

# THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

Volume 02-60

The great popularity of the Harry Potter books, acclaimed to have induced a whole generation of children to read books, and the huge popularity of the recent Harry Potter movie, has sparked a great debate in various professed-Christian circles. Are such things, with their wizards and occult practices, harmless diversions? After all, it is argued, stories of werewolves, vampires, witches and goblins have “entertained” and “scared” children and adults for centuries. We have Halloween; many of us enjoyed *Bewitched* and *I Dream of Jeannie* a generation or so ago. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* remains very popular after a number of years on TV, and many of the children’s cartoons are based on ghosts and goblins and creatures “good” and “bad,” with super powers. Has there been any harm done?

While we don’t want to go on a spiritual witch hunt, and we can’t tell you what not to read or not watch, we are exercised in this *Assembly Messenger* to show you what *Scripture* says about the occult. Then you can decide before the Lord!

Getting back to Harry Potter, I heard a radio broadcast a short time ago where a professed Christian was extolling the movie: He called it showing the “good side of evil.” He seemed to mean that good won out over evil, as in most cartoons, etc., so that made everything OK. *But isn’t that one of Satan’s favorite tricks?* Both his deceitful workers and “Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Cor.11:13-14). So we certainly need to be careful of the good side of evil! We need too to remember that good will finally triumph permanently only after at least another 1007 years, and after the Great White Throne when all evil will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ and its evil workers cast forever into the Lake of Fire! That shows what the *Lord* thinks of evil!

## THE OCCULT

The word *occult* means hidden, mysterious arts; magical arts. The danger lies, not in slight-of-hand *magic* tricks, but in demonic forces behind true magic where the demonstration is beyond natural powers, not done by trickery or clever mechanical devices. The term *magic* has the thought of working wonders beyond the ordinary powers of mankind. Satan uses the occult to receive worship and to enslave or ensnare people.

### How Satan and His Demons Work

Since we are dealing in this subject with the evil spiritual world of Satan and his demon-host of sinning, *fallen* angels, we need to better understand our terrible enemy, the master-

mind of the occult. But we need to realize *God* is still in charge and can and does use Satan for His purposes. For example, by excommunication, sinning Christians are placed into Satan’s territory to learn not to blaspheme, for the annulment of the flesh (1 Cor.5:5; 1 Tim.1:20). In that way, a sinning Christian learns to “have no confidence in the flesh” — one’s sinful nature (Rom.7:8; Phil.3:3) — because there is nothing of the flesh that can ever please God.

- Satan *blinds* the minds of the unsaved (2 Cor.4:4), but can only *influence* the minds of the saved.
- Satan can get an *advantage* against us (2 Cor.2:11 JND) — more than the “take advantage of us” of the NKJV — by his trickery, so it is important for us to understand his method of operation and be ready to repulse his evil suggestions. The name Satan means *the adversary*; his title, the devil, means *the false accuser*. So we are not to be ignorant of his thoughts.
- Satan would kill all believers if he could (Job 1-2). But since he isn’t allowed to do that, he and his demons interfere in human affairs as much as they can, to attempt to achieve their evil purposes (Dan.10:10-21). As with Job and Daniel, God sometimes allow Satan to hinder for our ultimate good (2 Cor.12:7; Rom.8:28).
- Demons are behind every idol (1 Cor.10:20) — every *spiritual* thing that draws people away from the true God. In that way Satan and his demons receive worship from the worshipers of the heathen deities. So Christians are to abstain from anything sacrificed to idols (Acts 15:20, 28-29), not because it will physically harm them (1 Cor.8), but because of the evil association which will stumble others. *God’s* angels are sent to serve us, to fulfill God’s will (Heb.1:14), and *they* refuse worship.
- Satan and his human servants can change into *ministers of light and righteousness*, thus tricking the unsuspecting (2 Cor.11:3, 13-15). Therefore, we are not to be blindly trusting of people’s ministry, but check out everything by the Word of God (Acts 17:11). Satan sees to it that there is a measure of truth in every false system in an attempt to get us to let down our guard because of the truth and then get trapped by the evil. In our *tolerant* society, this is even a greater danger. Think again of the expression, “The good side of evil.”
- Satan (as well as God — Acts 16:6-7) can regulate circumstances, including sickness, injury, chance

meetings, business opportunities, moves, etc., although only as far as God allows. Satan thus can hinder us or open up opportunities. So we can't rely on *circumstances* to know God's will (1 Thes.2:18). Seemingly-favorable circumstances may be one of Satan's most effective weapons because we too often assume *God* has answered prayer and opened up the way to do something *we* really want to do, and He hasn't!

