

## **To the Law and to the Testimony!**

*By James Moriello, Firm Foundation Christian Church, Woonsocket, RI*

*(Companion Paper to the Sermon delivered 10/23/2011, All Scripture quoted herein from the NKJV of the Holy Bible)*

*“And when they say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isaiah 8:19-20)*

Our text speaks to a topic that is in season, for Halloween is upon us. Now I am not against Halloween per se, because if I were it would be inconsistent with the fact that I do celebrate Christmas and Easter. To oppose one holiday on the basis of its pagan origin but not all three seems to me to be a strange position indeed. Whatever one thinks of the Catholic theology, observing November 1<sup>st</sup> as All Saints Day is a reasonable way to seek redemptive purpose in the day. Nevertheless there is liberty there to observe or not to observe any holiday. *“One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind”* (Romans 14:5). All this being said however, the holiday does bring occult practices to the forefront of our minds. What does the Bible say about these practices? Our text gives us the answer. *“To the Law and to the Testimony”* should be the rallying cry of Christians everywhere (Isaiah 8:20a)! In other words, we are to seek authoritative answers from God’s Word, and live by them. God’s Word is light, and the things that line up against it are darkness. Whether the practitioners of such evil are really doing these things or are simply charlatan deceivers is irrelevant, for both further the demonic plan whether they know it or not. We will begin with the biblical position on occult practices. Then we will address the two types of people of which our text speaks. Both mediums and wizards are condemned on the basis of their practices, and we will define what those practices are. Then we will look at other practices that fall

under the related heading of divination, which is also condemned by Scripture. Finally, we will present the Christian response to them.

First, let us define the biblical position. *“To the Law and to the Testimony”* (Isaiah 8:20a)! *“Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God”* (Leviticus 19:31). *“And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people”* (Leviticus 20:6). *“A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them”* (Leviticus 20:27). *“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you”* (Deuteronomy 18:10-14). *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law”* (Deuteronomy 29:29). *“But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord”* (Acts 13:8-10)? *“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”* (Revelation 21:8). These are only a few of the many texts and passages on this subject in support of our text, and they are all very clear that

divination, magic, mediums, necromancy (calling up of the dead), sorcery, and witchcraft/wizardry are forbidden by Almighty God.

Now we turn to the first of the two categories of people and practices specifically addressed in our text; that of mediums. A medium is someone who claims to be able to contact supernatural beings or deceased human beings. Seances, Ouija boards, and necromancy fall into this category. Necromancy is the English term that arises out of the two words in the Greek (nekros manteia) meaning 'dead body divination'. This is the specific practice of mediums of raising up the 'spirit of the deceased' in either 'ghost form' or bodily form. We see an example of this in the encounter of Saul with the medium at En Dor (1 Samuel 28:6-20). In that particular case, God allows the practice. However, the practice is condemned and Saul would face judgment on the basis of his sin in seeking the medium to begin with. The Bible does not teach the concept of ghosts of the deceased, or the hauntings that are often associated with them. Rather, Scripture states that *"it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27). The soul and spirit go either to be in the presence of God, or in torment awaiting the final judgment (Luke 16:19-31). What then is the explanation for such occurrences? The Bible is very clear that angels and demons (fallen angels) can and do intervene in human affairs in a variety of ways. Heavenly angels will always glorify God, and so they intervene not to bring attention to themselves or the spectacular, but the Creator God (Hebrews 1:13-14). The origin of valid ghosts and hauntings is therefore demonic. Fallen angels will seek to destroy or undermine anything that glorifies God. *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12). What about instances when people feel a sense of peace or some other positive result from a communication of a departed loved one, for instance? The Bible answers that question quite clearly. *"And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works"* (2 Corinthians 11:14-

15). If it is deception and false peace that will lead the inquirer away from God, then evil will offer them. Very often, the faith of the seeker will be in the medium and a fascination with the unseen realm of darkness will result. That is a trap! Do not fall for it! There are times in life when we do not have all the answers to our questions. God has not given you any other recourse in His Word other than to seek Him with your whole heart and soul (Deuteronomy 4:29).

The second category of people and practices warned against in our text is wizards. Under this heading, we will include sorcery, black magic, and witchcraft. All of these things are ways in which someone tries to influence people, things, or events through occult means. Sorcery has been made popular by the Harry Potter movies, and is feeding the souls of children in place of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Black magic includes practices such as voodoo, and is popular in many pagan ancestral religions in what we would call the 'Third World', but do not think that it is not practiced here as well. We will spend the most time on witchcraft, and specifically the religion known as Wicca. Wicca has become so widespread that it has received recognition as a religion by the United States military. It is essentially a humanistic religion which denies the existence of the Christian God and offers a works salvation. Since Wicca teaches that divinity can be found in various manifestations, including oneself, it follows that its followers can earn salvation in the form of a 'better reincarnation'. In between lives, so the teaching goes, the individual gets to go to Summerland. Contrary to popular belief, adherents are encouraged to only use magical powers in 'good ways' and do not even believe in the existence of the devil or absolute evil. Wiccan sure sounds like a fairy tale, but folks so want to escape being accountable to God, they will try just about anything. A similar movement, often closely connected to Wiccan, is the Goddess movement. This is a movement that is matriarchal in nature and is borne out of the modern day feminist rebellion against what is seen to be the patriarchal Christian God. This thinking has even invaded Christianity itself. For instance, although all three Persons of the Trinity are always identified with male pronouns in the Bible, some have endeavored to create a 'gender neutral' God by bastardizing the translation of the Scriptures from the Hebrew and the Greek.

Let us now turn briefly to other practices which relate to but do not fall neatly into the two categories in our text, but are forbidden in Scriptures quoted earlier. We will place them under the heading of divination, and we will deal specifically with astrology and tarot reading. Divination is seeking to know the future through occult means. Astrology seeks to read celestial signs and bodies to determine the future. The believer is forbidden to worship anything in the heavens, including the sun, moon, and stars (Deuteronomy 4:19). Instead, our faith should be in God alone. Lest one try to excuse himself and say that it is not worship, the Lord categorically forbids the interpretation of omens of any kind (Deuteronomy 18:10). It is out of bounds for the Christian, and God does not take such sin lightly. Astrologers, stargazers, and monthly prognosticators—and those who participate in them—face certain judgment for their heinous sin (Isaiah 47:13-14). Tarot reading is simple fortune telling, at best a scam, and at worst a road to perdition, and represents distrust that the Lord your God has your future in His hands. Would you rather your future be found in the hands of a tarot card reader or in the hands of Almighty God?

In closing, I will once again declare to you the Christian response to these things. *“To the Law and to the Testimony”* (Isaiah 8:20a)! Your God and His Word to you is the authority for all matters pertaining to Christian faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16). If you are mixed up with any of these sinful practices, forsake them. They are not harmless. Although many of the practices we have covered are simple human foolishness, there are powers at work that you do not want to expose yourself to. Do not play games with them. Again I say, forsake evil! Warn others of the danger as well, that they may not fall into, or further into, the trap of occult practice. The best defense against the wiles of evil is to live close to the Lord Jesus Christ and cultivate your relationship with Him. Focus on Christ, and do not focus on evil—evil will find you anyhow. May we be found continually *“looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith”* (Hebrews 12:2a)!