

SATANISM/OCCULT

Introduction

In Jerusalem is a monument in white and black representing the battle between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. Children in their play often depict the same theme, whether it be cowboys and crooks, cops and robbers, or He-man and Skeletor. The film, Star Wars also told of evil being overcome by good. The battle between good and evil is ongoing. In the Christian context we understand the struggle to be that of Satan, the Prince of Darkness against God the Creator.

Some would argue that the subject is best left alone, this view being influenced by fear. We need not fear. Scripture says clearly that all we need to fear are sin and God. Never need a Christian fear Satan. So then I need to explain the purpose of my sharing with you. I am not here to examine in detail evil and the forces of darkness. Nor am I to act as a cheap publicity agent for Satan. I do not wish to scare anybody.

The need was expressed that since the subject is topical, we need to have a Christian perspective. Magazines and radio talk shows have missed the subject. The Sunday papers of 19 August referred to activities at Rosettenville mine dumps. The SABC news of the 22nd August referred to police investigations into occult practices. The Transvaal Teachers Association have had the topic on their agenda.

Proclamation of Good News

As children of the living God we have Good News to share. I want to emphasize that Jesus Christ has given Satan a blood nose and Jesus will return to complete the action. Satan will be put down once and for all. Furthermore we need not fear. The Lord encourages us, "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you." (Luke 10:19)

However there also needs to be a warning sounded. It is for those who may be tempted to get involved in occult activity even for purely inquisitive reasons. This other world holds attraction because it offers power. It gives super-natural control, but it destroys. Do not consider even to play around with these things. The repercussions may be very grave indeed. The occult is a spiritual poison.

It is also necessary while hearing the Good News to be honest and open. There are times when we are too quick to blame Satan for things that are directly attributed to our own conscious actions. At times we may opt out of squarely accepting responsibility. We remain sinners.

What Scripture Teaches about Satan

The word "occult" comes from the Latin "occultus", meaning things mysterious, hidden and secret. The occult is manifested in spiritual knowledge, spiritual power, systems, symbols, rituals and practices

that lead to another reality. Scripture is quite clear that these manifestations are against God's will for His people.

Early in Genesis 3:1-7 we meet Satan. He is described as "more subtle than any other creature." Spurgeon calls Satan more cunning than the wisest for he soon entangled Solomon. He is stronger than the strongest as Samson was overthrown. Even a man after God's own heart, David, was led into grievous sin.

In the New Testament Satan is called "a liar and the father of all lies" (John 8:44b) This too is evident in Genesis 3. He is deceitful and causes Eve to doubt and question. All He wishes to achieve is "to rob, kill and destroy." (Jn 10:10)

Isaiah 14:12 and Ezekiel 28:11-15 tell how Satan rebelled, wanting to be equal with God. So the angel became the "Prince of Darkness" and as one regal he rules this world. (Jn 14:30) As a prince Satan seeks our worship. Paul spells this out clearly in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. He is bound to want this because of his nature. He rebelled, trying to be equal to God and God alone is worthy of worship. Since man is created in the image of God it is a feather in Satan's cap if one should worship him.

Scripture is clear about the consequences for man who dares to do this. This person is robbed of eternal life and is outside the Kingdom of God. There is no peace and the abundant life is lost.

Once man allows it, Satan will use him. This lesson Peter dearly learnt (Mt 16:23). Also as Satan uses people so he uses the spiritual gifts. He is capable of counterfeiting all good gifts. He is not called the Great Deceiver for nothing. This aspect reaches its zenith in the Black Mass, a vile perversion of something sacred.

