

Idolatry and Sorcery

In and of itself the possession of an idol was never a great temptation. It was always what that idol symbolized. Just as the worship of Jehovah came with a lifestyle, including commands and statutes that must be observed, so also did all idolatry. It was the worship of the idol that created the temptation. Most idolatry focuses on human desires. Sexual activity, human sacrifice, attempts to influence the future, bring safety or change an outcome, these are the driving force of idolatry. While the idol has receded into the past, all that made idolatry appealing in previous generations is still alive and a powerful force in today's culture.

Most idolatrous practices have now moved into the obscure and vague term "occult."

1. What is the Occult?

Depending upon our definition of the term, the occult is a broad force in society today. In its more benign form:

Samantha or Endora on Bewitched,
Cinderella's fairy godmother
I dream of Jeannie
Peter Pan
Beauty and the Beast

Wicked Witch of the West
Snow white's step mother
The Little Mermaid
Merlin
Frozen

Hobbit
Lord of the Rings
Star Wars
Pirates of the Caribbean

In its more sinister forms:

Dracula,
Fred Nightmare on Elm Street

Frankenstein,
Jason from Friday the 13th

The Wolfman.
Damien on the exorcist.

It is the basis of the interest in:

Horoscope,
mediums,
New Age,
Demon possession
lucky numbers,
fear of graveyards after dark,
a black cat.

palm reading,
Spiritists.
Shirley McLean
exorcism,
knocking on wood.
bad luck in breaking a mirror,

Ouija boards,
It is Est,
Channeling.
the lucky rabbit's foot,
voodoo,
walking under a ladder

In short it is the belief in any power other than God that holds and influence and sway over us.

The sin of idolatry and sorcery results from the perversion of a wonderful emotion God gave us. It is the ability to feel awe, reverence and respect. It forms the very heart of our ability to worship God, but man has perverted it as a means of gaining wealth and power. We see this clearly in Simon's request to purchase the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. His perverted thinking was that he could use this power to gain even further influence over others.

The occult is the driving force and emotional compulsion behind idolatry. It is the raising of the hair on the nap of our neck, the surging of the emotions of fear, concern and awe. It is the "what if this really has something behind it." In the Scriptures, it is:

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2Th. 2:9-10

It is what the Egyptian magicians did when Moses threw down his serpent(**Ex. 7:11**), changed the water of the Nile into blood(**Ex. 7:22**), and brought the frogs(**Ex. 8:6-7**).

It is what the prophets of Baal sought to do in the contest with Elijah on Mt Carmel.

It is what the the magicians, the astrologers, and the sorcerers would have done if Nebuchadnezzar had first told them his dream. These kings were heavily influenced by these people.

"For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver. Ezek 21:21

There is a powerful yearning in the hearts of each of us to know the future. We long for the security and comfort that is gained by knowing we are going to have a long and prosperous life, married to a wonderful person, with strong and healthy children who will live to an old age, in a nation that will bring us comfort and peace. A knowledge of the future brings power, financial gain, and security. For these reasons, the quest for a knowledge of the future is a powerful yearning in the hearts of men.

Added to this is the natural inclination man has toward the supernatural. Everyone knows there are

forces at work much more powerful than ourselves. We see it nearly every day. We see it in the sun, moon and stars, and in many of the things that occur on earth. The lightning bolt, earthquake, tornado, tidal wave and eclipse remind us of how powerful these forces are. Death and life, prosperity and adversity, peace and war, love and hate. All these powerful forces that we would like to have some control or knowledge about.

When these two natural inclinations merge, one of two things happens, either we are led to God and to the truth that makes free, or into the error of idolatry and superstition leading to the bondage of idolatry.

Though some feel that there is only the difference of personal choice between these two decisions, from time to time God nudges man into the truth.

He did it with **Dagon** when the ark was in his temple(1Sam. 5),

He did it on **Mt Carmel with Elijah**(1Kings 18),

He did it with **the ten plagues in Egypt**(Ex. 7-11), and with **His Son Jesus Christ.**

He mocks the whole concept of idolatry in Isaiah(**Isa 44:1-28**), and proclaims that there is no excuse for it in **Rom. 1:18-32.**

2. God's Description and Condemnations.

God has not left His people without guidance in these matters. He speaks out clearly and forcefully against all forms of idolatry and superstition they use to gain power over others. He is God and there is no other. The idea that people can talk to the dead or that the dead remain to haunt or influence is all part of idolatry and should be forever banished from our minds as unworthy of a genuine and complete faith in God.

