

## ***Sinister Spirit***

*Tracing the Spirit of Antichrist Through Current Events*

By Timothy Zebell

## **Appendix C.4**

### Witchcraft in the Church

According to Hollywood, witchcraft is practiced in dark and secluded areas surrounded by Occult symbols. The spells are often complicated and require an assortment of exotic—and often disturbing—ingredients. Moreover, the witches are society’s outcasts or individuals who have sold their souls to the Devil. Occasionally, a more tame and juvenile form of witchcraft is portrayed. These rituals are practiced during slumber parties and in the halls of high schools. The spells are intended to invoke true love, to manipulate authority figures, and to enact revenge. These stereotypes may make for entertaining tales, but they are far too restrictive. The truth is, witchcraft can be practiced virtually anywhere, by anyone, to accomplish almost any goal.

Shocking as it may be, even pastors and Christian leaders can succumb to the promises and allure of witchcraft. In fact, this has been occurring for thousands of years. In the Old Testament, God repeatedly condemned Israel’s religious and state leaders for practicing witchcraft. An example of this can be found in Ezekiel 13:1–2, and 20–23:

*The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who are prophesying, and say to those who prophesy from their own hearts: ‘Hear the word of the LORD!’” ... “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against your magic bands with which you hunt the souls like birds, and I will tear them from your arms, and I will let the souls whom you hunt go free, the souls like birds. Your veils also I will tear off and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand as prey, and you shall know that I am the LORD. Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not grieved him, and you have encouraged the wicked, that he should not turn from his evil way to save his life, therefore you shall no more see false visions nor practice divination. I will deliver my people out of your hand. And you shall know that I am the LORD.”*

God condemned Israel's prophets for prophesying falsely and for employing Occult practices. Prophets were the pastors of the Old Testament. They were called by God to speak forth His Word to the people. In Ezekiel 13, we discover that there were some who were not truly called by God, yet they presented themselves to the people as prophets—as religious leaders who spoke forth the Word of God. Their inspiration was self-induced, and they used magic to ensnare the people in their deception.

Ezekiel 13 is a prophecy against witchcraft. These religious leaders were creating magical charms. In their book *Scripture and Other Artifacts*, Phillip King and Michael Coogan write:

In the closing verses of Ezekiel 13 the prophet turns his attention to magic practices whose details remain obscure... Two key terms are *kesatot* and *mispabot*... The *kesatot* are “sewn” on the arms, while the *mispabot* are made “on the head of every height”...In modern times archaeological discoveries and texts from Babylonia in particular have shed further light on what might be involved: G. A. Cooke cited Hellenistic figurines from Tell Sandahannah (Mareshah) in Palestine with wire twisted around their arms and ankles ... and a magical text from Babylonia that speaks of white and black wool being bound to a person or to someone's bed. ... J. Herrmann [notes] that both words can be related to Akkadian verbs, *kasu* and *sapabu*, which mean respectively “to bind” and “to loose.” ... Herrmann also drew attention to texts in which these verbs were used in a specifically magical sense. ... This text indicates that, whatever the objects were, their function was to act as “binders” and “loosers” in a magical sense, in other words as means of attack and defense in sorcery.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, these religious leaders were performing divination which is the practice of using magic to see the future. The use of magical charms and divination were forbidden practices according to Deuteronomy 18:9–11 where God commands, “*When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead,*” Therefore, in Ezekiel 13, God declares that He is against these magical practices and those who perform them.

Israel's religious leaders in Ezekiel 13 were practicing witchcraft in the name of the Lord to accomplish “the Lord's work.” Similarly, in Ezekiel 8, God declares that the religious leaders who lived and served in His temple were, in fact, witches. God reveals that He had been driven far from His own sanctuary in anger because of the detestable practices of these religious leaders. Rather than worship the true God in holiness and truth, they had erected within the temple an idol that provoked God's jealousy. Within the

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<sup>1</sup> Phillip King and Michael Coogan, *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King* (Westminster John Knox, 1994), 121, Source: Horn, *Apollyon Rising 2012*, 175.

walls of God’s sanctuary, the religious leaders were practicing “vile abominations.” As a result, God set Himself against these “men of God.”