There is no room for doubt, Satan is a foe! He is against God and has no rightful authority. He is a usurper. Time and time again his actions reveal this. He tried to prevent Christ's birth as he used Herod to murder the infants. He attempted to destroy His work and ministry through the temptations in the desert. Satan even tried to eliminate Christ by having a false charge of treason laid against Him. This led to the Cross. No doubt, he is a formidable foe (see Ephesians 6:10-13 and 1 Peter 5:8)

Scripture also condemns all the practices of the Prince of Darkness.

e.g. astrology	Isa 47:10-15
reincarnation	Heb. 9:27
divination	Deut. 18:10-11
fortune-telling	Ezek. 13:17-23; Acts 16:16-18
contacting the dead	Deut 18:11; 1 Chron 10:13-14
spiritism	Lev. 20:27

Yet there is good news. Satan is defeated. The Wilderness was the beginning of his defeat and he has been under judgment since Eden. This judgment was implemented at Calvary. One stronger than he binds him (Mk 1:21-27) This means Satan has no rightful authority. Christians look to the day when Satan will be finally put down. (Rev. 20:10.)

The Reasons Young People get Involved in the Occult (General Views)

The first point to realise is that man is incurably religious. There is a valid spiritual hunger in man. One theologian has said that man has a "good-shaped vacuum" in his being. All too often young people tend toward idealism. There is black and there is white, but no room for grey. Against this background so many "isms" of the world are failing or have failed (Nationalism, imperialism, communism)

Christian orthodoxy has declined and often appears powerless. Ethical standards have slackened. Within the church the members are ignorant of the Bible, the very resource text of the faith. So there is a need unmet. Religious answers are sought, but not satisfactorily answered. There is a greater need that is not met. The desire or want for occult activity is a masked deeper yearning for God.

Young people are also experiencing incredible change. Physiological and psychological stress of puberty and adolescence are part of the change from childhood to adulthood. This is all at a time when there is so much uncertainty. The only certainty is change itself. The world seems to be falling apart.

Materialism and commercialism has created a pleasure-orientated society. There always remains one more thrill to experience. Many have tried sex, drugs and alcohol. The occult provides a new and fascinating frontier.

Mention has already been made of the power of the occult. This power can be used to control. It is spiritual power and it is a great temptation to be able to have power and control. The occult offers spiritual power from a source other than the Creator God revealed in the Bible.

Young people seek identity and a place of belonging. The occult offers this in abundance and adds the attraction of secrecy. This offer of belonging is attractive because the place of belonging for young people is failing. The breakdown of family life is a major factor in the occult's attraction.

Those who are in Danger of getting hooked (Specific view)

The individual who is curious and daring and is willing to risk may want to experience this other reality to test and prove its existence. It may take the form of so-called "innocent play", harmless games. Soon the individual finds he is playing with the devil himself.

The strong conformist who bends to peer pressure is an ideal candidate. This, together with dissatisfaction with life and family is dangerous.

Unfortunately there also are specific situations, very natural to life, that can be exploited. A sad or bereaved person can be tricked into entry into the realm of the occult. Contact with dead loved ones is offered.

The rebel and escapist too may step into the trap easily. Beware those who claim that they have tried everything. Finally the offspring of occultists is very vulnerable.

Areas of Contact or Encounter with the Occult

Five major areas occur:

1. **The area of Magic**

This is not the entertainment at kiddies parties which is sleight of hand, where the hand is trained to be faster than the eye. Magic concerns actual control of the environment. Black and white magic are practised. The phenomenon of levitation fits in here.

2. **The Mystical Area**

These are experiences beyond the natural. Many claim to have direct communication with another reality. Even science is starting to support this view. Much research is going on in parapsychology.

3. **The Mantic Area**

Practices such as divination and future prophecy are examples.

4. **Spiritualism**

This is communication with the spirit world or so-called contact with the dead.

5. **Satanism**

Christian Action: What can I do?

Firstly we need to be aware of some of the dynamics taking place. We use the concepts of physical science to explain what happens when Satan approaches us. It is an attack often carried out by his agents we call demons. They are oppressors. One way to explain their influence is to see ourselves as being surrounded by an energy field of sin.

Without any resistance from us this energy field will continue to tighten around us. Hebrews 12:1 describes the process. The only way to break the field is to learn to say "no" to Satan's lures and offers. The word of God is a weapon.