*"When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. 10 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, 11 or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 **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.**" Deut. 18:9-12*

*'Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, **to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.**' Lev. 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. 7 Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. 8 And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the LORD who sanctifies you. . . 27 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.**" Lev. 20:1-8 27*

*"But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images 14 for you shall worship no other god, **for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God**), 15 lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and **they play the harlot with their gods** and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, 16 and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods." Ex .34:13-16*

"To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him. . . Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other." Deut. 4:35, 39

Do not fear, nor be afraid; have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one. Isa. 44:8

I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, . . . 22 "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. Isa. 45:5 45:22 see also Isa. 46:9;

Throughout the history of the Bible every incident where God had to deal with the idols of the peoples, He swept them away. He destroyed the idols of Egypt and revealed they were powerless(Ex. 12:12). He destroyed the idols of the land of Canaan. In the midst of the feast to Dagon the Philistines were destroyed by Samson(Judges 16:23-29). When the ark was in the temple of Dagon God first had Dagon fall on his face, then broke off his head and the palms of his hands the next day. After striking the people with tumors, God had the two cows leave their calves to take the ark to Israel. In the contest at Mt Carmel, in the contest of Daniel vs the magicians and astrologers of Babylon, God interpreted a dream all others said would be impossible.

The point of all the above is clear. God proclaims that there is no power, no success, and no wisdom

to be gleaned by following any of the idolatrous and superstitious practices of the occult. There is nothing to be gained by following them because they have nothing behind them except the "power, signs and lying wonders of Satan" (2Th. 2:9)

Not only is their nothing to be gained from the things themselves, but there is everything to lose from God. He considers it an abomination that defiles the one who practices it. God states that He will set his face against all who practice them and will cut them off of the people. Our God is a Jealous God and he considers all these things to be harlotry and adultery directly against Him. He is God in heaven and above and on the earth, there is no other! There is no God beside Him.

3. Jesus Dealt with the Occult in His Day.

Though the accounts of the life of Jesus are silent on the idolatrous practices of the day, Jesus bypassed all the lying wonders and takes a **direct assault upon the devil himself**. He disdains all the devil's temptations and at the end of His life states that the Devil has nothing in Him (Jn 14:30). **In every confrontation and conflict with the Devil Jesus conquered. He cast out demons, healed all diseases, conquered every temptation and destroyed the works and the power of the devil.**

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Heb. 2:14-15

Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this, "He ascended"-- what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) Eph. 4:8-10

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death." Rev. 1:17-18

"And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. 20 But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. 22 But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. Lk. 11:19-22

Jesus is Lord. When He sent out His disciples, He gave them power over all the works of the evil one.

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." 18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Lk. 10:17-20

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. 17 "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Mk. 16:15-18

Jesus gave His disciples the power to conquer all the works and power of the devil. Now, by putting on the whole armor of God we can conquer all the evil that Satan can still muster.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 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. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Eph. 6:11-13

Jesus is the way, the truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Him (Jn. 14:6). There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

As the apostles went forth into all the world, they did all that Jesus promised.

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city. 9 But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was

someone great, 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." 11 And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. 13 Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. Acts 8:5-13

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 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? 11 "And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Acts 13:8-11

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." 18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. Acts 16:16-19

Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Acts 19:13-20

These stirring events prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is the only God and there is no other and Jesus is the only Lord and there is no other. The entire concept of idolatry, which includes all that occult we have spoken of above is perfectly set forth in the book of Corinthians.

Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), 6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live. 7 However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 1Cor. 8:4-7

We know there is but one God and one Lord. Others do not have this knowledge. Through superstition and deceit many today believe and are in bondage. We must show them a better way.

So what conclusions should we draw. God has power over all spirits. Of the angels "are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). Of the wicked hosts, "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. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:12-13). Of those who are already dead, "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." (Luke 16:22-23). So the angels are our allies, the spiritual host of wickedness are thwarted with the whole armor of God, the dead are in Hades, God is over all and we are more than conquerors.

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 8:37-39