

Pharmakeia
(Word Study Done by www.preceptaustin.org)

Galatians 5:19-21, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

“**Sorcery**” (*pharmakeia* from *phamakeus* = one who prepares or uses magical remedies; from *pharmakon* = a drug or spell giving potion, but also used of medicinal drugs; English - pharmacy, etc) primarily signified the use of medicine, drugs, spells, then, poisoning and finally sorcery.

It was used to describe the use of magic which often involved the taking of drugs. Sorcery per se describes an occult practice in which the adherents claim to have supernatural powers and knowledge, including the ability to foretell the future and to summon evil spirits through charms and magical spells.

Lightfoot refers to idolatry as the open recognition of false gods" and sorcery as "the secret tampering with the powers of evil.

Eadie writes that the term, from its association with idolatry, denotes incantation—superstitious dealings with the spirit-world. These practices were common in Asia Minor.

Practice of magic was a very real issue in Paul's day, Luke recording the effect of the gospel to set the captives free in Ephesus...And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing. (Acts 19:19,20) (Note the "power" of the power of darkness, compared to the glorious light of the Gospel! The battle is not a "power struggle" but is more accurately understood as truth struggle, for the primary battle field is in our heart and mind.)

A T Robertson writes the root word *pharmakon* meant...a drug, the ministering of drugs), but the sorcerers monopolized the word for a while in their magical arts and used it in connection with idolatry.

Wuest adds that *pharmakeia*...speaks in general of the use of drugs, whether helpfully by a physician, or harmfully by someone whose purpose it is to inflict injury, hence, in the sense of poisoning. Aristotle, Polybius, and the LXX use the word of witchcraft, since witches used drugs. In Isaiah 47:9, it is a synonym of the word *epaiode* which means enchantment. (Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans or Logos)

The UBS Handbook notes that sorcery translates a word which originally meant simply “use of medicine or drugs,” but which had the derived meaning of the use of drugs for magical purposes. Therefore it came to mean, in the biblical writings, magic, sorcery, or witchcraft... Witchcraft may be rendered as “they practice black magic against one another,” “they do sorcery,” “they cause curses to come upon people,” or “they cause curses by magic.” (Arichea, D. C., & Nida, E. A. The United Bible Societies' New Testament Handbook Series or Logos)

Ancient sorcerers and oracles commonly used mind-altering drugs to induce their visions and healings.

The use of hallucinatory drugs has become commonplace today and will become almost universal in the time of the last 7 years of this present age (Daniel's Seventieth Week), associated with the spread of related sins such as fornication.

Magic is closely related to sorcery and in Paul's day was not a benign form of entertainment using illusory tricks.

To the contrary, magic was a far more serious occult practice that was based on the belief in and use of supernatural powers to achieve goals otherwise unattainable, these supernatural powers being harnessed by using correct techniques such as recitation of formulas, etc.

The only other NT uses of *pharmakeia* is in the Revelation, John recording that in time of the Great Tribulation marked by the outpouring of God's wrath rebellious earth...the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery (*pharmakeia*) (see note Revelation 18:23) (Comment: John describes the sorcery by which Babylon deceived all the nations, the implication being that mind altering agents will be part and parcel of that great deception of mankind!)

In the Textus Receptus (source of the English translation of the KJV) there is one additional use of *pharmakeia*...and they did not repent (here we see the flesh in its full orb'd depravity and rebelliousness to the Almighty Creator) of their murders nor of their sorceries (Textus Receptus = *pharmakeia*; Nestle Aland = *pharmakon* = a drug used to control one's mind in an evil sense) nor of their immorality nor of their thefts. (see note Revelation 9:21)

There are 6 uses of *pharmakeia* in the Septuagint (LXX) (Exod. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18; Isa. 47:9, 12).

Exodus 7:11 Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers (*pharmakos* - those who prepare and use drugs for magical purposes or ritual witchcraft), and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts (Lxx = their sorceries = *pharmakeia*).

Exodus 8:7 And the magicians did the same with their secret arts (Lxx = their sorceries = *pharmakeia*), making frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

Isaiah 47:9 (These are the judgments prophesied on Babylon, which will one day future be completely fulfilled - see note on related verse Revelation 18:23)"But these two things shall come on you suddenly in one day: Loss of children and widowhood. They shall come on you in full measure In spite of your many sorceries (Lxx = *pharmakeia*), In spite of the great power of your spells.