What we have to guard against at all times is not to provide Satan with any "sin handles" (phrase used by Michael Greene). He must not be allowed a foothold. We also need to be informed. We need to know what we are up against. Already Scripture has provided a full picture.

Opposing forces are involved and it is described as warfare as we resist Satan (1 Peter 5:8). Very comforting and reassuring words are there for all who will hear in Romans 8:31-39. The one trap we must not fall into is to ignore this menace and behave as if it is non-existent. Satan's activity is anti-Christian. In Deuteronomy 18:9-14 there is a clear warning. Acts 19:19 and Galatians 5:20 are New Testament references.

Christians must be involved in the battle (Ephesians 6:12). It is a costly battle and a tough one, therefore no Christian should stand alone (Galatians 5:24). Seek support from fellow-believers.

The Good News is that the Son of God appeared. We need not fear (1 John 3:8). The early Christians really did believe this. They knew Satan was a defeated foe. Since he has no weapons against Christ, Christians can be victorious. Hence the early Christians were prepared to follow Christ even to death. They were confident of sharing in Christ's resurrection because the king of death had been defeated.

This is exciting. You and I are called to share in the victory of Christ over Satan.

Practical Activities

The only name Satan fears is Jesus. As Christians we know the power of God to set people free. Satan shudders to be reminded of Calvary and Christians calling on the name of Jesus Christ. Prayer therefore is vital. Break the silence. Let the forces around you hear God's name being called. Prayer is a vital part of Christian warfare. It is an expression of our dependence on God.

All can pray and thus be involved in spiritual warfare. Not all are called to be on the frontline battle however. For each soldier at the front during battle there are many others behind the lines providing support. Provide a power house of prayer for those who minister to those dealing with persons caught in the web of the occult. Pray also for those oppressed by Satan.

Scripture says watch and pray. To watch is to be alert. (Mark 14:37f) Keep your eyes peeled for Satan's subtle attacks. Watch for heresy creeping into teaching. Satan finds good ground where there is a tendency to be oblivious to mistakes and failures.

Paul calls the Bible our sword. This is part of our personal equipment. We need to know it and know how to use it. With it we can stand against Satan's attacks.

We also reach out to occult-trapped persons with Scripture. It serves no purpose to just quote Scripture to them. It must be used to explain God's rationale behind His commandments. To simply say the occult is wrong will achieve little if anything.

Show why God says the occult is wrong. e.g. The occult violates God's very first commandment. "You shall have no other gods before me." In the occult a god or source of spiritual power is sought. Any encounter with persons involved in the occult must be motivated by love. Care and concern rather than condemnation must be communicated at all times.

One way this can be shared is the following: "What you are doing is a danger to your spiritual welfare. If I saw you eating ^{poison} mushrooms I would warn you of the danger. Since I care about you I want you to

know what you are doing is potentially poisonous for your spirit."

With this goes the recognition that here is a person with a valid spiritual hunger. Sin is always the perversion of the good. So in dealing with persons recognize their desire or want for occult involvement is a deep unrecognized, unadmitted yearning for God. Therefore try to see the person's genuine deeper need. This may be done through questions like: "What are you looking for in astrology?" "What need of yours will astrology meet?" "The way to Jesus can be shown with no-threatening statements like: "You are spiritually hungry like all of us."

The gifts of the Spirit need more attention. We need to develop them and use them in the life of the Church. This will foster boldness as we see God's power at work. Boldness will enable us to speak out against Satan. Luther said, "I often laugh at Satan and there is nothing that makes him so angry as when I attack him to his face and tell him that through God I am more than a match for him."

It cannot be stressed enough that the greatest danger facing Christians is apathy in the area. Get involved. Take the threat seriously and stand united in the fight. Satan would divide to conquer. Let us add our support and share the Good News. At the first coming of Jesus, Satan's doom will be confirmed. Maranatha.

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