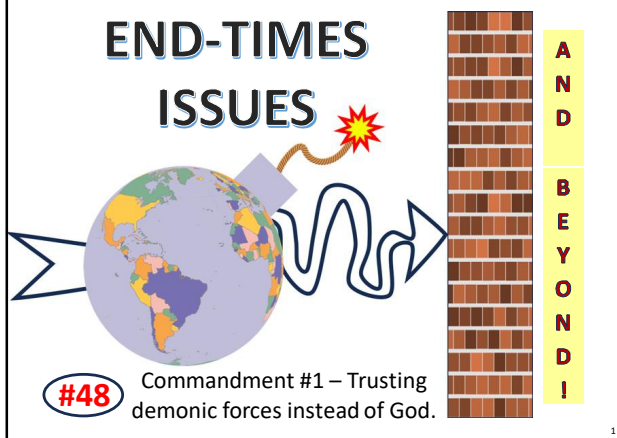


END-TIMES ISSUES



#48 Commandment #1 – Trusting demonic forces instead of God.

1

"You shall have **no other gods** before Me."
Exodus 20:3 (BSB); also Deuteronomy 5:7.

WE'VE ALREADY SEEN – the temptation to replace God with:

- ✓ **SECURITY** – Wealth, possessions, safety, happiness, etc.
- ✓ **TRUST** in humans – ourselves, others, and human-invented methods for attaining "spirituality."

TODAY – We are looking at the issue of:

⇒ **TRUST** in the "unseen realm" – demons, the forces of evil, the occult, the devil, the "paranormal," etc.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **authorities**, against the **powers of this world's darkness**, and against the **spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms**.

Ephesians 6:12 (BSB)

2

TRUSTING SOMETHING FROM THE "UNSEEN REALM," THE PARANORMAL, THE OCCULT, ETC.

Activities related to this come in many forms.

- Some forms have been around for millennia; others are newly invented.
- Older ones may get "repackaged," to make them sound more acceptable.

They don't always look evil.

- Some things in this group are obviously anti-God in nature.
- Some are less obvious – designed to introduce people into this.
- Some seem quite harmless. (The devil often works by *stealth*.)
- *ALL of them oppose God.* Therefore, God opposes all of them.

All of these involve placing one's trust in something other than the Creator God. All of them violate the first commandment. All are strongly condemned in Scripture.

3

WHAT ARE SOME OF THESE ACTIVITIES?

They tend to fall into three basic groups, based on recognizable common features.

3 MAIN CATEGORIES...

1. **Communication** with spirits, demons, etc. – to gain knowledge or information, to predict the future, to (supposedly) communicate with dead people, etc.
2. **Mystical experiences** of things that go beyond the five senses or the physical world.
3. **Manipulating or controlling** things or people, with help from the spirit realm.

DISCLAIMER: It's not our purpose to teach all the various ways people do these things today. We will mention some specific examples found in the Bible, to illustrate their incompatibility with God.

4

HOW DO WE KNOW THEY ARE EVIL? God warns us that they are.

- God knows (better than we sinners do) what things are *incompatible with his nature* – things that compromise loyalty to him.
- We can discover, in Scripture, that these things are incompatible with God's nature, and are a rejection of who he is.
- *Each of these things will ultimately cause trust to be transferred from God, to the demonic enemies of God.*

You can ignore the Bible, if you think you're smarter than God...

- But be aware: When God warns you about something, it's because it is *true*.
- Be also aware: You don't have to know you're serving, trusting, or depending on the devil, in order to be doing it! (The Bible has many examples of people doing it *blindly*.)

If you plan to do the "harmless" occult activities, first ask yourself: "Do I want God to see me *pretending* to reject him?"

5

OPPONENTS VS. COUNTERFEITS.

- Some who do these things may openly oppose the Creator, the God of the Bible. *God is obviously against these.*
- Others will claim to get their abilities from the God of the Bible. *God is against these, as well.* ☞

WE ARE THE PROPHETS OF BAAL!

