

Angels & Demons

Lesson 4: A Look into the Occult

1. **Finish Lesson 3:** Comment on this quote from Prof. Sorum's book, *"Until you 'see' the ways evil spirits try to take God's Word away from us, you have not yet seen Satan at his best ... or worst. We have looked at many ways demons attack us. They want to make us suffer, to give us pain, to fill us with fear, to enslave us, to make us filthy in every way they can. But what is the demons' main goal, their keenest desire? However wide their trail of destruction, however bitter the suffering they cause, and however deep the wounds, demons are not and cannot be satisfied until they take us away from our God."*
2. Usually, we think of Satan as the tempter. What else does the devil do? Read Revelation 12:10
3. Why are both the tempter role and the accuser role effective ways of leading us away from God?
4. Sometimes it helps to see these things played out in Scripture. How do we see the devil as both the Tempter and the accuser in Judas Iscariot's life?
5. Evaluate: When our conscience accuses us of sin, we have to determine whether the accusation comes from God or the devil.
6. *"When the devil throws our sins up to us and declares we deserve death and hell, we ought to speak thus: "'I admit that I deserve death and hell. What of it? Does this mean that I shall be sentenced to eternal damnation? By no means. For I know One who suffered and made a satisfaction in my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Where he is, there I shall be also.'"* – Martin Luther to Jerome Weller, a friend undergoing spiritual despair, he had once lived in Luther's house.
7. Luther said nothing else that what God has said in his word. Read Romans 8:1, 33-34, 38-39. We know the devil's work and his tactics. We know one who is more. What comfort do we have in these verses and for our life?

Introduction: Would you ever play a game of Russian roulette? Why not?

Today and in the next few lessons, we will take a peek into the occult. We are looking at how Satan influences the world. How there are doors that are open to his influence. While we, as God's people, may already know the danger of these things, and we don't practice them. It is good to be aware that we may be alert and of sober mind as our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking to devour us.

8. First, let's define some terms.

- a. The Occult – hidden things, secret things, supernatural that would be known only by God.
- b. A Cult – A cult is a religious group that deviates significantly from orthodox Christianity. (Kind of a bad definition because every false religion could fall into this.) A cult will exhibit several of the following general characteristics. (See page 3)
- c. Divination – Trying to predict the future through superstitious or supernatural means. (Omens, animal entrails, tarot cards, crystal balls, psychics, etc)
- d. Astrology – the study of the movements and relative positions of celestial bodies interpreted as having an influence on human affairs and the natural world.

9. Gamblin' with the devil: Why is divination a dangerous game?

- a. Read Daniel 10:14 – some dabble in the occult hoping to see into the future. Is it possible to know future events?
- b. Read Genesis 3:4-5, Where did the art of divination start? Did the devil's first prediction come true?
- c. Read John 8:44 – Why is it foolish to consult with the devil concerning the future?
- d. Read John 20:31. Divination mainly deals with the future of our earthly life or the future events of the world. What future does God want us to focus on?
- e. Psalm 23:4. In view of God's promise, why is it not necessary to know what the future holds for us here on earth?

10. Gamblin' with the devil: Why is astrology a dangerous game?

- a. Astrology has been around for millennia, apart from God's Word what proof is there that astrology is not an exact science?

- b. In his Word, God often deals with people who have ventured into the occult to try and know the future. Read Isaiah 47:13-14. What challenge does God give to those who trust in astrology?

- 11. Satan and his influence is not only found in the astrology section of the newspaper. (I remember exactly where that was in the New Ulm Journal). Satan has weaseled his way into every aspect from culture. Where can someone find the occult in plain view in society?

- 12. Discuss how the following passages help us avoid the devil's dangerous games:
 - a. 1 Kings 3:9 –
 - b. James 4:7 –
 - c. Philippians 4:8 –

- 13. Read Numbers 23:7-10, 23. This is the account of Balak, king of Moab, hiring Balaam, a sorcerer, to curse Israel. What happened? What comfort does this bring to God's people?

- 14. Comment on this quote from Dr. Siegbert Becker who wrote in his book *Wizards that Peep*, "Our best defense against the modern explosion of the occult," concludes Dr. Becker, "is not more knowledge of the occult on our part ... the best weapon is the Gospel of God's redeeming love in Christ who has come to destroy all the works of the devil ..."

General Characteristics of a Cult

1. Claim of new truth or revelation or new interpretation of Scripture or special discoveries;
2. Non-biblical source of authority (e.g., the Book of Mormon);
3. Denial of the divinity and all-sufficient redemptive work of Jesus;
4. They are invariably work righteous;
5. Offer uncertain hope;
6. Anti-Trinitarian; (this is pretty much invariable)
7. Often employ double talk, using Christian terms with different meanings;
8. Their theology is often in flux—it changes to suit the circumstances (e.g., Mormon decree allowing Blacks full rights to the priesthood);
9. Doctrinal ambiguity or confusing theology;
10. False interpretation of the Bible—taking passages out of context, picking and choosing passages and portions of Scripture without letting Scripture interpret Scripture;
11. Tend to soften the teachings of sin and hell;
12. Religious syncretism – combining what they consider the “best” ideas of two or more religions or religious philosophies;
13. They often employ false prophecy and predictions;
14. They are often gathered around a charismatic leader or prophet (e.g., The Unification Church and the Rev. Moon);
15. Claim of messianic leadership or special/unique prophetic calling from God;
16. Prey on the ignorance of nominal Christians and others;
17. Feel a notch superior to orthodox Christians;
18. Enslaving organizational structure;
19. Financial exploitation.
20. Often secretive.