11-13 – shocked by appearance of the dead)

B) ***New Testament***

- 1) Galatians 5:20 – idolatry and sorcery (“witchcraft” KJV) and “such like” condemned
 - a) “Sorcery” (Gk. *pharmakeia*) – use of medicine, drugs, or spells of magical arts
- 2) Revelation 21:8; 22:15 – sorcery condemned eternally
- 3) Acts 19:18-20 – Christian has no need to use such things
 - a) “Magic” – obtaining knowledge from spirit world, cast out spirits, etc.
- 4) Acts 8:9-13 – Simon the sorcerer deceived people; recognized real power of miracles
- 5) Acts 13:6-12 – Bar-Jesus
 - a) Influenced people of power
 - b) Prevent hearing gospel by opposing righteousness
 - c) Attempted to deceive and divert attention from the truth

Conclusion

The “mystery” of God has been revealed in all truth (1 Cor. 2:7-10; Jn. 16:13)

God’s power is supreme over all the powers of darkness (Eph. 6:12-13)

We must defend our souls from evil – avoid and expose evil (1 Thess. 5:21-22; Eph. 5:11)

We must stand up with the light of the truth (Jn. 3:19-21; 2 Cor. 4:4-6)

We must keep our present hope secure in Christ Jesus (Col. 2:6-10; Rom. 8:38-39)