

# Harry Potter and the Lord of the Rings

By Rick Leibee

The Bible text that I am going to teach from is 1 Timothy 4:1-2, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.*”

This verse is a very strong verse. The word Spirit is capitalized. So, the Holy Spirit is going to show us that not all but some are going to depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Now the word devil, if you were to look it up, means what you might think it means—it means demons. It is not a euphemism. It is not just a general term. It actually means in the Greek, “*demoni.*” It means the teachings and doctrines and truths that demons would hold to. There is a warning here that in our day we will see some that are actually in the church be seduced and have something to do with demons. To be seduced means to be attracted to and won over to another thing, and then to go to it and become one with it. This is in the Bible and we see it here in our day.

The backdrop of this verse is that some who are Christians will be seduced by doctrines of demons. The keyword is *some*. We know the world is going to play with those things. The world always has and the world always will. The difference we are seeing now is not a little thing, but a big shift in the thinking of most Americans over the last 25 years.

## Worldwide Influence

The Harry Potter books have had a worldwide impact; they are also the most popular books of the 21st century. They have sold over 150 million copies since they were introduced in to America in the fall of 1999. The average price of each book is \$15.00. “The Goblin of Fire,” was \$25-\$28.00. If you start doing the math, the book sales alone were around \$3,000,000. The movie came out last year. Both the “Lord of the Rings” and the “Harry Potter” movie came out in 2001. Both movies were two of the top five movies of that year. It is not just a blip on the radar screen. Hundreds of millions of people are watching and reading.

Do you know what the most popular book besides the Bible in the 20th century was? It was “*The Lord of the Rings,*” by J.J.R. Tolkein. Like Harry Potter it is based on a magical, mystical, mythical land called middle earth. It is filled with elves, dwarves, giants, and goblins. Wizards rule with magic—supposedly good magic. There is no such thing as good magic, as we will see in the Bible, but the premise of the book is that there is good magic. There are three books in the series.

## The Popular Christian Response

While God calls the themes of these books an **abomination**, some Christians are calling them good and even virtuous! There is a marked shift here. Some are being seduced by spirits and falling under the sway of the doctrines of devils. They are actually calling darkness light and evil good. These are not just a few weirdoes—this is mainstream Christianity by the millions and millions! The world as we know it is waxing worse and worse. We do not say that with joy but with a sense of the reality and soberness of the times in which we live. We need to be awake and aware of these things, because they are doing a lot more than just being popular. They are changing the way people think and relate to one another. They are changing the way people think about Christianity and God. We need to know these things so that we can know the time in which we live.

I’ll just relay a few things that have happened to our family in the last several weeks. We have received several phone calls from those who have encountered several professing Christians who were arguing or debating with them about the goodness and rightness and Christian virtues of these books, which I would consider very much occultic. Primarily the Harry Potter books, but also the Lord of the Rings. Then a few days ago I got an advertisement in the mail from a major Christian bookseller. The thing that surprised me most about what I found in there was a book defending the Harry Potter books.

I went to several Christian bookstores to see what kind of information they would have. They had four books on the Harry Potter series. All four of them were **defending** it. One was called, “*The Bible According to Harry Potter.*” Another one was called, “*The Christian Virtues of Harry Potter.*” Then there was this one that I bought, “*Fantasy and Your Family, A Closer Look at the Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter, or Finding Magic in the Modern World.*” This is promoting it. They were for it, not against it! There are a few in Christian circles that are taking a stand against these books, however they are the minority and their books are not found in the popular Christian bookstores.

They did not sell the Harry Potter series at the stores I went to; however they did have the entire Lord of the Rings series in three different versions. I read part of the books while I was there so I would know what I was talking about. I also got a hold of a few Harry Potter books, although I did not read much of them because they pollute the mind of the reader. One of the criticisms people give is that they think I did not read the books. You don't need to read these books to find out how bad they are, but I did want to do some research.

### **What the Scriptures Say about Witchcraft**

I do not want to give too much detail about these books, but I will give a little more information later. Let's read the Word first because that is our foundation.

**Exodus 22:18**, *"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."*

**Leviticus 19:31**, *"Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God."*

**Deuteronomy 18:10-11**, *"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer."* Necromancer is a compound of two words meaning "death" and "empowered." A necromancer is a wizard who has a special power to raise the dead. The word necromancer is in both The Lord of the Rings and the Harry Potter books.

