

**Dealing with Witchcraft**  
**Deuteronomy 18:14-20, Mark 1:21-28**  
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Perhaps some of you older ones remember missionaries coming to your church to show slides of their work...in Africa or South America. Remember pictures of men with painted faces and pierced ears...headhunters and warriors...they kind of look like modern teens. Naked women and children lived in poverty. The religious leader was the witch doctor or shaman. He cast spells, conjured up cures. He was the most pathetic looking one.

The missionaries would show pictures of the people after they received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They got hospitals, children got to go to school, fearful dances were replaced with joyful singing, women were clothed. The power of God through Jesus Christ transformed the culture from cannibalism to peace.

Our country is going through the opposite cycle. From peace to violence... from security to crime...from modest clothing to sensuality and nakedness. From packed churches and joyful singing to rap music and anarchy and drugs. From hope to despair and epidemic suicide.

Why? Witchdoctors...pretending to be college professors...teaching evolution, denying the Creator, worshiping the creation. They reject the Bible and authority. They reject Jesus. They bring in spiritists, mediums, fortune tellers and all sorts of dangerous magic. Americans are getting demon possessed like the pagans used to be. The end result is fear and suicide, immorality and disease, anger and violence.

It has gotten so bad in America that we are starting to see African churches sending missionaries to us! One of the best pastors in Duluth is a black African pastor from Kenya.

Our scripture lessons tell us about this ongoing conflict between the dark demonic world and the victorious Jesus Christ. Let's look at the Old Testament lesson in Deuteronomy 18 first.

- I. **Stay away from Spiritism. V. 14** *The 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 children of Israel were about to go in and possess the promised land. One of the reasons that

God wanted them to wipe out the inhabitants is that **they were totally given over to occult practices**, even to the point that they sacrificed their children to idols. God knows how dangerous and devastating occult worship is. When people and cultures get involved with spiritism and witchcraft they get demon possessed and soon the culture becomes a culture of violence and death. That is why God strictly forbade the people to have anything to do with sorcery or divination. God put the death penalty upon anyone who consulted a medium. Have you ever consulted a medium? ...gone to a fortune teller? ...considered your horoscope? ...called a psychic hot line? ...used an Ouija board? ... participated in a séance?

- Deuteronomy 18:9-14 *When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. 10 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, 11 or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. 12 Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. 13 You must be blameless before the LORD your God.*

We need to wake up. Modern spiritism is flooding in. It is coming at us from all angles: television programs about witches, psychic hot lines, rows of books at Barnes and Nobles and even seminars that sound innocent but are based on witchcraft. Here is one that is coming to Mineral Point for ladies on March 31 and April 1. It sounds good at first glance: *Ladies getaway, Managing Stress and Anxiety, teaching others to take care of themselves, achieve more confidence and passion about your life, stop smoking, manage your weight...* what could be better! Read the fine print: *Pranic healing, Cranio-sacral, energy medicine, shaminism, Shen... A teacher is a noted astrologer... and will be conducting a group reading using her book and divinity cards by the same name. This unique three-fold system, consists of 33 cards which have been inspirationally designed... to help you release limitations, blockages and negative energy from the past...she will teach you about your allies (animals, colors, goddesses). Another person will be conducting a group hypnosis session based on the cards...One session is described this way...The purpose for a session with **a medium or psychic** is to assist an individual to become more attuned with this capacity and power.*

- *Leviticus 20:27 A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be **put to death**. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads. (This is the Word of God to Israel.)*

Undoubtedly there will be many women in our area who will attend these sessions and delve into the world of the spirits. They will receive spiritistic healing. But there is a catch...in the process they will open up their souls to demons and become demon possessed. Then we will have to be like the African missionaries and learn to cast out the demons.

When I was in Seminary we used to go to a neat shopping mall that was in some restored warehouses along the Mississippi River called River Place. It was especially beautiful there at Christmas time with the music, the carolers and brass ensembles. So a number of years later, when I was dating Sharon, I decided to take her there. But much to my shock and embarrassment most of the businesses were closed down and many of the spots were now filled with psychic readers and fortune tellers. It was creepy and we couldn't wait to get out of there. What a miracle that Sharon went out on another date with me!

Psychics and mediums seem so innocent and interesting at first. They are powerful and accurate because they consult with demons that have been following your family for generations. You may get some help from them at first but over a period of time the spirits will destroy your faith in Jesus and lead you into philosophies and experiences that you never would have wanted when you first got involved.