THE GOD OF ISRAEL SENT ME!!

"They say, 'I had a **dream**! I had a **dream**!' How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who **prophesy** the **delusions of their own minds**?"

Indeed, **I am against those who prophesy false dreams**," declares the Lord. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their **reckless lies**, yet **I did not send or appoint them**. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 23:25b-26, 32 (NIV)

6

WAYS TO DETECT A COUNTERFEIT:

1. If they are less than 100% accurate, they are a false prophet.

- If they are wrong even once, that proves they are false and should be rejected.
- Usually, their predictions are so vague and general, that just about *anything* could be claimed to be a "fulfillment."

But if any prophet dares to speak a message in My name that I have not commanded him to speak, or to speak in the name of other gods, that prophet must be put to death.

When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD and **the message does not come to pass or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken**. The prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

Deuteronomy 18:20, 22 (BSB)

7

2. If what they say comes true, but they point you to some other god, they are a false prophet.

- God may let this happen, to test our loyalty.

If a prophet or dreamer of dreams arises among you and proclaims a sign or wonder to you, and **if the sign or wonder he has spoken to you comes about, but he says, "Let us follow other gods** (which you have not known) and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. **For the LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul**. You are to follow the LORD your God and fear Him. Keep His commandments and listen to His voice; serve Him and hold fast to Him.

Such a prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he has advocated rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way in which the LORD your God has commanded you to walk. So you must purge the evil from among you.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (BSB)

8

Recognizing the difference between genuine and false prophets.

- Many Scriptures point out the *contrast* between God's prophets, and false prophets.

- ✓ False prophets can say what they want... but their message is *inherently different* from what God's Word says!

"Let the prophet who has a dream recount the dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. **For what has straw to do with grain?**" declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 23:28 (NIV)

- ✓ We must compare their message to the testimony of Scripture!

When men tell you to consult the **spirits of the dead** and the **spiritists** who whisper and mutter, shouldn't a people consult their God instead? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

Isaiah 8:19-20 (BSB)

9

- Note how God deals with the *false* prophets vs. the *true* prophets.

RESPONSE TO
THE FALSE
PROPHETS

RESPONSE TO
THE TRUE
PROPHETS

"I am the LORD,
who has made all things,
who alone stretched out the heavens,
who by Myself spread out the earth,
who **foils** the signs of **false prophets**
and **makes fools** of **diviners**,
who **confounds** the **wise**
and **turns** their knowledge into nonsense,
who **confirms** the message of His servant
and **fulfills** the counsel of His messengers, ..."

Isaiah 44:24b-26a (BSB)

(Note the emphasis on the *true* prophet's *message* and *counsel*. His main calling was to teach God's ways, not to have dreams and visions!)

10

- Whether we call them prophets or teachers, Scripture warns us about the *false* ones – those who teach contrary to the Word of God, adding to it, and subtracting from it. Scripture also describes them as *wolves* – Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:29-30.

Now there were also **false prophets** among the people, just as there will be **false teachers** among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, ... Many will follow in their depravity, and because of them the way of truth will be defamed.

2 Peter 2:1a, 2 (BSB)

- Today, under the New Covenant, the focus has changed. God has now spoken through his Son – who's message has been given to us through the apostles (Hebrews 2:3-4), now written in Scripture.

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but **in these last days** he has spoken to us by his Son ...

Hebrews 1:1-2b (NIV)

11

"What about dreams and visions today?"

- In countries where there is very little exposure to Christ (such as those controlled by Islam), there *are* situations in which this has happened. A person has a dream/vision that points them to the Bible, or to someone who can share the Good News with them.
- When this happens, the people *don't* become fixated on the fact that they had such an experience; but they look to the Scriptures, learn about Jesus, and become his followers. The *Bible*, not the dream or vision, becomes the focus of their lives; and its message becomes the basis of their salvation.
- This is totally unlike the dreams/visions of the *false* prophets (who would lead people *away from* the truth). Yet it is also unlike the dreams/visions of the *true* prophets – for it leads the people to the *Bible*, not to a revelation of something new.
- Perhaps we could compare it to Cornelius (Acts 10), who was told to send for Simon Peter, who would tell him the Good News.