**Revelation 21:8**, *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."*

**Revelation 22:15**, *"For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."* The people in this list are *without*—outside the gates of heaven. Did you catch the one in the middle? It is sorcerers, users of magic. Why does God put that in the list? God makes witchcraft a question of salvation. He takes it seriously enough that He defines a line marking where an eternal soul is going to be if they touch those things. They are going to be *without*, and that is very serious thing. The professing Christians that are being seduced must tear the truth that witchcraft is an abomination right out of the Bible. Once again, we need to be aware that this is a shift in thinking. It wouldn't be as bad if it was the world saying this, but these are Christians. They are doing it by the millions. It is not the guy down the street riding his Harley Davidson and drinking his beer. These are famous regular Christians who have Christian radio programs and big national ministries with millions of followers. They are not only saying that this stuff is not bad, they are saying that it is good. Most of the Christian literature today that defends the Harry Potter books says that everyone knows that there are no such things as real magic and sorcery. It is just like a make-believe story. Chuck Colson is one of the authors of this material. I am sorry, but Chuck Colson is calling God a liar.

**Galatians 5:19-21**, *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."* This verse is very similar to the verse above in Revelation. This is a list of the works of the flesh, and tucked in the middle is the word witchcraft. If you look it up it means a user of sorcery, magic and wizardry. These are the words we hear in Harry Potter or the Lord of the Rings.

### **A Little about the Books**

Some suggested I read these books here in church, but I could not bring myself to do that. I hope you can take my words and descriptions of these books without reading them or hearing portions of them. I read enough of them to get a good idea of what they are about, and I copied down a couple of short excerpts.

For some background, the hero of the series is Harry Potter. He is a boy of 11 who was an orphan. His parents were killed by an evil wizard whose name I won't read—even his name is gross. Harry was left with a mark on his forehead, just like the mark in Revelation. He does not have any friends. Nobody respects him. But

then he is invited through a secret messenger to a school where he can learn to be a wizard. He begins his magical life there. He finds out that he is a wizard. He begins going to school and learning all of these things.

The evil wizard was actually killed and resurrected by taking some of Harry Potter's blood. Notice the imagery they use. They use some blood from the hero to give life to the villain. They use resurrection. They take things from the Bible. The headmaster of the school, supposedly the head wizard has some friends who are 666 years old. They are planning to commit suicide. When Harry Potter becomes surprised at this the headmaster says, "To one as young as you I am sure it seems incredible, but really it's like going to bed after a very, very long time day. After all to the well organized magical mind death is but the next great adventure."

This is the kind of stuff that is going in to the minds of 9, 10 and 11 year olds. Other age children read it, both younger and older. This is probably enough to give you a basic idea of this book.

The books present many things that we noted the Bible speaking against earlier, such as astrology, mediums, numerology, crystal gazing, wizardry, spell casting, and the list goes on. The whole series is set in England and it chronicles his life over different years at this magical school. Some of his teachers turn out to be dark wizards. They teach things like defense against the dark arts. Here is a quote from one of the evil wizards, "There is no good and evil; there is only power in those too weak to seek it." Did you catch that? These are books that Christians are saying are good, but the books themselves say there is no good or evil.

The other book, which was the most popular book of the 20th century, "The Lord of the Rings," takes place in a mythical place and time and is filled with dwarves, giants and elves. An evil wizard is named Saron. There are magical rings; it is all sorcery and wizardry. I don't need to go in to all of those things.

### **America's Thinking Has Shifted**

Did you know there are actually witch covens in the United States? It is actually a legitimate registered religion in America today in many, many states. One of the precepts of Wiccan is that there is no good or evil. They don't call themselves evil. They just say power is to be used however you would like to use it. That is the whole premise of the Harry Potter books. There are wizards in there. Some are good, some are evil and some are in the middle. There is no good or no evil except Harry Potter the really good guy according to these books. The books state that it is just power. That is one of the most insidious things about the books, because one of the effects is that it is teaching children how to think. The Harry Potter books are written for 9-12 year olds. Isn't that shocking?

Because of these books, young people are beginning to learn and think in another way. They are beginning to believe that there is not a right or a wrong way of thinking. The ones that are critical in these books are critical of Christians who teach and preach against this. They teach that the only true evil is intolerance.

This is a shift in American thinking. It used to be if a Christian got in to a discussion with someone else the other person would say, "I don't believe in that," or, "I don't agree." Today you might hear something like this, "You are judging me, you are judging everybody, you hate everybody, and you are just preaching hate." Now the shift is that Americans no longer disagree about the Bible or about what God is doing; now they classify Christians as full of hate and intolerant. True evil in our society is now intolerance rather than standing for what is right and what is wrong. Because when you stand for that you are seen as the greater evil. You are seen as more evil than a wizard or a sorcerer, because the best thing to be politically correct in our society is everything is ok, everybody is ok, nothing is that bad. It is also called relative morality. Relative morality says that if it is wrong to me it is wrong, but there are no absolutes.

This whole change in the thinking of America is one more step. It is evil and an abomination. Some of you may get in conversations about this and find out you are being attacked. You're thinking, "I am just standing for the Bible." You are called names like prejudice or this and that. This is a shift that may not have happened thirty or forty years ago. But, now that is the way people think.