- When it's to his advantage, Satan can come as a *roaring lion* to frighten us and rout us from our stand for Christ (1 Pet.5:8). Some have no stomach for the spiritual warfare we all are in (Eph.6:11-12; Jude 3), so once the going gets tough and it is necessary to stand against sin, they want to retreat or retire from the warfare, even though God has told us to hold fast (Eph.4:27). They will compromise the truth for the sake of outward or immediate peace, regardless of the long-term consequences. Satan soon finds whether the angel of light or the lion approach works best against you and me. Although Satan *personally* only can be in one place at a time (not being omnipresent as is God), he works through a host of his fallen angels, called *demons*.
- Satan's *fault* or *condemnation* was pride, and he uses that weapon very effectively against us, acting through our sinful nature (Isa.14:13-14; 1 Tim.3:6). He uses *pride* to keep us from admitting and confessing a wrong, from obeying God in dealing with someone who has allegedly hurt our feelings, from accepting the discipline of the assembly, from receiving constructive criticism, and on and on. Through pride, our testimony and usefulness for God are often weakened or destroyed. Our testimony is *very* important: we need to carefully guard it, or we will fall prey to the devil (1 Tim.3:7).
- We can "turn aside" and follow Satan's leading, to our spiritual ruin, until there is repentance. In 1 Timothy 5:14-15 women are particularly spoken of as having certain tendencies along this line, perhaps in gossip or in looking for security and love outside of God's will.
- According to James 4:7-8 we are not to be passive when it comes to Satan, but are to *do* two things ... but in proper order. First, we are to *submit to God*, which includes confession of past sin to God and as required, to the offended person, if any. Then, and only then, we are to *resist the devil*, and he will flee because of the power of God. Likewise in Ephesians 6:11-18, we must be in the right spiritual condition, having on the spiritual armor of God, to be able to take the "sword of the Spirit," the Word of God, and go on the attack and be victorious in spite of Satan. We are hopelessly outmatched if we think we can win over Satan if we resist him without first submitting to God!

- Even if Satan appears to succeed in neutralizing a Christian, by, for example, casting him into prison for no more crime than preaching Jesus (Rev.2:11), God is still in charge and has a crown of eternal life for His faithful servant.

## History of Occult Practices

The first apparent mention of occult practices is in Genesis 6:4 where we have inferred that there were sexual encounters between ungodly women and fallen angels, apparently posing as men. Angels, seemingly including Satan, are called "sons of God" in Job 1:6; 2:1. These encounters resulted in "giants, mighty men" — certainly not normal children which would have been the case if the "sons of God" were simply saved men taking up with unsaved women (which probably also happened). According to 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, these angels who went too far are locked up, never to be allowed to go free, in contrast to the rest of the fallen angels, Satan's demons, who are temporarily free to roam heaven and earth.

The second inferred occult practice is in Genesis 11:4 where we apparently have in the Tower of Babel an astrological tower (a ziggurat) where astrologers sought to discern the future by being closer to the stars which they believed (and still believe) define their future. Archeology has found remains of such towers in the region of Mesopotamia. Abraham was called out of this region.

The first mention of idols is in Genesis 31:19, 30-34, where Rachel hid her "gods" which she stole from her father. How quickly the knowledge of the true God was lost or compromised!

## Key Verses on the Occult

Perhaps the key verses dealing with the occult are Deuteronomy 18:9-14. The occult practices mentioned therein are called *abominations*. Let's look at the evil practices mentioned. Different translations use different English words or expressions for these evil practices.

- **Pass Through the Fire.** Here we have human sacrifice, which was common in Old Testament times (Lev.18:21; Dt.12:31; 2 Ki.3:27; 2 Ki.16:3). Psalms 106:35-38 tells us Israel was contaminated by this terrible practice when they associated with the Gentiles. Consequently, their children were sacrificed to the heathen deity Molech (Lev.20:2-5) and thus to demons. This practice is not a direct threat in North America, but in one sense, we can sacrifice our children to idols when we:
  - sacrifice (expose) them to the filth of the world by having around certain publications or certain cable or satellite TV

channels, or allow their minds to be filled with ungodly music.

