

Dangers of Occultism (Part 1): Fortunetelling

8-9-15 PM

The word occult (from the Latin word *occultus* "clandestine, hidden, secret") literally refers to a knowledge of the hidden (from *occulas*, eye). In common vernacular, occult refers to "knowledge of the paranormal". It is a type of knowledge or power that is expressed as symbols & symbology as well as incantations or sayings/writings that claim to conduct or bring into existence supernatural powers. As we will see in depth, the concept of occultism (hidden) is completely contrary to the concepts of Christianity (open), and as Christians we cannot participate in intentional occultic practices (although we will see that many occultic things has been brought into our lives, and having lost their original intent and purpose are rendered meaningless and with discernment, harmless).

What we call occultism today is actually ancient pagan practices and teachings. For example, many occult symbols and incantations are actually from ancient Egypt (Exodus 7:11), such as the *All Seeing Eye* (of Ra), the pyramid, etc. As well, much of the occult paraphernalia today can be found in the Levantine witchcraft of Babylon, Persia and Assyria (Daniel 2:2). The Zodiac (later adopted by the Greeks) came from Babylon, as did most astrological imagery. Finally, there is a great deal of ancient Jewish witchcraft (called kabbalah) (2 Chronicles 33:6) in modern occult ideas, such as pentagrams and other similar symbols. We should understand that what we call occult today was called (pagan) religion 2000 years ago.

Occult symbols and sayings are found all over today. Freemasonry uses many occult pagan symbols (and language; consider their vows of secrecy) that are readily observable. However, we also see that many denominations and religion use occult symbols. Catholicism, Mormonism, Amish and Islamic symbolism (just to name a few) originates with occult practices and images of ancient paganism. Today it is common and popular for movie stars to wear red kabbalah bracelets, or Egyptian ankhs, or the pagan tree of life (Yggdrasil for the Norse) to be found in popular jewelry.

Is it a sin for a Christian to wear such things, or to engage in practices such as these? As we already said, occult symbolism is so prevalent in our culture we cannot escape it (consider the pagan names for the days of the week). Our question needs to be this: (1) do we believe that it has power, and (2) do others believe it has power? Paul told the Corinthians in I Corinthians 8 that those who understood that false gods had no power could eat in a pagan temple without sin; however, if they did so not understanding that it had no power, or if others who did not understand the emptiness of these things observed them eating, they could not. So it is today with us and occult imagery; we can only engage if both we and those around us know there is no magic in these things.

However, there are some practices of occult that are still seen as powerful and influential, and therefore we cannot have any engagement. We might consider in that list using astrology & fortunetelling to make predictions, speaking to the dead, and in general superstitions.

In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 18:9-14 makes a plain case about the danger of working with the occult of Canaan. The context of the passage explains to us (coming of the real prophet) that these things are counterfeits of divine messages and alternatives to prayer and worship. The occult religion of Canaan sought to communicate messages that were not from God, but demonic in origin. In particular, the passage identifies a number of practitioners and practices that were an abomination to God. We can sum them up in the modern fortunetelling, astrology, seeking spiritual guides and using incantations or charms.

We see this in the New Testament as well. In Acts 19:13-20 we read about the seven sons of Sceva and the occult practices of the people of Ephesus. There we find that the sons of Sceva “exorcised” demons. The word “*exorkistes*” in Greek refers to a conjurer, or one who can bind (a spirit) by an oath or spell; this means that these men were workers of the occult. We see their failure (and subsequent abuse by the demon), and that the people were filled with fear. What did they do with this fear? They cast out (at a loss) their magic emblems (identified as scrolls). They saw that fortunetelling communes with demons, and that even when it is “Godly” fortunetelling, it still risks a demonic reply!

Conclusions: In the Old Testament God thoroughly condemned attempts to obtain knowledge by supernatural means, which is the purpose of occult practice. It was an abomination in the Old Testament, as it was communing with demons (Deuteronomy 32:17). In the New Testament it is equally immoral (Galatians 5:19-20). A Christian cannot commune with God AND Satan by Astrology, Fortunetelling etc.