

T H E T E A C H I N G

# LEGACY

O F D E R E K P R I N C E

## Understanding Your Enemy

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Somewhere in every one of us is a deep longing to make contact with the unknown, with some “higher power”—something greater or wiser or more powerful than ourselves. This is true at all levels, from the teenage girl reading her horoscope, to the witch doctor in some remote tribe who has never seen a white man, to the scientist probing outer space and seeking to discover the secrets of the universe.

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It was God who placed this longing within us, but His archenemy, Satan, has devised a way to divert seekers into deceptive, evil systems that bring them into bondage to himself. These deceptive systems can take countless different forms, but the generic name for them all is *the occult*.

The word *occult* is derived from a Latin word that means “concealed.” The power operating through occult practices comes from Satan, but most people caught up in them do not know this. They have been enticed by claims that make them appear highly desirable.

Scripture calls turning away from the one true God to false gods “spiritual adultery.” Thus, the Bible’s warnings against immorality and adultery also apply to involvement with the occult. The “strange woman” described in Proverbs vividly depicts the lure of the occult. The tragic end of those who permit themselves to be enticed and deceived by her is described in Proverbs 7:25–27:

*Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways,  
Do not stray into her paths;  
For she has cast down many wounded,  
And all who were slain by her were strong men.  
Her house is the way to hell,  
Descending to the chambers of death.*

Scripture emphasizes that the victims of this “strange woman” are *strong men*. Satan hates such men. Strong men become vulnerable when they place their confidence in their own strength and in their past successes.

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## Two Main Branches

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The two main branches of the occult are identified in Scripture as *divination* and *sorcery*.

**Divination** provides knowledge through supernatural means about people, events and situations. Frequently it predicts future events. The contemporary terms for this are *fortunetelling*, *psychic predicting* and *extrasensory perception (ESP)*.

A clear example is offered by the slave girl in Acts 16:16–22, who was said to be “possessed with a spirit of divination.” Interestingly, the Greek merely says “she had a python spirit.” In classical Greek culture the python was often associated with the practice of divination or fortunetelling. The modern term for such a person is psychic.

This girl was the first person in Philippi to discern the identity of Paul and Silas. “These men are the servants of the Most High God,” she cried, “who proclaim to us the way of salvation” (v. 17). Everything she said was true, yet her knowledge came from a demon. When the demon was expelled, she lost the ability to tell fortunes and her masters lost their source of income.

This is what makes fortunetelling so deceptive and dangerous. A person who has a python spirit can actually channel supernatural knowledge concerning the past or future. This measure of truth is the bait on Satan’s occult hook by which he seeks to capture and enslave his victims.

Most people want to know what the future holds. Fortunetelling caters to this desire. But God requires us to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7), not knowing what the future holds but trusting His unfailing faithfulness. There may, however, be times when God will give us some sovereign revelation concerning the future, without our desiring or seeking it. When He takes the initiative, the result will serve His purposes.

Another way many people are exposed to divination is through horoscopes. Casually scanning “your” horoscope in the newspaper with an unguarded mind can expose you to demonic influence.

Here again, many Christians are deceived. They consider such activities harmless, not recognizing the snare. I ministered to a Christian woman once who needed deliverance from a spirit of divination. She could not understand how such a spirit could have entered her. As I questioned her, she eventually acknowledged that she read her horoscope occasionally in the daily newspaper. She was shocked to realize that she had opened herself to a demon of divination.

Another potential door-opener for demons is involvement in the martial arts. The martial arts originated in cultures permeated with idolatry and demonic activity.

The other main branch through which the occult operates is **sorcery**. It uses various means to make an impact on the physical senses. Some of its tools are drugs, potions, charms, amulets, magic, spells and incantations.

Revelation describes two end-time judgments of God by which some sections of humanity will be killed. Then it closes by saying that the rest of mankind “did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts” (Revelation 9:20–21). The Greek word translated “sorceries” means literally “drugs.” The NIV renders it “magic arts.” The evil actions here associated with sorcery are murders, sexual immorality and theft. Often addiction to drugs opens the door to these other evils.