In Scripture, God repeatedly condemns the political and religious leaders of Israel for engaging in witchcraft. In Ezekiel 13:20, we learn that the people of Israel were ensnared—they had been drawn in and trapped—by the example and exhortations of their religious leaders. Rather than be appalled by the detestable practices occurring within the walls of God’s temple, they had been deceived into believing that those practices were normal and acceptable to God.

Unfortunately, witchcraft has again found a safe haven within the walls of God’s house. Too many pastors have introduced into their churches an idol that provokes God’s jealousy. This can be anything that is valued above God and His commands. For some of these churches, the pastor may not have introduced the idol, but he has refused to prevent its arrival and to teach against it. As such, the people have been fooled into believing that these practices are normal and acceptable to God. Ultimately, they have driven God out of their sanctuaries.

Anyone can practice witchcraft. This is because witchcraft is merely the manipulation of spiritual forces to accomplish one’s own will. This is why the Bible defines witchcraft as rebellion and defiance against God (1 Sam. 15:23<sup>2</sup>). At its core, witchcraft is when an individual seeks to accomplish his will instead of God’s will by manipulating spiritual forces.

Today’s church has become enamored with methods to manipulate spiritual forces to accomplish one’s own will. In other words, today’s church has become enamored with witchcraft. Let’s consider some examples of how we see this in modern churches.

### **Circles of Power:**

The lead pastor of National Community Church Mark Batterson, has created a book and teaching series called *The Circle Maker*. It advocates learning “how to pray in a new way.” Among other things, individuals create circles while they pray as a means of calling down the power of God and multiplying His

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 15:23 (ESV): “For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.”

1 Samuel 15:23 (KJV): For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

Both the ESV and KJV are acceptable translations. The Hebrew word “kashaph” means “to whisper a spell, that is, to enchant or practise magic.” This word is translated as “witchcraft” in the KJV Bible, whereas the ESV uses the word “divination.” (Strong’s, #H3784, 76.)

miracles in their lives.<sup>3</sup> These may be literal circles drawn on the ground around them, circular prayer walks, or even figurative circles drawn around a promise or an idea.

Mark Batterson credits the legend of Honi the Circle Maker as inspiration for this novel form of praying. Honi belongs to the Jewish mystical traditions known as “the Kabala,” being mentioned in *The Legends of the Jews*. According to the story, on one occasion when Israel needed rain, Honi drew a circle in the dirt around himself and told God that he would not move out of the circle until it rained. Soon the sky began to sprinkle rain, but Honi told God that he expected more rain. It then began to pour down rain, at which point Honi told God that he wanted a calm rain. Soon it began to rain calmly.<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of whether this individual truly existed, the stories about him are clearly exaggerated or fictitious. In one of the stories, Honi slept underneath a Carob tree for **70** years.<sup>5</sup> At the very least, these stories should not be used to create Christian doctrines or practice.

Circles are critical to Mark Batterson’s teaching, but they are also a critical aspect in the rituals of witchcraft. A circle is used to create a sacred space.<sup>6</sup> This may be to protect the practitioner from outside spirits, or it may be to bind spiritual energy. Often these circles are drawn using chalk or salt, and some forms of witchcraft teach that a circle should be drawn three times in a clockwise motion.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly enough, this is precisely what is portrayed in Mark Batterson’s promotional trailer. Mark is shown drawing a chalk circle around himself three times in a clockwise manner.

There is nothing in Scripture which teaches that we must create circles when we pray. There is nothing that teaches that praying in a circular path is more powerful. There is nothing that teaches that circling promises enables God to accomplish greater things in our lives. There is nothing that teaches that placing one’s self inside of a circle energizes our prayer. There is nothing that teaches that we have a right to demand things of God in our prayers, as Honi the Circle Maker did. As Mark Batterson admits, this is a

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<sup>3</sup> EnLocal, “Pray In a New Way.”

<sup>4</sup> Batterson, “The Legend of the Circle Maker.”

<sup>5</sup> Prero, “YomTov.”

<sup>6</sup> “Creating sacred space or casting a circle means that you are changing the energy configuration of a room or space within a room to an energy which is neutral, cleansed of any extraneous vibrations that may not be helpful or may even be jarring to the ritual or ceremony that you are about to perform. Casting a circle contains, focuses and intensifies the energies that you will raise during your rite. By clearing, cleansing and sealing a space for your rites, the magical energy can be contained and built up for the proper moment of release into the universe.”

