

Send questions to: pastornick@htchurch.com

On YouTube: @htchurch

Recap

- Our first block was about the *theology* of spiritual warfare. We began by looking at the nature of reality.
- We then took some time to understand our enemy, the Devil.
- Finally, we looked at the “cosmic conflict.” We saw mankind’s dilemma and how Jesus became the Seed of the Woman.
- We will now be moving into the next section of the course, dealing with some of the *practicalities of spiritual warfare*.

About the Occult

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8a). A good verse to memorize and meditate upon!

- People can become bound to evil powers through sin, and through *occult sins*.
- The word *occult* means something that is *hidden*.
- Nearly all people will be attracted to the supernatural and to supernatural experiences. God has put eternity in our hearts (see Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Idolatry and the occult are ancient: “If I have observed the [light] when it shines, or the moon moving in brightness, so that my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand; this also would be an iniquity deserving of judgment, for I would have denied God who is above” (Job 31:26-28).

- Throughout the Bible, we see people engaging in various types of occult activity.
- The prophets rebuked God’s people for various occult sins, and we see Jesus and the apostles encountering occult practitioners. This continues today.
- Occult sins will be prominent until the end of the age: “But the rest of mankind... did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts” (Revelation 9:20-21).

Caught in the Devil’s Web

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:2-3); “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve’” (Matthew 4:10).

“Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord...” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12, NIV).

People who contact supernatural beings other than God or who seek supernatural knowledge apart from God can easily be deceived.

- They are deceived by the supernatural manifestations that the enemy sends them. “Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13 CSB).
- People can also become deceived when God gives them over to their sin.

The risks which come from the occult also apply to people who try to develop the supposed abilities of the human soul: so-called *psychic powers*.

Knowing God and knowing His Word well are of much more value than being expert in the occult! Take this as a helpful principle: the Bible tells us not to do anything which we cannot do to the glory of God! (See 1 Cor. 10:31.)

Questions to help you think about different teachings and practices:

- Is there a biblical basis for this activity or belief?
- Who is being glorified by this activity? Remember, not everything supernatural is from God.
- Does this activity or this belief undercut God as the Creator or undercut the work of Jesus on the Cross?

Understanding Idolatry

Idolatry is the sin of worshipping anything other than the one true God. To avoid idolatry, we need to understand Who that God is. The Word of God will keep us from error in our doctrines and our lifestyles.

Any religion that doesn't agree with what the Bible says about God is idolatrous, because it differs from what God has said about Himself.

Idolatry also includes participating in the prayers and ceremonies of false religions, because those prayers and ceremonies give honor to false gods. Idolatrous praying includes supposedly Christian prayers to Mary, to angels, and to so-called "saints."

Religious cults with a deficient view of Christ

- It's spiritually dangerous to participate in groups with unbiblical views of Christ. These doctrines have real-world consequences.
- A simple test to check the basic doctrine of any group: cults attack *the Person of Christ* (who He is) or they attack *the Work of Christ* (what He did).
- Who is Jesus, and what did He do?

Divination

Divination is seeking and obtaining knowledge by supernatural means that God has forbidden. Common divination practices include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Astral projection.
- Ouija board.
- Fortune-telling, tarot cards, palm-reading.
- Dowsing or water-witching.
- Astrology.
- Mediumship or “channeling.”
- Séances or otherwise trying to contact the “dead” or “ghosts.”
- Automatic writing.

Satan can reveal information, give guidance, and steer people’s future in a limited way through *familiar spirits*. This is a counterfeit of the true Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Witchcraft and Sorcery

According to Galatians 5, *witchcraft* is a work of the flesh. Human beings have a sinful tendency to manipulate, intimidate, and control people and situations.

- Fleshly witchcraft can become a stronghold in your life, and become demonically energized.
- However, people can operate in witchcraft at a deeper level, by seeking out demonic assistance. This is *supernatural* witchcraft, which involves *spells and curses*.

Sorcery uses potions and drugs to do the same thing: influence people and outcomes.

Throughout history, drugs have been used as a way to see the so-called “gods.” Today, people use drugs like ayahuasca to have spiritual experiences. Don’t do it! The Greek New Testament uses the word *pharmakeia* to mean “witchcraft.”

- Witchcraft and sorcery include so-called black and white magic, control by demonized religious leaders, and dedicated objects.
- In addition to infesting a person, demons can attach themselves to places, to animals and objects.
- Idols, artwork, and jewelry can carry demonic power. Scripture warns us not to bring an abomination into your house, lest you become an accursed thing like it (see Deut. 7:26). In the New Testament, we see people coming to faith in Christ, then burning their books and objects of false worship (see Acts 19).

Deceptive Adaptations

Be on guard and pay special attention to practices that people have adapted to our society in order to hide their true nature. Many people and groups re-package spiritual practices for a Western audience.

1. **Yoga.** Yoga postures [the “asanas”] are actually postures of worship to Hindu gods in which you are trying to incarnate the Hindu gods.
2. **Other practices or “therapies” that involve supposed “life energies”** such as “kundalini,” “chi,” “prana,” etc. This includes ta’i chi, feng shui, traditional acupuncture, Reiki, certain massage therapies, etc.

3. **Hypnosis and similar therapies which involve suspending the human will, such as regression or past lives therapies.** God has given us our wills to be the gatekeeper of the castles of our hearts.
4. **“New Age” medicinal practices or “holistic” medicine** which incorporate things described in #'s 1, 2, and 3 above.
5. **Martial arts which retain their spiritual component,** particularly those which involve manipulating the *chi* or *ki*. This includes traditional karate.
6. **Participation in the religious ceremonies of occult or idolatrous groups,** especially receiving objects, prayer, or “blessings” from practitioners.
7. **Contact and conversation** with “aliens,” “ascended masters,” “spirit guides,” etc., or supposed “angels” who do not obey Jesus Christ.
8. **Transcendental Meditation or any form of meditation designed to empty the mind or bring you to a so-called altered or “higher state of consciousness.”** Biblical meditation means filling your mind and heart with God’s Word, not emptying the mind. Avoid what Jesus called a vain or worthless repetition.
9. **“Gaia” or nature worship.**
10. **Role-playing games with occult themes.**