In Deuteronomy 18:10–12 (NIV), the Lord declares His attitude toward occult involvement:

*Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord. . . .*

The word translated “detestable” is the strongest word in the Hebrew language for what the Lord hates and rejects. God places such people in the same category as those who sacrifice their children to a pagan deity. It is hard for our culture to realize how intensely God hates all these occult practices.

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## False Religion

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False religion is closely related to the occult. Both promise what appeals to us all—peace, power, knowledge, access to God. They claim to direct us to the light, but they actually entice us into darkness.

How can we protect ourselves? In John 10:9 Jesus said, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved.” Again He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Many different doors lead into the realm of the supernatural. But there is only one door that leads to the supernatural realm of God. That door is Jesus. Those who go through any other door can enter a supernatural realm—but it is the realm of Satan, not of the one true God.

Satan will do all the damage he can to humanity through ideologies such as atheism or humanism, but false religion is an infinitely more powerful tool in his hands. To this very hour, the great majority of the human race is enslaved by false religion.

As with other forms of the occult, it is impossible to list all the forms of false religion currently being practiced. But here are five of the main features that characterize religions as false:

**1. Religions that acknowledge a plurality of gods.** The early church was surrounded by a polytheistic culture, but in 1 Corinthians 8:5–6 Paul defined the Christian position:

*For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), 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.*

**2. Religions that practice idol worship.** Idolatry is the first specific sin forbidden in the Ten Commandments and the one that carries the heaviest penalties (see Exodus 20:3–5).

**3. Religions teaching that human beings ultimately can become gods.** This was the original temptation offered by Satan in the Garden of Eden: “You will be like God [or gods]” (Genesis 3:5).

This promise contains an inherent self-contradiction. God, who has created all things, including the human race, is Himself uncreated. It is logically impossible for man, the created, to become like God, the uncreated. The created can never become uncreated. Nevertheless, this promise of becoming like God has appealed to the self-exalting pride of humanity in every generation.

**4. Religions teaching that people can achieve righteousness by their own efforts.** Again, the appeal is to human pride. Proud people are drawn to religious systems that demand hard, unreasonable forms of work and even self-inflicted suffering. The more rigorous the demands, the greater the degree of pride a person feels in fulfilling them.

**5. Religions that offer esoteric knowledge available only to a privileged few.** Access to this knowledge usually requires some special rite of initiation. In the first century, the apostles were warning their followers about this form of deception. It was against this error that Paul warned Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:20–21:

*O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle [or vain] babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge [gnosis]—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.*

Mormonism and Freemasonry are two examples of religions whose secrets are revealed only to those who have passed through a stringent process of initiation.

Christianity, on the other hand, is open. It has no special process of initiation and no secret rites. The basis of its faith, the Bible, is an open book. All are encouraged to study it.

False religion always appeals in one way or another to human pride. The Gospel, on the other hand, emphasizes that we are saved by the grace of God, which cannot be earned, but is received only by faith, which God Himself supplies. In Ephesians 2:8–9, Paul says this leaves no room for pride.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

In 1 Corinthians 10:20–21, Paul emphasizes that every form of false religion is permeated by demonic power and that Christians must not, therefore, be involved in any way:

*The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.*

This brief overview of the occult and false religions reveals just how complex it is. There is no simple way to define or describe it. You might compare it to an octopus with many tentacles, which it fastens onto its victim. Just as the victim is guarding himself against one tentacle, another seeks to fasten onto him from his blind side.

If you have been involved in the occult or false religion—even inadvertently or experimentally—God wants you to repent of it, confess it as sin, and seek Christ for forgiveness, cleansing, and release. And to make your break deliberate and clean, any books or other objects connected with the occult or false religion should be destroyed.

ADAPTED FROM DEREK PRINCE'S TEACHING: "THEY SHALL EXPEL DEMONS"

**For further study, we recommend Derek's audio message, available on CD:**

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