12

QUESTIONS...

"BUT WHAT IF THESE OCCULT PRACTICES REALLY WORK?"

- The **issue** *isn't* whether or not doing these things "work," OR whether or not the prediction "succeeds," OR whether or not some occult practice gets promoted as having physical, mental and/or emotional benefits.
- Demons *do* have abilities that go beyond human capabilities.
- The **issue** *is* the change of focus, from 100% loyalty to the Creator God, to something else (whether a divided loyalty, or a complete abandonment of the true God).

Even when occult practices "work," they are a poor substitute for what God can do. **EXAMPLES:** →

13

Contrasting God's power to those who practiced the occult:

In the end, they had to admit that God's power was greater.

- The Egyptian magicians, wise men, sorcerers – they could duplicate some of the first miraculous signs given by Moses (usually in an inferior way), but eventually they had to give up and acknowledge that God's power was greater than theirs. (Exodus 7:10-13, 20-22; 8:6-7, 16-19; 9:10-12)

"This is the finger of God," the magicians said to Pharaoh.

Exodus 8:19a (BSB)

- The Babylonian magicians, enchanters, astrologers, sorcerers, wise men and diviners could not interpret the dreams that Daniel's God could interpret. (Daniel 1:19-20; 2:1-13, 25-28; 4:6-9; 5:5-17)

KING
NEBUCHADNEZZAR
TO DANIEL →

I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery baffles you.

Daniel 4:9b (BSB)

14

- God can control the results of *their* actions, in order to accomplish *his* purposes! Ezekiel's prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem includes such an instance:

For the king of Babylon will stop at the fork in the road, at the junction of the two roads, to seek an omen: He will cast lots with arrows, he will consult his idols, he will examine the liver.

Into his right hand will come the lot for Jerusalem, where he is to set up battering rams, to give the command to slaughter, to sound the battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to build a ramp and to erect siege works.

Ezekiel 21:21-22 (NIV)

This does not excuse the king, for his sin of relying on the occult.
Rather, it shows God's power to use (or overrule) human sin, to accomplish his purposes.

15

"BUT WHAT IF WE USE THE OCCULT ONLY FOR GOOD THINGS?"

- The **issue** *isn't* the **outcome**, but our willingness to participate in an activity that is *always* condemned by God – something that is a violation of the first command.
- Ultimately, it *can never* be good. There may seem to be some superficial benefit from it; but even the "best" of it is designed to take one's loyalty from God.

Why not say,... "Let us do evil that good may result"?
Their condemnation is deserved!

Romans 3:8 (BSB)

- A person who is *born* a sinner (= all of us) *can't* fully comprehend what "good" is! We need *transformed* minds!

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:2 (BSB)

16

"IT'S ALL FAKE – HARMLESS AND FUN! SO THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH DOING IT!"

- Today, some of it might be fake. *But much of it isn't*. The devil operates in different ways at different times.
- When the Bible has an influence on society, open demonic activity tends to be limited. (Fakeness may be greater here.)
- In places that lack the Bible's influence, demonic activity can be quite extreme.



- In our society (with still a little bit of Christian influence), many "harmless" practices exist, that can *introduce* people to occult practices. Many of these things have the appearance of being fake – just toys, with no demonic connection.
- Some people, who dabble in what appears to be "harmless" versions of the occult, will never go deep into the practices. *This does not undo the fact that others will.*

17

"WHAT ABOUT 'NON-RELIGIOUS' FORMS OF THESE THINGS?"

