

Why Sorcery Will Be So Prevalent During the Tribulation

As is the case in this age of grace, the Tribulation Period will reveal two distinct classes of people—those who will turn to Jesus Christ in faith and those who will turn away from Him, seeking another method of salvation.

Take Revelation 9:21, for instance. Even though God still reaches out to people by His mercy and grace during the Tribulation Period, many will reject Him. That verse reads: “And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

The word “sorcery” is, in the Greek, a term well known by prophecy scholars: pharmakeia. It refers to the employment of drugs for any purpose: sorcery, magic, enchantment and even goes so far as to refer to poisons, amulets, charms, magic spells, witchcraft, or any other object or practice that makes someone susceptible to sin.

Drugs are used in association with sorcery because they place the practitioner into an altered state of consciousness whereby he or she becomes more open to contact with the spiritual realm.

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But why would the use of sorcery be so prevalent during the Tribulation Period? Drugs in the ancient world were used to dull the senses and induce a state suitable for religious experiences such as séances, witchcraft, incantations, and cavorting with mediums. It is on this point we now turn to history to give a possible explanation as to why sorcery will

be so widespread in the future.

The consequences of the First World War are well documented. Although estimates vary, my own Australian War Memorial states: "It is generally accepted that the First World War killed some 16 million people worldwide, of which military deaths constituted about 9.5 million. It is also estimated that around 20 million were wounded, including eight million left permanently disabled in some way. This was indeed a shocking toll for just four years. As if this were not enough, disease would then step in to claim an even greater toll in the form of the 1918–20 influenza pandemic, the Spanish flu."

Confronted with the enormity of the death toll and the sudden loss of loved ones, the living sought hope among the dead. Enter: Spiritualism. Spiritualism, in hindsight, had a rather bizarre introduction to the world. It was sparked by the Fox sisters—Margaretta "Maggie" Fox (14) and Kate Fox (11) in the bedroom of their home in Hydesville, New York. Intercepting a neighbour on a late March day in 1848, the sisters claimed that every night around bedtime, they heard a series of raps on the walls and furniture—raps that seemed to manifest with a peculiar, otherworldly intelligence.

Upon relocating to Rochester to live with their sister Leah, the sisters eventually embarked on a professional tour to spread word of their contact with the spirits. An editorial in the *Scientific American* scoffed at their newfound fame, calling the girls the "Spiritual Knockers from Rochester."

Kate pursued Spiritualism with an intensity that her sisters did not share. Her business boomed during and after the American Civil War, as increasing numbers of the bereaved found solace in Spiritualism. Prominent Spiritualist Emma

Hardinge wrote that the war added two million new believers to the movement, and by the 1880s there were an estimated eight million Spiritualists in the United States and Europe.

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Spiritualism had become not only a source of solace, but also of entertainment. Large gatherings in theaters soon featured séances where mediums claimed to connect with the dead. These mediums, often women thought to possess innate abilities, used various methods to facilitate contact with spirits using, for example, possession, letter arrangement, and Ouija boards. In fact, this practice had become so widespread, the front page of The San Francisco Examiner on May 26, 1918, ran the headline, "Can the Dead Talk to Us?"

Returning to World War I, the global conflict had a profound impact on the popularity of Spiritualism. The war's unprecedented loss of life left many soldiers and their families seeking solace and answers. On the battlefield, in addition to relying on morphine and cocaine to dull physical and emotional pain, soldiers turned to Spiritualism for comfort and hope. Some soldiers even reported feeling the presence of fallen comrades or visions of the dead, which bolstered their belief in an afterlife.

Families of fallen soldiers went through a similar process.

To them, Spiritualism had a dual purpose: to seek evidence through the spirits that their loved ones were in a better place and to reassure themselves that their own afterlife was secure. Of course, the rise of Spiritualism allowed unscrupulous mediums to prey upon desperate people. For families desperate for news of their loved ones, living daily with the risk of death and losing faith in their leaders, the prospect of some supernatural power or otherworldly influence, was somewhat reassuring. In the chaos of war and amid the frailty of humanity, to feel that the outcome was no longer in mortal hands brought them a sense of peace. But it was a false

peace.

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In hindsight, the boom in Spiritualism and the occult during and after World War I was a multifaceted phenomenon fueled by unparalleled violence, social upheaval, the influence of celebrities and the declining influence of Christianity. As people turned away from God, they still wanted to be given hope for an afterlife, which Spiritualism and the occult sought to fulfill. Looking ahead to the Tribulation Period, it is not hard to foresee that people will once again search for answers apart from God, particularly as they will be under the influence of widespread drug use and the forces of darkness in the demonic realm.

After the rapture of the church, the world's descent into spiritual darkness will be hastened. Once again, forces of darkness will rush to fill the void, finding sympathetic hearts because wicked mankind loves darkness (John 3:19).

It may appear too disparaging to the supposedly enlightened people of this age to entertain the possibility of a return to sorcery, but even in Western cultures the enemy is preparing the minds of mankind for a worldwide return to these abominable practices. Evidence of this may be found in the plethora of music, movies, television shows and books with demonic and occultic themes, particularly coupling drug use and contact with the unseen realm.

Sadly, as we witnessed in the World War I era, often times worldwide disaster causes mankind to seek refuge in darkness rather than light. But there is hope: it is found in Jesus Christ. He said of Himself in John 8:12: "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

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