

Jesus vs. the Occult

Adapted from John Piper. Desiring God Foundation. desiringGod.org

Deuteronomy 18:9-14

New International Version

⁹When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. ¹⁰Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, ¹¹or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. ¹²Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. ¹³You must be blameless before the LORD your God.

¹⁴The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so.

The Message

⁹⁻¹²When you enter the land that GOD, your God, is giving you, don't take on the abominable ways of life of the nations there. Don't you dare sacrifice your son or daughter in the fire. Don't practice divination, sorcery, fortunetelling, witchery, casting spells, holding séances, or channeling with the dead. People who do these things are an abomination to GOD. It's because of just such abominable practices that GOD, your God, is driving these nations out before you.

¹³⁻¹⁴Be completely loyal to GOD, your God. These nations that you're about to run out of the country consort with sorcerers and witches. But not you. GOD, your God, forbids it.

What is the occult?

Occult: anything that involves dealings with the world of spirits or supernatural forces which are not oriented on Jesus as he is revealed in the Bible.

Examples of the occult

Underline the 8 occult activities in *The Message* that Moses mentions.

What do these 8 activities have in common?

- They all involve efforts to obtain knowledge which is ordinarily hidden, and attaining that knowledge through dealings with the spirit world or with supernatural forces.
- The knowledge is sought out of a desire to exert some power over people or events.

What is God's view of the occult?

Highlight Deuteronomy 18:12 (NIV).

What does the Bible say about the occult?

Scripture forbids God's people from any participation in the occult. According to Deuteronomy 18:10, no one who practices these activities is to be allowed to stay among God's people. In the New Testament, church provisions were made for excluding people who willfully continued in abominable practices. When the word of Christ captures a person's mind and heart, all involvement with magical arts should cease. It is Jesus versus the occult; you cannot have both.

Leviticus 19:26b (NIV) Do not practice divination or seek omens.

Leviticus 19:31 (NLT) Do not defile yourselves by turning to mediums or to those who consult the spirits of the dead. I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:26 (NASB) As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.

Acts 19:18-19a (NIV) ⁸Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. ¹⁹A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly.

Why is God opposed to the occult?

It belittles God and exalts man. Or to put it another way, the occult is a continuation of the satanic deception in Genesis 3:5: "You shall become like God." All forms of the occult present us with a similar temptation: will we act like humble children of the heavenly Father and submit to God's wisdom in limiting our knowledge and power, or will we, like Adam and Eve, hanker for the fruit that can make us "wise" and for the power that belongs to God?

But someone may say, "God is silent where I need knowledge. God has not said enough." Consulting any other oracles beyond God's Word is wrong because it belittles God as an inadequate revealer of mysteries. It says that God is either unable or unwilling to tell me all that is good for me to know. It says that he lacks the power or the goodness to help me, and so I will take matters into my own hands.

No matter how innocent the practices of the occult seem at first, they are all dimensions of the rebellion that has been underway since the Garden of Eden. Man in the occult is man in rebellion.

Another way of saying this is that man in the occult is man in harlotry (Leviticus 20:6). Consulting mediums is like committing adultery against God. Jesus Christ is the husband of the church. He is God's fullest revelation. All that we need to know and all the power which it is good for us to have comes through him and his Word. Involvement in the occult is wrong because it is spiritual adultery, it is rebellion against the sovereignty of God, and it belittles his revelation while exalting human pride.

What is the alternative for the Christian?

Faith in Jesus Christ, the embodiment of all God's revelation. Faith seeks no other secret knowledge. Faith lays itself open to the power of God through Jesus Christ alone and seeks no other psychic or spiritual power. Faith cleaves to Jesus, loves Jesus, adores Jesus, trusts Jesus, extols the all-sufficiency of Jesus, and shuns, in all her many garments, the temptress of the occult.