- A person who has some Bible understanding will be less inclined to pursue something that is *openly* of the devil. So the easiest way to get him to participate is to repackage the practice in a way that makes it *not* look sinful or religious. **EXAMPLE:**

PERSON "A" (an eastern religion "missionary") –

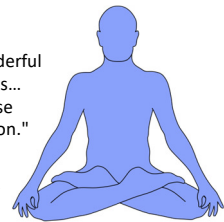
- "I tell them this practice comes from an eastern religion, and the church-goers *refuse* to do it!"

PERSON "B" (an atheist) –

- "I tell them it's 'scientific,' and has wonderful physical, mental, and emotional benefits... and they *eagerly* do it. They even oppose people who claim it's from a false religion."

PERSON "A" (the "missionary") –

- "In other words, if I just change the way I describe it, I can get them to do it!"



18

WARNING!

DON'T WORRY! THERE'S NO RELIGIOUS "HOOK" IN THIS PRACTICE WE ARE PROMOTING!

- ✓ The devil isn't that concerned with *how* he traps you... **He just wants you trapped!** He will happily use *atheists* and others, to promote "non-religious" forms of his "tricks."
- ✓ People who have been influenced by the Bible tend to avoid things that they think are "demonic." They are more easily ensnared, if they are told that it is "not religious."

WELL THEN, IT MUST BE GOOD!

Every "big" sin has an "entry point" that looks relatively harmless, and can be a method of ensnaring those who might not jump into the more obvious versions of the sin.

19

WHAT ABOUT TRUSTING IN "GOOD LUCK CHARMS"?

These are not mentioned very often in Scripture – perhaps because they were connected to other practices that were the main issue. Ultimately, the question is: **Who do you trust?**

Woe to the women who sew **magic charms** on all their wrists and make veils* of various lengths for their heads in order to ensnare people. Will you ensnare the lives of my people but preserve your own?

I am against your **magic charms** with which you ensnare people like birds and I will tear them from your arms; I will set free the people that you ensnare like birds.

Ezekiel 13:18b, 20 (BSB)

*(These veils may have had charms sewed on them.)

In that day **the Lord will snatch away their finery:** [list of things, including] ... **charms**,** ...

Isaiah 3:18a, 20b (NIV)

** (Some translations read "amulets.")

20

WHAT ABOUT PRACTICES DONE BY EVERYONE (EVEN CHRISTIANS)?

Certain things are *not themselves* sinful; but the *reason* they are being done may cause them to *become* sinful.*

EXAMPLE: Casting lots. This is like throwing dice or flipping a coin, to make a decision one way or another. This practice is mentioned many times in Scripture.

- (sinful) ⇨ Trying to determine the will of the gods (Ezekiel 21:21-22). [In this example, God would use their actions to judge Judah.]
- (not sinful) ⇨ Choosing which goat would be used for the sacrifice (Leviticus 16:5-10); settling disputes (Proverbs 18:18); choosing a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:15-26).

* Technically, *many* things in life could be described this way; for everything that is *not* done in a way that honors God is sin – a violation of the command found in passages, such as 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Colossians 3:17.

21

A RANDOM SAMPLING OF SCRIPTURE PASSAGES.

These verses won't list some of the *modern-day* trends; but they represent the *categories* that these trends belong to.

Since these things are incompatible with God, and in direct opposition to him, we must not have anything to do with them.

Occult practices are incompatible with following God! Do not do them! (There are many passages like this.)

You must not practice divination or sorcery.

You must not turn to **mediums** or **spiritists**; do not seek them out, or **you will be defiled by them**. I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:26b, 31 (BSB)

In Israel, under the Old Covenant, those who practiced such things were to be put to death.

You must not allow a **sorcerer** to live.

Exodus 22:18 (BSB)

22

God is against those who do these things!

EXAMPLE: What God says about false prophets...

... those who prophesy out of **their own imagination**: ... Woe to the foolish prophets who **follow their own spirit**, yet have seen nothing.

