

Biblical Warnings Against Occult Involvement

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Whether or not practitioners accept the categories, the data point unmistakably to the conclusion that the essence of occult practice constitutes a trafficking with demons. From this reality flow a number of other concerns: idolatry, spiritual deception, the likelihood of possession, psychological and physical harm, and the immoral, ethically consequential teachings that inevitably accompany demonic involvement or revelations. Our purpose is to simply document that God does indeed warn against the occult.

God teaches that spiritual warfare is a reality (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Peter 5:8) and that supernatural manifestations are not to be accepted uncritically but to be tested by the Word of God (1 John 4:1; Revelation 2:2; Acts 17:10-12; Deuteronomy 18:20-22; Matthew 24:24, etc.). Scripture also speaks of the reality of a personal devil and myriads of demons who should be regarded as cunning enemies of both the believer in Christ and the nonbeliever (John 8:44; 13:27; Matthew 6:13; 9:34; 12:24; Luke 8:12; 13:16; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Acts 16:16-18; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:3; 2 Timothy 2:26). Indeed, one of the devil's tactics is to masquerade as an "angel of light" and a servant of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

The Scripture also warns that false prophets are linked to evil spirits and that there are "doctrines of demons" (1 John 4:1; 1 Timothy 4:1); that there is great power in the occult (Isaiah 47:9); that Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4); that the whole world lies in the power of this evil one (1 John 5:19); that demons work through people by giving them psychic abilities (Acts 16:16-19; Exodus 7:11,22; 8:7); and that Satan and his hordes are active in the affairs of the planet (Ephesians 2:2; Daniel 10:12,13,20).

In many instances, Scripture explicitly cites Satan or his demons as the reality behind occult involvement, idolatry, and false religion (Deuteronomy 32:16,17; 1 Corinthians 10:19-21; Psalm 106:35-40; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:9,10; Acts 16; 16-19, etc.). This is one reason why God considers occult activity in virtually all its forms as an abomination (Deuteronomy 18:9-12)—because it links those for whom Christ died to evil spirits who are His enemies. Thus, occult involvement will eventually lead to judgment for those who refuse to forsake it (Revelation 22:15; 2 Chronicles 33:6).

Scripture condemns by name spiritism, mediumism and necromancy (Deuteronomy 18:9-12; 2 Chronicles 33:2,3,6); various forms of sorcery and divination (Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Hosea 4:12; Exodus 22:18; Isaiah 44:25; 29:8,9; Ezekiel 21:21; e.g., astrology, Deuteronomy 17:2-5; 2 Kings 17:15-17; Isaiah 47:9-14); and magic (Acts 13:8; 19:16-19; Isaiah 47:9,12).

In their numerous forms these basic categories (magic, spiritism, divination, and sorcery) cover almost the entire gamut of occult activity. But the irreducible reality of all occultism is

spiritism.

Thus:

[Spiritism]... is one of the oldest known forms of religious expression. It is also one of the deadliest where the certainty of divine judgment is concerned.... It is terminal error, since it demonstrates not only an active rejection of God, but an active embrace of his replacement. It is, as the prophets put it, "spiritual adultery," carried to completion. It is faithlessness fulfilled.

The extent to which a society endorses or indulges in widespread spiritism, therefore, is something of a spiritual thermometer. It can give us a rough estimate of our collective state of spiritual health.... The Bible levies its judgment against spiritism at two levels. It treats spiritism as a symptom of social decline as well as an act of personal culpability.

All sin provokes God's judgment. Advanced or developed sin provokes it more directly and immediately. As a social symptom, spiritism represents the final stage of a long process of spiritual decay. It is the terminal phase of our flight from God. It is terminal because God's judgment on spiritism is not meant to admonish or correct, but to cleanse and extirpate.

On an individual scale, the practice of spiritism is terminal because it represents an ultimate confusion of values. It trades humanity's privilege of intimacy with God for sheer fascination with a liar who secretly hates all that is human and all that humans hold dear.¹

In 20 years of studying spiritistic contacts and literature and the effects on the lives of spiritists, we can confirm this view wholeheartedly.

Clearly, the Scripture warns against the occult. And just as clearly, those who practice it disobey what God's Word commands. In essence, occult activity courts deception and betrayal from the demonic realm as well as judgment from God for engaging in it, and thereby promotes spiritual evil under the guise of legitimate religious practice.

Notes:

¹ Brooks Alexander, "What is Spiritualism... and Why Are They Saying Those Awful Things About It?" (Berkeley, CA: Spiritual Counterfeits Project, 1986), p. 3.