(Charboneau-Harrison, “Creating Sacred Space.”)

<sup>7</sup> “A ritual circle (or magic circle) is a circle of space marked out by practitioners of many branches of witchcraft and ritual [magic](#), either to contain energy and form a sacred space, or as a form of [magical](#) protection, or both. It may be marked physically (drawn in salt or chalk, for example) or merely visualised. The creation of a ritual circle is known as “casting” a circle, and there are many different techniques. Some [traditions](#) say that one must trace around the circle three times in a clockwise direction (also known as ‘sunward’ or ‘deosil’).”

(“Witchcraft Terms and Tools.”)

new way of teaching. It is not established on the faith that was once and for all delivered by the apostles (Jude 1:3<sup>8</sup>).

Jesus taught us how to pray, so why do we need to be taught a new way of praying? (Matt. 6:5–13<sup>9</sup>). Are we to believe that Mark Batterson has discovered a more meaningful and powerful method of prayer than Jesus Christ? Certainly not!

Whether or not Mark Batterson realizes it, he has fallen prey to the false promises of witchcraft. He encourages people to rely on a formula to manipulate God into answering their prayers. This formula cannot be found in Scripture; instead, it depends upon an unreliable account of an individual who demanded that God act according to his will. As such, the hero of this story who models this new prayer method embodies a spirit of defiance which, according to 1 Samuel 15:23,<sup>10</sup> is the heart of witchcraft.

### **The Law of Attraction:**

A key doctrine within witchcraft is known as “The Law of Attraction.” Faehallows School of Magic defines this doctrine in an article titled “Enhance Your Magic with Law of Attraction,” “Law of Attraction states: Like attracts like. This means that every thought we think is attracting similar thoughts to it. The more we focus on a particular thought, the stronger it will get, because other thoughts like it will be attracted. These thoughts also attract similar people, places, and things to us.”<sup>11</sup> Often this teaching encourages practitioners to first visualize what they want and then to positively affirm it with their mouths.

In 2006, this doctrine became particularly popular and widespread through a self-help book titled *The Secret*. Due in a large part to the endorsement of Oprah Winfrey, *The Secret* was the number one book on *The New York Times Bestseller List* for 146 consecutive weeks.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jude 1:3: Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 6:5–13: “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’”

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 918.

<sup>11</sup> Wulf, “Enhance Your Magic.”

<sup>12</sup> “Making of *The Secret*: Official Web Site of *The Secret* and *The Power*,” *TheSecret.tv*, Source: Wikipedia, “*The Secret*.”

Remarkably, this doctrine is also a popular doctrine among Christians who promote self-esteem, purpose, and successful living. (Of course, it is not called The Law of Attraction among Christians.) Bible teachers such as Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Joyce Meyers, and Joel Osteen teach this method of accomplishing one's will and desires. Rick Warren and Robert Schuller have also practiced this method within their ministries.

Some examples of popular Christian books which teach this method of witchcraft include:

- *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale
- *Power Thoughts: 12 Strategies to Win the Battle of the Mind* by Joyce Meyers
- *Me and My Big Mouth* by Joyce Meyers
- *Battlefield of the Mind: Winning the Battle of Your Mind* by Joyce Meyers
- *The Secret Power of Speaking God's Word* by Joyce Meyer
- *Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential* by Joel Osteen
- *Become a Better You: 7 Keys to Improving Your Life Every Day* by Joel Osteen

Nowhere does the Bible teach that we can manipulate reality through visualization and verbal affirmation. We are not told to meditate upon money, a job promotion, a new car, etc. for our prosperity. Instead, we are told to meditate upon God's Word. Psalm 1:1–3 says, *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."*

## **Sex:**

Sexual relations is a key element in witchcraft. It is an empowering act. It is an act of worship.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, pastor of Fellowship Church Ed Young Jr. teaches that sex is an empowering act of worship. He has written a book called *Sexperiment* which teaches that if a person has sex in different places in his home for seven days, then God will bless his marriage. Founder and former pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church Rob Bell has also written a book called *Sex God: Exploring the Endless Connections Between Sexuality and Spirituality*.