- allow them to go to certain places which dishonor or compromise Christ and His Word. These don't have to be "bad" places in the eyes of the world.
  - set a bad example in our language, habits, conduct, pleasures, in forsaking to assemble together (Heb. 10:25), in not obeying governmental laws (Rom. 13:1-7). Our children become a chip off the old block, as the saying goes.
  - don't get involved in what is going on in their secular education, or in home Bible reading or prayer.
  - spoil our children by allowing them to put the world's pleasures above the Lord's interests.
  - give up known truth so our children can have the world's best, as we think of it.
- **Divination: Foretelling the Future by Occult (non-Scriptural) Means.** The word *divination* means *prediction*, with the thought of secret knowledge. It is Satan's counterfeit of true scriptural prophecy. Some modern-day practices as palm reading, playing the Ouija Board, and astrology (horoscopes) are simply occult divination. These things are not *games* that Christians should play with. For the use of the word in Scripture, see Genesis 41:8; Exodus 7:11; Ezekiel 21:21 (where certain arrangements or colors of arrows, images, or animal livers supposedly told the future); Jeremiah 27:6-10; and Acts 16:16-18.
  - **Observer of Times; Witchcraft.** Here we have the matter of lucky or unlucky days; sorcery — as a result of occult powers. It is not mentioned elsewhere, but we have lots of modern day examples, many of which we hardly think about. Some of these are good luck charms, the four-leaf clover, Friday the thirteenth, a rabbit's foot, upside down horseshoe, black cat, walking under a ladder, throwing salt over the shoulder, breaking a mirror, hex signs, casting lots, etc. We may laugh at these *superstitions*, as we call them, but somewhere behind the superstition is an occult practice and a demon. We need to be aware and be careful.
  - **Enchanter; Whisperer; One Who Interprets Omens.** The thought is to cast a spell over someone by omens. See Isaiah 47:9-15 for God's thoughts on the enchanter and other occult practices. Some modern examples are the thoughts, "the force is with you" (Star Wars), "the power is within you," the repeated word or phrase of Transcendental Meditation, visualization, yoga, other *Hindu*-type practices, new age tapes, crystals, pyramids, some far-out religious speakers, etc., as well as many of the examples above under *Observer of Times*.
  - **Witch or Sorcerer.** A witch or sorcerer is one who perverts the mind; to bewitch. In Exodus 22:18, under the

Law, witches were to be killed, showing God's hatred of their practice. See 1 Samuel 15:23. Today, witchcraft or sorcery is presented very alluringly and cleverly to children in the so-called *cartoons* on TV and by certain toys, and to adults in some TV programs, and in many motion pictures such as *Harry Potter* we mentioned earlier, as well as Halloween. We need to be aware that we are dealing with Satan's power and thus be very careful! Don't we tend to be far too tolerant of Satan's tricks to pervert our and our children's minds?

- **Charmer; the Caster of Spells.** The thought is to fascinate, to catch the victim with the eye, hold him spellbound. As today, snakes are associated with the charmer (Ps.58:4-5). Also see Isaiah 19:3. Today, we have people who seem to have the ability to get people to believe *them*, not Scripture. They often have large followings who heap money and fame on them. The idea is seen in some of the cults that have ended in mass suicides and in some of the televangelists who preach a false health and prosperity gospel. We need to be very careful. God says those who preach "another gospel" should be "accursed" (Gal.1:8-9).
- **Consulter of Mediums: Spiritualist.** The Hebrew word is *ob* — inflated with a spirit. In Leviticus 20:6, 27, such were to be killed under the legal covenant, showing God's hatred for such practices. In 1 Samuel 28:7-20, we have the account of Saul, Samuel and the witch of Endor. She had every intention of contacting a spirit, a demon, to impersonate Samuel, but God brought up *Samuel*. As a result of Saul consulting a witch, he was killed (1 Chron.10:13-14). See also Leviticus 19:31 and Isaiah 8:19; 29:4. Certainly, the Christian is to have nothing to do with seances, tarot cards, Ouija Boards, or any attempt — even as a game — to consult with the dead. Such things involve playing right in Satan's territory and can lead to physically and spiritually harmful communication with demons.
- **Wizard (Male Witch).** The word means a knowing, wise one — wise because of being able to tap into the knowledge of the demon host (Isa.8:19). Again, in stories such as the *Wizard of Oz* and *Harry Potter*, Satan makes an evil thing seem funny and certainly not dangerous. Be warned!
- **Necromancer — One Who Communicates with, or Calls Up the Dead.** Obviously, there is some intended difference between a Consulter of Mediums and a Necromancer: perhaps the necromancer is more the medium himself or herself — the person who has a "familiar spirit." What is said above certainly applies here, and the practice is evil.

Bob Costen points out that King Manasseh practiced many of

these abominations (2 Chron.33:1-9), but was later saved (vv.11-19). So we should never assume *anyone* is too evil to be saved.