*Revelation 16:13-14 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are spirits of demons **performing miraculous signs**, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.*

*1 Timothy 4:1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*

Dear friends, **stay away from spiritism**...Our passage in Deuteronomy 18 goes on to say that God himself will raise up His prophet and that we should listen to Him and not to those who practice divination. This takes us into our second point:

- II. Listen to Jesus Because Jesus is Lord** When the missionaries first came to Alaska the people were in horrible bondage to demonic spirits.

Fear drove them to make masks to scare away the demons and totem poles to appease the demons. When the missionaries introduced them to the Lord Jesus Christ the Eskimos and Athabascans were so happy to find a good and loving Savior that is infinitely stronger than the demons that their forefathers so foolishly embraced and passed down. The end result for those who came to Jesus was great joy and no one can sing the praises of the Lord with more joy and enthusiasm than a group of redeemed Eskimos!

Turn with me to our gospel lesson in Mark 1. Verse 22 *The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.* Jesus did not just give the people information. He had authority over the diseases and demons that were plaguing their lives. The gospel goes on to demonstrate the authority that Jesus had. A man came into the synagogue and the demons that possessed him cried out, *What do you want to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!* Jesus told the spirit to be quiet and come out of him. The man shook violently and the spirits came out of him with a shriek.

The people were amazed at what they saw and the news about Jesus spread rapidly throughout the area. And we know the rest of the story, Jesus healed many sick people and cast out many demons, he calmed the storms, Jesus raised the dead back to life. This is the point: Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He has power and authority over all of the demons that hell can throw at us.

When Jesus sent out his disciples on a mission, He gave them the same power. Luke 9:1-2 *When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.* Later He sent out 72 men with the same assignment and they returned with joy saying, *"Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."*

When Jesus gave the great commission in Mark 16 He promised this same authority would accompany those who go out and preach the gospel. Mark 16:15 *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation... 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons ...20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.*

The first century church also was like that. It was a powerful church that preached the Word of God with the same authority Jesus had. They healed the sick. They cast out demons.

This same thing happens today. Our missionaries in Brazil have told me that on Friday nights they pray for the demon possessed to be delivered. We had a man in Bible study right here on Wednesday night who also prays for the deliverance of the possessed.

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, PEOPLE NEED OUR HELP. They have gotten involved with the occult. They hear voices. They are tormented. You know some of them, I'm sure. Maybe someone here today has a demonic spirit? Jesus would have helped them then. Jesus wants us to help them today.

**We need to get prepared for the work.** (That is why we are studying the armor of God at mid-week Bible study.) We are going to need to be people of prayer, living close to our Heavenly Father. We are going to need to be people of holiness with lives that are clean and pure. We need to be people of the Bible, filled with the Word of God, able to use it as a mighty sword of the Lord...led by the Holy Spirit...filled with faith. **Being filled with the Holy Spirit is no longer an option... these days it is a necessity.**

The American church is too weak to help these desperate souls. Oh that our church would become a strong place of refuge for those who want to be set free from the power of evil. The church is a hospital for sinners, not a hall of fame for saints.

So let's lay aside sin and unbelief. Let's repent of any involvement we have ever had with witchcraft, sorcery, mediums or spiritism. Let's cleanse our homes from the enemy's devices and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we can be a sharp tool in His hands to set people free from the power of Satan.

That is the kind of church our confused society needs. Is that the kind of church you want? ...a church where the possessed can be set free? Friends, witchcraft is coming at us from all angles, on TV, in our schools, at the book store, through seemingly innocent seminars. Two points: **1. Stay away from spiritism. 2. Listen to Jesus because Jesus is Lord**...and only Jesus can set the prisoners of evil free.

*Who is on the Lord's side? Who will serve the King? Who will be His helpers, Other lives to bring? Who will leave the world's side? Who will face the foe?*

*Who is on the Lord's side? Who for Him will go? By Thy call of mercy, By Thy grace divine, We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!*

*Fierce may be the conflict, Strong may be the foe, But the King's own army None can overthrow. Round His standard ranging, Vict'ry is secure. For His truth unchanging Makes the triumph sure. Joyfully enlisting By Thy grace divine, We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!*

Have you ever wanted to be a missionary? You are one: witchcraft has left Africa and come to America. Welcome to the American mission field! Amen