To emphasize the fact that the abuse of drugs will be a major "cultural aberration" in the end times, notice that words in the same family (*pharmakos*, *pharmakeus*) are used repeatedly in the Revelation (much more concentrated use than anywhere else in the New Testament)...But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers (*pharmakos* = one who uses drugs to induce false "religious" fantasies and occult experiences) and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (See note Revelation 21:8)

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers (*pharmakeus* - one who prepares [a pharmacist] and uses drugs for magical purposes or ritual witchcraft) and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. (See note Revelation 22:15)

Notice in the Revelation references that sorcery is intimately associated with immorality and idolatry and that the habitual practice of these sins (if not therefore

repented, which is always a possibility because of God's amazing grace , longsuffering and mercy toward sinners) is a sure sign that one is on the pathway to the Lake of fire which is the second death characterized by eternal torment and eternal separation from God.

Tony Garland has an interesting discussion of sorcery writing that...Sorcery was forbidden by the Law of Moses (Ex. 22:18; Deut. 18:10-11) as were all practices which involved communication with the dead such as conjuring spells (Deut 18:11), consulting mediums (1Sam 28:3-9), spiritism, or calling up the dead (really the demonic realm). This included all forms of magic (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:31; Lev. 20:6, 27; 2Chr. 33:6; Mal. 3:5). God condemned all of these practices and was indignant that men would “seek the dead on behalf of the living” (Isaiah 8:19). Instead, they were to seek the living God.

One need only view modern cartoons on television or observe the recent Harry Potter phenomenon to observe how the foundation continues to be laid for subsequent generations who will have little reservation to participate in these forbidden practices.

That people are today [1983] being prepared for an irruption of demons, however, seems very probable.

The plethora of movies, television programs, and books with demonic themes, along with the latter-day mushroom growth of occult religions and practices, are all surely conditioning men to a widespread belief in Satan and his demons. Furthermore, none of this is driving men to refuge in Christ, as one might at first suppose it would. (Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983) Rev 9:6)

In response to those who believe that participating in activities such as reading the Harry Potter books is “harmless creativity” we respond with the simple question: Does it not grieve God that we will not train our children in the things of God, but readily expose them to the influence of magic? To believe otherwise is to demonstrate a lack of appreciation for our own tendencies as well as an ignorance of God’s word. Moreover, God knows that even if today’s train ride may seem “harmless” and not end in disaster, the eventual destination—given our dark hearts—is a guaranteed train wreck! His prohibitions against these practices are numerous and serious because He alone understands the nature of man. If we call ourselves Christians, then why would we participate in activities which are unbiblical and undoubtedly grieve our Lord?

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 demonic realm.

The following account of a shaman from the Yanomamo tribe illustrates the connection between drug use and the demonic realm—a connection well-known even among “primitive” peoples: I recently interviewed a man who had spent most of his life communing with spirit entities. There is no doubt as to his “authenticity.” He was a shaman, a medicine man and chief of his Yanomamo tribe, which resides deep in the Amazonian rain forest of Venezuela. At odds with the lie promoted in anthropological circles that the lives of primitive tribes-people are pure, natural and Eden-like and therefore best kept from outside influence—Chief Shoefoot and his people's violent, fear-filled existence is documented in a book titled *The Spirit of the Rain Forest*, written by Mark Ritchie . . . As a young boy, Shoefoot was singled out as one sensitive to the spirit realm and subsequently initiated into the sorcerers world. Again, a shaman is one who, through knowledge and power obtained from the spirits, heals and guides his people. Although the initial process of enabling him to contact the spirits was brutal, involving days of food and water deprivation and having someone force hallucinogenic drugs into his system by blowing them up his nose, the spirits he met were at first benign and curiously captivating. . . . Shoefoot increased his drug intake in order to go deeper into the spirit world to find more trustworthy and benevolent spirits. That led to even more wicked spirits (Luke 11:26), greater frustration, and intense despair. (T. A. McMahon, “The Spirits of the Lie,” *The Berean Call*, November 2003. [www.TheBereanCall.org].)

