

Angels & Demons

Lesson 5: Witchcraft and Other forms of Spiritism

Introduction: Read Proverbs 5:1-6. While this section of Scripture speaks specifically to the lure of sexual immorality, we can find wisdom in this account against the lure of spiritual adultery, that is, trusting in other things rather than God. What are some ways that the immoral woman in v.3 and the lure of the devil to witchcraft, spiritism, or other demonic ways are similar?

Perpetual Note: Today and in the next few lessons, we will take a peek into the occult and other things like that. 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, we don't want practice them even inadvertently. 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.

1. The Lure of Witchcraft

- a. Witchcraft goes by many names such as Wicca, Wica, Benevolent Witchcraft, or The Craft. It, like satanism (which we will cover later), is a religion protected by the United States Constitution.
- b. Those who practice witchcraft are very careful to distinguish themselves from satanists. In fact, Wiccans will deny the existence of the devil. They call the devil an invention of Christianity.
- c. Witches often refer to their craft as "The Old Religion." They do this in contrast to Christianity, which they consider a recent development. They claim that Wicca dates back thousands of years before Christianity and was the original religion of early man. No surprise: they blame Christianity for their bad reputation.
- d. What kind of religion is witchcraft?
 - i. Pantheistic – "the divine is seen as everywhere and in everything."
 - ii. Animistic – "every human, tree, animal, stream, rock, and other form of Nature [are] seen to have a Divine Spirit within."
 - iii. Two main gods: the horned god of hunting and nature and the goddess of fertility.
 - iv. The goddess receives more attention and is often worshiped as the earth mother.
 - v. There are many different traditions within witchcraft, but one common thread is that they all worship nature and the earth.
- e. Witchcraft lures people in with wisdom. In fact, the word "Wicca" comes from an Old English word meaning "wise." Compare that with Romans 1:22-25. How does God point out the foolishness of this lure of the devil?

2. The Lure of Near-Death Experiences

- a. Read 1 Samuel 28:3-25. What "wisdom" was Saul after?
- b. Why would he want to talk to Samuel?

- c. A popular form of spiritism today surrounds the out-of-body/near-death experience. Why do you think people are drawn to these things?

- d. Read Luke 16:27-31. Some people use near-death experiences to prove that heaven is real. They look to those things for comfort. How does Jesus answer that in this account of Lazarus and the Rich Man? Where do we go for comfort?

- e. Read Isaiah 8:19-20. Someone says they had a glimpse of heaven, or an out-of-body experience. According to this passage, how should we evaluate it? How would you talk with someone who is really into near-death experiences?

- f. Those who have had near-death experiences often picture heaven as a spiritual (out-of-body) experience rather than a physical (in-the-body) experience. How does Job describe our life in heaven? Read Job 19:25-27

3. The Lure of the New Age

- a. Read the 6 Statements (see last page) that summarize the New Age Movement. (These 6 statements come from Douglas R. Groothuis's book *Unmasking the New Age*). Where & How do you see those beliefs in our culture?

- b. What similarities do you see between New Age and both astrology & witchcraft?

- c. Go back through the statements. Can you think of Scripture that counters each point?

- d. Note: New Age is more of a philosophy than it is of beliefs. But the ties to the occult are clear. Besides books and magazines, practitioners of New Age often have things like Tibetan bells, exotic herbal teas (that are to help energies in the body), Viking runes, solar energizers, other occult paraphernalia that is used for aiding in meditation. The most sacred object is crystal. Crystals are believed to provide healthful energy fields and possess healing powers. They are also to be helpful in meditation and "amplify the experience."

- e. Read Genesis 3:5. How are Satan's temptations and promises similar to the promises of the New Age Movement?

- f. Read 1 Timothy 4:1 and apply the passage to the rise of spiritism in our country and culture.

Summary of the New Age Movement

1. ALL IS ONE—Groothuis explains: “Ultimately there is no difference between God, a person, a carrot, or a rock. They are all part of one continuous reality that has no boundaries, no ultimate division.”
2. ALL IS GOD—The New Age teaches that God is everything and everything is God. God is not regarded as a personal being, but an impersonal energy force. Everything that exists is god. This concept was (and is) evident in the *Star Wars* films with the presence of “the Force.”
3. WE ARE ALL GOD—Since everything is god it follows that we are all gods. The key is to awaken the god within us. A noted New Age leader urges: “Kneel to your own self. Honor and worship your own being. God dwells within you as you!”
4. A CHANGE OF CONSCIOUSNESS—Even though we are all gods, we don’t know it. The problem is our ignorance, which keeps us from realizing our divinity. The solution is enlightenment. Through meditation we can alter our consciousness and open the door to reality.
5. ALL RELIGIONS ARE ONE—Religions are simply different paths to the one truth. Thus the New Age seeks to incorporate all religions into its movement. Christianity is no exception. Rather than being the Savior of the world, they say Christ’s mission was to alert the sleeping masses to their innate divinity.
6. NEW AGE COMING—the old age is passing away. A new age is dawning. We are part of a great transformation of consciousness and culture. Through “conscious evolution” we will be able to steer the cosmic ship into bigger and better times. New Agers call this the Age of Aquarius (“␣ this is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, the Age of Aquarius␣”) (That’s a song reference for you youths, The 5th Dimension “Age of Aquarius” from 1969. Look up the lyrics and you’ll get a feel for New Agers)