They see **false visions** and speak **lying divinations**. ... the LORD did not send them...

Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: Because you have uttered **vain words** and seen **false visions**, **I am against you, declares the Lord GOD**. My hand will be against the prophets who see **false visions** and speak **lying divinations**.

Ezekiel 13:2b, 3b, 6, 8-9a (BSB)

- The final destiny of those who practice such things...

But to the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral and **sorcerers and idolaters** and all liars, **their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur**. This is the second death.

Revelation 21:8 (BSB); see also Revelation 22:15.

23

Entire nations have been judged for doing these things!

- ✓ This was one of the reasons that God sent *Israel and Judah* into exile. [See 2 Kings 17:13-20; 21:1-9 and 23:24-26; 2 Chronicles 33:1-9; Ezekiel 22:23-31.]
 - When Jesus returns, God will remove all such practices from the nation.

This is an end-times prophecy.

I will cut the **sorceries** from your hand, and you will have no **fortune-tellers**.

I will also cut off the **carved images** and **sacred pillars** from among you, so that you will no longer bow down to the work of your own hands.

I will root out the **Asherah poles** from your midst and demolish your cities.

Micah 5:12-14 (BSB)

24

- ✓ This is why some of the *other nations* were judged. (EXAMPLE: Babylon. Their occult practices would be powerless to stop it.)

... loss of children and widowhood.
They will come upon you in full measure,
in spite of your many **sorceries**
and all your potent **spells**. ...

Disaster will come upon you,
and you will not know how to **conjure** it away.

Keep on, then, with your **magic spells**
and with your many **sorceries**, ...

All the counsel you have received has only worn you out!
Let your **astrologers** come forward,
those **stargazers** who make predictions month by month,
let them save you from what is coming upon you. ...

They cannot even save themselves
from the power of the flame.

Isaiah 47:9b, 11a, 12a, 13, 14b (NIV); context: Isaiah 47:7-15.

25

This is the reason for the response of Christians in Ephesus

- In the book of Acts, when new believers* realized the seriousness of the matter, they destroyed all their books about magic. (*They didn't sell them or give them away for others to use.*)

Many who had believed now came forward, confessing and disclosing their deeds. And a number of those who had practiced **magic arts brought their books and burned them** in front of everyone. When the value of the books was calculated, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. So the word of the Lord powerfully continued to spread and prevail.

Acts 19:18-20 (BSB)

- * (New Gentile Christians had to *grow* in their understanding of what it meant to "follow Jesus." Unlike the Jewish Christians, there was nothing in their background to help them know.)

26

⇒ WARNING: The devil doesn't care...

- ✓ If you believe that God exists ... or if you don't. (As long as you don't obey God.)
- ✓ If you believe the facts about Jesus ... or if you don't. (As long as you don't repent and follow him.)
- ✓ If you believe in the devil ... or if you don't.

The devil doesn't care...

- ✓ If you think that occult practices are *incompatible* with the Bible, or if you think they can co-exist in your life.
- ✓ If you think that only "really bad" forms of the occult are against the Bible.

→ All he cares about is that he can capture your soul...

★ And he will use *whatever it takes* to accomplish this.

What are you willing to do – or to let God do – in order to make the devil *fail*?

27

Your MISSION:

BE AWARE... THE DEVIL DOESN'T CARE *HOW* HE GETS YOU!

The devil* doesn't care if you think occult practices ...

- 1) Are *incompatible* with the Bible.
- 2) Can *co-exist* with the Bible.
- 3) Are against the Bible only when they are "*really bad*."
- 4) Are OK if you remove the "*religious*" part.

He just wants you... and will use these things, if he can.

Do YOU care enough to oppose him (with God's power working in you)?

Be alert and of sober mind. **Your enemy the devil** prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

And **the God of all grace** ... [will] make you strong, firm and steadfast.

1 Peter 5:8, 10 (NIV)

28

Credits

SCRIPTURE

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