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<sup>13</sup> "In magick we manipulate a certain amount of energy into a desired direction; for that we specify a goal, raise energy and point it into the wished direction (release the energy) to achieve a manifestation in our physical reality. In sex magick we basically focus on a goal by affirmation, visualization etc.; we raise much energy through prolonged sexual arousal and we release the energy at the moment of orgasm. The goal in sex magick can be the achievement or attraction of anything wished in the physical world, like a new house, a better relationship or a healing. It can also be the charging of magickal tools or talismans. And the goal can be spiritual development."  
(Heij, "Introduction to Sex Magick.")

## Rituals:

Witchcraft emphasizes rituals to release spiritual powers. In order for the ritual to be a success and the power to be unleashed, there are specific steps which must be done in the proper order and in the correct way. For many churches, worship has become such a ritual. Utilizing a specific order of up-tempo and slower songs, lighting, and prayers, the worship leader seeks to release God's power in the service. Often this is referred to as "God's anointing." Supposedly, worship accomplishes something powerful within the life of the Christian, such as creating a greater intimacy with God. Thus, worship is transformed into a formula, which if done correctly, grants the worshipper something meaningful.

This approach to worship is not honoring to God. King David exhorts us in Psalm 29:2 to worship the Lord because He deserves glory and honor, "*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.*" Our worship ought to come from the overflow of our hearts. We should not have to manipulate rhythms and lighting to generate a particular emotion that we associate with worship. If this is needed to create an attitude of worship, then we have lost our perspective of who God is. The very fact that we are able to worship the Lord is due to His overflowing mercy. Recognizing who God is, is what produces a genuine attitude of reverence. David understood this as he writes in Psalm 5:7<sup>14</sup> (KJV), "*But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.*"

Genuine worship is giving homage to God because of all that He is, and all that He has done. It is not simply an emotion which can be conjured. Neither is it an opportunity to receive some special empowerment from God.

Fasting has also become a ritual in some churches which is used to produce some form of empowerment within the life of a Christian. For example, Jentezen Franklin has written a book called *Fasting: Opening the Door to a Deeper, More Intimate, More Powerful Relationship with God*. He has also written a book called *Fasting to Regain Your Edge*.

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<sup>14</sup> Psalm 5:7 (ESV): But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.

Both the ESV and the KJV are acceptable translations. The Hebrew word "shachah," which is translated "worship" in the KJV and "bow" in the ESV, means "fall down flat," "do (make) obeisance," "do reverence," "make to stoop." (Strong's, #H7812, 151.)

Communion is still another practice which some churches have transformed into a ritual used to empower one's life. For example, Perry Stone has written a book called *The Meal that Heals*. He teaches that if a person takes communion every day, then he will be healed both physically and spiritually.

Christians do not need to practice rituals in order to release God's power in their lives. The Apostle Paul declares in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." Rather than focus on formulas and rituals, we ought to be focusing on our relationship with Jesus Christ.

### **Spells:**

The correct pronunciation of words is crucial when casting spells. If the word is mispronounced, it fails to release its power. Today there is a movement known as "The Sacred Name Movement" which teaches that we can only be saved if we call upon God's true Hebrew name and pronounce it correctly. They teach that the entire Bible was originally written in Hebrew, but the Greeks re-wrote it and corrupted the true name of Jesus. They believe this despite the fact that there is no evidence indicating that the New Testament was written in Hebrew. In fulfillment of prophecy, most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, but the entire New Testament was written in Greek (Isa. 28:11;<sup>15</sup> 1 Cor. 14:21–22<sup>16</sup>). Nevertheless, The Sacred Name Movement teaches that only those who call upon God's true Hebrew name—not the name of Jesus—will be saved.

In defiance of proper etymology, the Sacred Name Movement teaches that "Jesus" and "Lord" are pagan names for God and must be rejected. According to *Ahayah Yashiya*, "The name Jesus is from the Greek Iesus, which is derived from a Greek goddess. It's also connected to the Greek god Zeus. In Spanish the name Jesus is pronounce Hey-ZEUS."<sup>17</sup> According to this teaching, God's true name is Hebrew. If we call on the name of Jesus, then we are not calling on God's true name. Therefore, we cannot be saved.