### **The Common Acceptance of Witchcraft**

I have another concern with these books as well, one which I am not even sure I see all of its depth or ramifications. This has to do with the acceptance of witchcraft as normal or even good. It is becoming more and more embraced and accepted.

What is seen as common in entertainment soon becomes acceptable behavior in society. I hope you understand that. If you do not believe that think of when Elvis Presley got up on stage in the 1950's. He was on Ed McMahon's Story hour, and he gyrated his hips and sang some rock and roll song. The nation was horrified and people wrote in and they turned off their televisions. They actually went back and edited the show and said

they would never show that again. Well, as rock and roll became accepted entertainment, what was considered outrageous back then soon became accepted as normal behavior.

Do you see how this happens? Society has always followed entertainment and art. It has been going on for thousands of years. I don't go to the movies and you probably don't either, but tens of thousands of people do feed on this and even Christians are saying this is good. Children go to church on Sunday after having spent Saturday watching necromancy and wizardry. And they feel at peace with God? That is scary.

These things are very dangerous because it is causing an unprecedented interest and activity in witchcraft. Even the books that defend these books admit this. There are a lot of websites out there about groups you can join. These groups are being joined by 9,10, 11, 12 and 13 year olds.

One of the authors who are for the books admits he is not sure about children joining these groups. A girl wrote in, Nicole, age 13, and said, "I wish I could do magic; if I could do magic I would speak to snakes. Or maybe I could be a necromancer so I could raise the dead." Another girl, Rebecca, age 12, said, "I could get revenge on some people." This is by a girl named Grace age 14, "Do I ever wish I could perform magic like Harry Potter! Ever since I have been reading Harry Potter books I have daydreamed about it; I would love to do it!" The list goes on. They give a whole list of children. Even those that promote Harry Potter have a bit of concern. They are concerned because of the young ages of children joining these online Wiccan covens and groups by the millions.

I went to Barnes and Noble Bookstore. Can you believe what was right next to the Harry Potter books? There were many books on witchcraft right next to the Harry Potter books. There were books on witches and wizards. The bookstores know what they are doing. They sell the real books right next to the fiction stories. The bookstores made the connection, but the Christians aren't getting it. Some have departed from the faith to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. The world knows what it is doing, but the Christians seem to not be getting it.

### **Removal of Godly Fear**

One of my greatest concerns even among church people is that godly fear that protects mankind from dabbling in the spirit world is being taken away first from children and second from their parents. Because they read these books, the terrors and horrors of evil are being taken away even for the worldling. These things are being normalized at an alarming rate. These books are engaging in discipleship and disciplining the children who read them. It is turning them away from Bible reading and ultimately from God's protection.

This godly fear that we used to have that protects mankind from the spirit world is being taken away from children who read these books. There used to be a terror and horror about dabbling in these things. But, instead these books actually draw them in and engage them so that the hero actually does these things. In the book it is not the bad guy that does this but the good guy. And he actually does it better than the bad guys. The book calls them bad guys. Of course the whole book is bad. According to the theme of the book the good guys do magic better. They have more wizardry. They take what God calls abomination, pile it up and call it good!

The largest fan club today of any fictional character is the Harry Potter fan club. Children join the fan club and they get clothing that looks like it and notebooks. They go to school with these items. They are being disciplined and discipled into this spiritual alternative. It turns them away from Biblical principles and ultimately from the protection of God. Once you start coming under the influence of this stuff you have lost the protection of God.

### **A Witch Can Repent**

God said in the Old Testament, "Suffer not a witch to live." We don't live in the Old Testament; I don't know what to do with that today. But, the principle of God's heart has not changed. Just because we are in a different dispensation does not mean that God's heart has changed. His way of handling it has changed, but his heart has not. If it was an abomination then it is an abomination now. The difference on this side of the cross is that there is a way that even they may be saved. It is open to them. Praise God. There is a way that can be made open, even though that practice is horrible.

Liars, idolaters, murderers, can repent too. Such were some of you; we know that Ephesus was the great cultural city of magic and sorcery. Acts 19 is where that encounter comes with those that had books of magic and sorcery and silver idols that they were using. The dark arts ended up being burned. There was a spiritual battle that took place in the city of Ephesus, in Acts. The result was that God brought the Gospel there through Paul and others. The spiritual battle was won. But, here we have in our day this battle going on. Again, this thing of intolerance is to the point where the only absolute truth is that Christianity is wrong.

## Effects on Society

What usually goes along with sorcery and witchcraft? What else do you often see? Suicide! Suicide rates go up. The suicide rate for people between the ages of 10-18 has gone up in the last twenty years all over the world, not just America.

What else do we see? Don't forget that the root of all this evil power is Satan. These are the doctrines of demons. Sorcery and witchcraft are supernatural attempts at manipulation of the order of nature the way God has made it—attempts to rend it and change it and pervert it by an outside power. That power is not of God, but the devil.

