

Question: What does the Bible teach about practices of the occult like spiritualism, witchcraft and the magic arts?

God's prophet, Moses, told the ancient Israelites: "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, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you" (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Despite these warnings from God, Israel often succumbed to sorcery, reading the stars and consulting with the dead like the nations that were in the land before them (Deuteronomy 18:14; 2 Kings 17:17; 2 Chronicles 33:5; Micah 5:12). In much the same way, there continues to be an interest in these and other occult practices today. They are seen as a means to some kind of supernatural power and knowledge that can control our world and personal futures.

However, the Lord God has denounced attempts to gain power and knowledge by means of things like divining, fortune-telling and sorcery (2 Chronicles 33:6; Acts 18:19-20; Galatians 5:19-20; Revelation 21:8). The New Testament word translated "sorcery" comes from the same Greek word as our English word "pharmacy," which suggests that sorcery has something to do with drugs. Sometimes drugs are used to induce trances for the purposes of supernatural power or knowledge. Other means to divining and fortune-telling are things like astrology, séances, casting charms and spells, witchcraft, horoscopes and the use of items such as divining rods, tarot cards and Ouija boards. While some may view these occult practices as meaningless games, these arts and objects were originally intended to gain power and knowledge by engaging demonic forces that are in opposition to the one true God. The leader of these demons, Satan, is a liar and his strategy is to deceive people (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

On the other hand, the God of the Bible does not communicate his will or exercise his power through the occult. Not only does he find these things detestable, but he has also demonstrated that these demonic arts are powerless in the presence of the one Lord of life and truth. For example, the rod of God's prophet Moses

became a serpent and swallowed the serpents produced by the sorcerers and magicians of Egypt (Exodus 7:10-12). The magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers of Babylon could not interpret the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, but God gave Daniel the explanation of the dream (Daniel 2:1-2).

If we want to reach true spirituality, know truth and live in the power of God, we only need to turn to the one true God and his word revealed in the Bible. There we will find the time-tested truth and principles for life. Since we can know Jesus Christ as the light and the good news of abundant life through faith in him (John 10:10), we have no reason to even consider the dark ways of the occult. As we approach Halloween again this year, I urge you to find ways to have fun without occult involvement. We especially need to protect our children from the dark influences of the occult.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: www.nchrist.org] 2012/10/28