Great emphasize is placed on the pronunciation of the name, but there is no consensus within the movement regarding the correct pronunciation. This is largely because the Jews did not speak God's name aloud, so there are no records of how it was pronounced. Despite the belief that mispronouncing God's name prevents a person from being saved and receiving God's power in his life, according to one of the Sacred Name websites, the following versions of God's true name are used within this movement:

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<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 28:11: For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the LORD will speak to this people,

<sup>16</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:21–22: In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers.

<sup>17</sup> Yashiya, "JESUS is a PAGAN GOD."



YHVH YHWH Yahweh Yahveh Yaveh Yaweh Jehova Jehovah Jahova Jahovah Yahova Yahovah  
Yahowah Jahowa Jahowah Yahavah Jahavah Yahowe Yahoweh Jahaveh Jahaweh Yahaveh  
Yahaweh Jahuweh Yahuweh Jahuwah Yahuwah Yahuah Yah Jah Yahu Yahoo Yaohu Jahu Yahvah  
Jahvah Jahve Jahveh Yahve Yahwe Yauhu Yawhu Iahu Iahou Iahoo Iahueh

Jeshua, Yeshua, Yeshuah, Yehshua, Yehshuah, Yeshouah, Y'shua, Y'shuah, Jeshu, Yesu, Yehoshua,  
Yehoshuah, YHVHShua, YHVHShuah, Yhvhshua, Yhwhshua, YHWHShua, YHWHShuah,  
Yhvhshuah, Yhwhshuah, Yahvehshua, Yahwehshua, Yahvehshuah, Yahwehshuah,  
Yawhushua, Yahawshua, Jahshua, Jahshuah, Jahshuwah, Jahoshua, Jahoshuah, Jashua, Jashuah,  
Jehoshua, Jehoshuah, Yashua, Yashuah, Yahshua, Yahshuah, Yahushua, Yahushuah, Yahuahshua,  
Yahuahshuah, Yahoshua, Yahoshuah, Yaohushua, Yaohushuah, Yauhushua, Iahoshua, Iahoshuah,  
Iahushua, Iahushuah, YAHO-hoshu-WAH<sup>18</sup>

The Sacred Name Movement teaches that God's true name—something known as the Tetragrammaton—is not so much a name as it is a creative force. This is no different from what the Occult teaches. According to the Servants of Light School of Occult Science, “The Four Worlds and the Four Elements correspond with the Four Letters of the Tetragrammaton (Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh), which is the so-called Incommunicable Name of God which, in occult science, represents a magical formula of supreme universal importance.”<sup>19</sup>

Today people can find Sacred Name Bibles where the words “God,” “Lord,” “Jehovah,” and “Jesus” have been replaced with God's “true” name, such as *The Scriptures*, *The Sacred Name King James Bible*, and *Hebraic-Roots Version*.<sup>20</sup> There are also Sacred Name churches such as the Assembly of Yahweh located in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Texas, and the House of Yahweh located in Texas.

Many of God's people have become ensnared by witchcraft introduced to them by their religious leaders. Too often we think of a witch or a wizard in its caricature form. We assume that a practitioner of witchcraft will be evidently evil. We do not expect to be taught witchcraft from a handsome, smiling individual such as Joel Osteen. We do not expect that witchcraft may underpin such seemingly spiritual teachings as circling God's promises and learning to pray in a new and more powerful way. We do not believe that such a sacred act as communion could ever become a ritual of witchcraft.

Those who are discerning enough to recognize the error of these teachings are berated. It is common to hear such statements as: “What gives you the right to question the motives of other Christians?” “How

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<sup>18</sup> “Restoration of the Sacred Name.”

<sup>19</sup> Servants of Light School of Occult Science, “An introduction.”

<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia, “Sacred Name Bibles.”

can you be so certain that you understand the Bible correctly and the others do not?" "Methods may differ, but isn't the important thing that God is being glorified?" "Look at how many people have been positively influenced; God must be blessing it."

Through such statements the dissenting voices are silenced or compelled to accept these practices and teachings as being normal and of God. And witchcraft continues to be practiced within churches. Consequently, one can only wonder how closely today's Christian church mirrors Ezekiel's vision from God in Ezekiel 8 and 13. To what extent is the church seeking to manipulate spiritual forces to accomplish its will rather than submit to God's will?