## Miscellaneous

- **Astrologer: Divination by Consulting the Stars and Planets.** The word means “one who views and divides the heavens.” These people believe the future is predicted in the Zodiac — an imaginary belt in the heavens that encompasses the path of the planets and is divided into twelve constellations or signs for astrological purposes. Perhaps, at least in North America, astrology is the most familiar form of the occult, although it is an old practice, going back to at least the Tower of Babel of Genesis 11:4 — a Ziggurat, a mountain top astrological observatory. See Isaiah 47:13-15 and Daniel 2:2.

Astrology is counterfeit prophecy. Man wants to know the future and be like God, but he chooses to go to the wrong source. If he chose God, he would know all that was proper for him to know (Prov.3:5-6). Astrology gets a hold on people and actually controls their lives because of who is behind it. To dabble in astrology, even for fun, such as reading your *horoscope* (astrological forecast) in the daily paper or contacting a psychic, is playing on Satan’s ball field and is very dangerous spiritually and should be stopped, or better, never started! It is evil, an abomination to God!

- **Sorcery by Drugs (Pharmakia).** We have this very interesting Greek word used five times in the New Testament (Gal.5:20; Rev.9:21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15). We get our English word *pharmacy* from this word — the drug store. It speaks of a satanically-controlled spell-giving potion used to subject the person to the occult. Galatians 5:19-22 calls it a work of the flesh (the sinful nature). This drug use apparently will be a main source of satanic control in the future Tribulation (Rev.18:23), so it is not surprising that such addictive, mind-altering drugs are being increasingly used in our and the world’s culture, just before the coming of the Lord. Since there is evil behind such drug use, it is no wonder that every heinous crime imaginable is committed by drug users, and that such use is even made an *excuse* for such criminal activity. Alcohol (while scripturally useful in extreme moderation — 1 Timothy 5:23) is the most common *abused* drug and should not be used as a social plaything, any more than should cocaine or marijuana. How sad if *Christians* become drug users!

To be a good testimony, we Christians should be *very* careful not to be under the influence of *any* drug, but we must remember that *caffeine* is not a mind-altering drug for most. It may make one more alert and give one a headache when not consumed after long-term addition, but

it is not a cause of crime and occult slavery. Likewise, *nicotine*, although a costly, dirty, smelly, unhealthy addiction that is not a good Christian testimony at least in North America, is not a seriously mind-altering drug or generally the cause of crime and occult enslavement. On the other hand, our bodies now belong to Christ and we should not do that which is known to seriously harm them (1 Cor.6:20). Also, we should be in control of our bodies and not under the addition of *any* outside influence (1 Cor.9:27).

- **Dreamer of Dreams.** Deuteronomy 13:1-4 indicates that the Lord might use someone such as a person who claims to get prophetic messages through dreams to test us as to whether we will follow the false prophet or God’s Word. The story told in 1 Kings 13 shows the importance of obeying God’s Word regardless of what anyone tells us otherwise. Some of today’s cultist religions were started by people who claimed special revelation in dreams, etc.
- **Exorcist: One Who Casts Out Demons.** Acts 19:13-20 shows that attempting to cast out demons without the Lord’s leading and power can lead to personal injury or worse. Matthew 12:28 shows that such true exorcism is by the Spirit of God in the name of Jesus (Acts 16:18-19). It is not a plaything!
- **Soothsaying: the Spirit of Divination.** Acts 16:16-17 shows that such demon-possessed people are able to deliver messages from demons to certain people.
- **New Testament Sorcerer: A Pretender to Magical Powers.** Elymas the sorcerer, the magician, sought *actively* to turn people away from the Lord by his occult powers (Acts 13:6-8), but couldn’t withstand the power of God through the apostles. In Acts 8:9-13 we also see that Simon the sorcerer had power over the people by his occult magic, but was overcome by the presentation of Jesus, even though the change was only mental, not a belief unto eternal life (ch.8:18-24)!

Although “He who is in you [the Holy Spirit] is greater than he who is in the world [Satan]” (1 Jn.4:4), we trust it is clear how careful we should be of one of Satan’s master plans — the occult — to control mankind and the world, and to hinder the Christian testimony. Will we adults be warned by God? Will we warn our children and in that way, keep them away from satanic influence? We pray that will be the case.

RPD

**NOTE:** Our new website that contains current and back issues is [www.assemblymessenger.com](http://www.assemblymessenger.com). **It may be up and running by the time you get this issue. If not, it should be soon, the Lord willing. Many thanks to my**

**daughter, Cindy Kalandek.**