Some of the things that we see in our day that are prevalent because of witchcraft are the following:

1. **Rebellion** is rampant in our land—really worldwide.
2. **Immorality**, because in these books nothing is right and nothing is wrong. There are no absolute truths, according to these books. This is one of the biggest tenants of the Wiccan and Wizard religions is that we are tolerant, it's not evil or good, it is just power.
3. **Violence**. We live in a day when people talk a lot about pacifism and we are supposed to be sophisticated and educated. But, violence is amazing in our day and our land.
4. **Fear**—that is part of suicide. There is a lot of fear. There are many spirits of fear. Is there a hospital in America that does not have a sleep center? Even Ephrata has one. Why? Because people can't sleep. They lay down at night and I believe that the demons in their belly start coming up. They can't sleep. What does the Bible say about sleep and a man of God? His sleep shall be sweet.
5. **Depression**. There is hopelessness of what is going to happen.
6. **Drinking and drugs**. The people that are involved in witchcraft drink and do drugs because they want to escape reality.
7. **Covetousness**, there is that wanting more. In the books they want more power. Even in the books the "good" guys want more spells. They want to learn more and have more power. In our society people want more and all these things are seen as ok. Even if there were not magic in these books the principles in these books are evil. Yet, Christian writers, famous ones are saying that they are good. That is frightening.

These societal issues are growing concurrently with these books. It is not an accident. We don't talk about this to sensationalize it, but I have a concern though that Christians can be asleep and think it is ok. We can without realizing it. We may not have this book, but there may be other things we let in our house. Like the Smurfs, CareBears, or Mickey Mouse. They are cute and cuddly looking. But, the root of all of these is sorcery. The most famous Disney movie with Mickey Mouse is, "The Sorcerers Apprentice." We need to be careful to keep these things out of our homes.

### A Battle for the Minds—and Souls—of Men

Not only that, but we need to also keep them out of our minds so that we will be ready to give the reason for the hope that is our hearts. We are being challenged about this issue—I had three calls in the last two weeks. A couple of months ago I had a few calls. At first I just ignored it, but when I added these to it I realized that something is going on here. These calls were from people in our circles who were being questioned and attacked harshly about these books. They were being challenged by professing Christians elsewhere. When I read that verse in 1 Timothy and I put it together I realized that this something real and there is a shift in the thinking in America.

It is really nice to live in Lancaster County, but there may be a temptation to put our lives on cruise control sometimes. We don't realize what the culture is doing and how it is affecting how people think and relate to the gospel. We need to know these things so we will know how to pray, because it is a spiritual warfare.

We are not learning about this to have a mental understanding. We need to gird up our loins and ask, "How do we pray and how do we need to press forward?" This is a battle—a spiritual battle—for the minds of the children of America. It is not an entertainment battle. It is not about who gets the ratings on the best movie, although they get that too. It is not a game. It is not a story about a little boy in England at a magical school. Satan is behind it all, and he is battling for the minds and ultimately the souls of the children.

We need to look at it as a cosmic battle, to step back and see this from God's perspective. That is why we need to talk about these things. I am not just glad that *I* am not misled. This is a very serious thing. This is a battle for the children in this country, a battle for their minds and hearts and ultimately as we read in Revelation for their souls. For their very souls! Satan is getting them younger and younger and younger.

That is why I am talking about this. I see this as part of the great cosmic warfare. The great spiritual warfare of the ages. In each age it may be manifested a little bit differently. In the Middle Ages it was done in a much more black and white way. In our day Satan is hiding as an Angel of Light. He can do that. He has the power to do that because he was that. He knows how to look like a lamb, even though he is a wolf. He wants to rend.

I have seen the pictures of Harry Potter. This is one of the reasons why he is so popular. He looks like this harmless little twelve-year-old boy. He is cute with round glasses, black messy hair, and a lopsided grin. He likes everybody and everybody likes him. But he is a wizard, so the root of the story is Satan. He knows how to look like an angel of light. He gets in the heart of children. Not a few, but tens of millions. A lot of them are even Christians.

J.K. Rowling is the author of these books. She said that she is purposely making each book a little more evil than the first. In her words, "I am making the characters a little worse because I want to draw them in to the story deeper and deeper." She has admitted what she doing and the parents are just eating it up. Isn't it amazing that she is not even trying to hide?

We need to blow the trumpet on this. This is not just about doctrine. This is an eternal issue, because it is part of cosmic warfare. It is not just, "I don't need to know about it." It is a serious issue. It is seducing millions of people and children in our land, and they are dying full of wizardry and sorcery and going off into eternity; going to meet the God of the ages, thinking that it was just a child's game. Where are those that commit sorcery going to be?

**They will burn in the Lake of Fire forever.**

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