



Part 1 – The Reality of Supernatural

Recently we saw the trailer for *Minions and Monsters*. The minions (funny yellow blobby people) are looking for real monsters so, by casting a spell they succeed only in summoning this green thing called Goomi. This kind of representation of magic and summoning of monsters got me thinking about how common magic, and witches, and evil, and demons are in our popular culture, both in books and movies. Pretty much every Disney movie has some

form of magic, then there's the Harry Potter, The Lord of The Rings or the Chronicles of Narnia to site but a few. it's hard to escape it. How should we engage with it? It is important to note that faithful Christians sometimes reach different conclusions. Romans 14 teaches us to respect one another's consciences. The Bible speaks about magic or the supernatural. In fact, the Bible is a supernatural book. Let me prove this to you. We can't see gravity yet we can explain it by science. We can't see God and we can't explain God with science or the laws of nature because God is supernatural. God our Heavenly Father, Jesus His Son and the Holy Spirit are supernatural. The devil and his demons are also supernatural. There is a spiritual realm.

Paul speaks of this spiritual realm, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Eph 6:10) Paul doesn't say, 'Be frightened.' He says, "Be strong in the Lord." The wonderful news is that Jesus has already defeated Satan through his death and resurrection. The supernatural is real and God is at work, ruling and reigning over this earth. But how are we to engage with the way the media presents it? Continuing in Ephesians Paul encourages believers to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." We're to pray, to intercede for brothers and sisters, to pray for God's provision and care, to ask the Lord to work in our heart and in others. Prayer is how we are called to engage with the spiritual realm because we pray to God! Wouldn't it be easier to pray if we could see God? But, if we believe in Jesus and that He died on the cross for our sin, then we have his Holy Spirit living in us. The truth is, even though we can't see him God is at work in us and in the world. He gives us grace and works everything according to His plan. The spiritual realm or the supernatural is real, we just can't see it. We are to engage with God through prayer and not through divination or witchcraft. (Deuteronomy 18:10-14) The spiritual realm is real. Jesus says the devil "comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." The devil's goal is always to draw people away from worshipping and trusting God. So let us come to God in prayer and get to know Jesus through the Bible. Stay away from witchcraft, divination, spells and sorcery because we will be engaging with the spiritual realm in ways we ought not to. If you believe in Jesus, you don't need to be frightened. Jesus doesn't ask you to be brave by yourself. He promises to be with you. Ask Jesus to be close to you. There is life and joy in Jesus, there is only misery and ruin in the devil. Let's enjoy Jesus in prayer and the Bible.

The first king of Israel was called Saul. At the beginning of his rule, he took God's word seriously and sent guards to get rid of all the people who practised witchcraft from the land. But later Saul walked away from God and hardened his heart against God and started doing things his way. Saul was doing wrong and not saying sorry; he was sinning and not repenting. But Saul needed help because there was an army marching against him. Saul had rejected God's word so he decided to try to talk to his old friend Samuel who is dead.

Part 2 – The Witch of Endor Read 1 Samuel 28:8-20

Let's be clear, outside of God's sovereign permission, no one can bring someone back from the dead. The text strongly suggests that God sovereignly chose for Samuel to appear in order to pronounce his final judgment on Saul. Some people who make a living of predicting the future through

stars, palm reading or cards are either completely making it up and scamming people or they are engaging in darkness, witchcraft and evil. The Bible warns us not to do this. The woman that Saul goes to was either a scammer or a dealer in darkness because when Samuel does actually appear the woman is so surprised that she screams!! This woman is terrified. She wasn't expecting this! It was a unique situation. God uniquely permitted Samuel to appear to pronounce final judgment on Saul. "Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today. The Lord will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. He will die the next day. God is still in control. God is all powerful. God is above it all and can either stop it or use it for his good purposes. Let me try and explain this to you. Let's say this ball bearing represents the power of the devil. Compare it with this pea representing God's power:

Volume difference: Pea: 422x ball bearing. Golf ball: 77,70x; Tennis ball: 300,000x; Size 3 football: 6.9 million x; Weather balloon: 5.8 billion x; Earth: 2.07 nonillion x; Sun: 2.07 Undecillion x. God is infinitely more powerful than the devil and his darkness. There is no competition. because the devil is a created being and God is the Creator. Saul wanted guidance without repentance. Today people don't usually visit witches, they visit astrology, crystals, psychics, tarot, mediums, self-help spirituality, "manifesting", TikTok prophet. But it is all wrong! There's no guidance without Jesus. Remind yourself of God's overwhelmingly strong power against darkness. That is what we will look at shortly.

Part 3 – The King of Kings

On the cross, Jesus disarmed the power of the darkness and put them to public shame in their defeat! (Col 2:15) After His resurrection, "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... in heaven and on earth and under the earth." (Phil 2:9-11) Satan can no longer act as our accuser because we know Christ paid for all our sin. That's why you can stand against Satan without fear. Even if he takes your life, he cannot take your salvation. John Piper used to say, "Imagine Satan as a snake with deadly fangs, but at the cross, Jesus snapped off those fangs. Now all Satan can do is 'gum' you. He can wound, tempt, and harass, but he cannot damn you". Years later, children would tell Piper, "Satan was gummin' me today." His response, "Jesus has won and his victory will be fully realised when he returns". You have time to join the winning team, if you're not already. Trust Jesus submit to him, find your hope and joy in him, and enjoy all eternity with Him.

So, what about all the books and films that depict magic? I believe that this is a matter for you to decide; it is a matter of Christian conscience. It is certainly true that watching depictions of it is not the same as taking part in it. We have to decide if watching it is edifying, if it helps us delight in Jesus more or whether it moves us to be more curiously interested in the darker realms and therefore draws us away from Jesus. Watching or reading a book where so-called 'good magic' conquers the bad might excite you for Jesus's victory over evil. So, watching it or reading it might be good. But if it makes you think that some magic isn't bad, and you start experimenting with it, watching or reading it would be bad. We need to discern what is edifying and good and what to stay away from and discuss it with our children. You might decide not permit it in your house, and that is ok too. Be fully convinced in your own mind. And if you make the wrong call, like I have done many times, stop reading or stop watching midway. It's ok!

"There are two equal and opposite errors about the devils into which our race can fall. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight." (C. S. Lewis author of the Narnia books) The spiritual realm is real, our Bible passage today made that very clear. Let us take it seriously and let it frame how we view life. Remember who is 'Lord over all'; King Jesus triumphed over the devil and all his minions on the cross, and one day the full realisation of Jesus's victory will be made known. Imagine a world where nobody gets sick. Nobody cries. Nobody lies. Nobody bullies anyone. Nobody dies. That's the world Jesus is bringing. There will be joy in the presence of our risen saviour. Come Lord Jesus Come.