Some, who deny the reality of the spiritual realm, believe experiences such as those of this shaman are brought on by natural causes, such as drug use: I asked Shoefoot through interpreter Mike Dawson, Joe’s son, who grew up among the Yanomamo, how he would answer a skeptic who thought his experiences with the spirits were nothing more than hallucinations brought on by the drugs he took. Shoefoot’s 70-something-year-old eyes sparkled at the question; he enjoys responding to challenges by skeptics, especially when he speaks to university anthropology students. Its ironic that this “primitive” man considers the highly educated anthropologists who study his people naive at best, deceived at worst. He told me of knowing shamans who had many of the same spirits he had had, yet, unlike him, they did not come to know them as a result of taking drugs. Whether the contacts were made with a clear mind or in a drug-induced state, descriptions and details were nearly always identical they all communed with the same spirits.

“Mike added that we of the sophisticated West have trouble relating to a culture in which spirits, i.e., demons, are a real, everyday part of life. However, that doesn’t mean they’re necessarily exclusive to the dense jungles of the Yanomamo. He said that on one autumn trip to the U.S. with Shoefoot, he was shocked as his friend, the former shaman, continually pointed out representations of spirits he had known being featured across America as it celebrated its most financially successful holiday: Halloween. Some time later, Shoefoot was given a sampling of TV’s Saturday-morning cartoon characters and power figures. It was more of the same. He was not aware of the worldwide popularity of the Harry Potter books, which introduce children to sorcery and encourage them in the practice of witchcraft. As Mike explained this series of books to him, he was grieved that so many young people were being set up for the suffering and bondage that had tormented his own people.”—T. A. McMahan, “The Spirits of the Lie,” *The Berean Call*, November 2003. [www.TheBereanCall.org]

During the awful days of the tribulation, the breakdown of law and order will mean that there will be no more restraints on drug use.

Furthermore, the fearful judgments on the earth will drive many to drugs as a form of escapism.

The merchants of the earth will gladly cooperate because of the great profits involved [see note Revelation 18:13].

Interestingly, Jezebel of the church of Thyatira apparently taught believers to experience “the depths of Satan” (see note Revelation 2:24), much like her namesake in the OT practiced witchcraft (2Ki 9:23).

As we discussed previously, Jezebel at Thyatira can be seen as a type for the church which enters the Great Tribulation (see note Revelation 2:22) whereas those who overcome and reject her teaching will receive “the morning star” (see note Revelation 2:28).

Those who practice sorcery will also have their part in the second death (see note Revelation 21:8) and will never enter through the gates of the eternal city (see note Revelation 22:15). (From Garland, Tony: *The Testimony of Jesus Christ - a verse by verse study of the Revelation from a conservative, evangelical, literal perspective*)

Rob Morgan gives some practical advice related to this vice noting that...The teaching of the Bible, from the first books of Moses through to the final book of Revelation is clear. Sorcery and witchcraft are manifestations of Satan's power and influence in this world. They are evil and wrong, they are destined for eternal judgment, but in the meantime they have the potential of causing harm. How can we protect ourselves? What do we need to do?

- First, pay no attention to superstitions. Don't worry about black cats, broken mirrors, four-leaf clovers, or spilled salt. Don't follow old wives' tales.
- Second, avoid anything remotely connected with the occult such as ouiji boards, séances, etc. Don't call the psychic hotline, and don't consult the horoscopes in the newspapers. Avoid entertainment that majors on these elements.
- Third, be a student of the Scriptures. Isaiah 8:19 says, "When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony!"
- Most of all, make sure you are covered with the blood of Christ. Take Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Appropriately the power of His blood over your life. There's an old Gospel song that says, "Would you be free from the burden of sin? There's power in the blood, power in the blood. Would you o'er evil a victory win? There's wonderful power in the blood." (See his sermon A World Of Evil)

C Norman Bartlett concludes that...Estrangement from God (as manifest in idolatry and sorcery) is a fruitful source of all manner of enmities and quarrels among men. What else is to be expected but that, in the absence of the restraints which a true faith in God imposes, unbridled greed and selfishness should break loose and work havoc in human society? (C. Norman Bartlett: Galatians and You: Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, 1948)