

## Discerning Sorceries in Babylon

By Nathan Warner

*“Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”*  
(Hosea 14:9 ESV)

The word “**deceive**,” from the Latin, means “to turn aside, ensnare.”<sup>1</sup> To **discern** is “to see or understand the difference; to make distinction.” As Believers, we do not rely solely on the intellect for our discernment, for we are given spiritual discernment by the Holy Spirit: “*The things of the Spirit of God...are spiritually discerned*” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

We walk in “the ways of the Lord” if we follow our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Deceptions often rise up on the way, attempting to turn us aside. Spiritual discernment is needed to understand the difference between God’s will, which keeps and leads us in His ways, and the will of the world that turns us aside with deceptions, attempting to ensnare us. Paul reminds us to “*not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may **discern** what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect*” (Romans 12:2).

While Babylon was a real nation, God uses “Babylon” as the spiritual name of a system that has dominion over world governments (Revelation 17:18) and deceives mankind, turning them aside and ensnaring them. The Babylon described by Isaiah in chapter 47 exists nearly verbatim in John’s account of the fall of Babylon in Revelation (18:4b-8). Babylon stands throughout Scripture as a great enemy of God’s children, whether Israelite or Christian. What other spiritual nation is responsible for all blood that has been shed on earth? “*And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth*” (Revelation 18:24).

In Revelation, God tells Babylon that “*all nations were deceived by your sorcery*” (Revelation 18:23b). This is not just a warning for the last days. In Isaiah, Babylon is described very similarly when God tells “her” that “she” will be destroyed in “*spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments*” (Isaiah 47:9b). Spiritual Babylon gains and keeps power over people and nations by deceiving them through sorceries and enchantments. Let’s look a bit more at what these words mean since they are at work in our world today.

**Sorcery**, n. Magic; **enchantment**; witchcraft; divination by the assistance of evil spirits, or the power of commanding evil spirits.

**Enchantment**, n. The act of producing certain wonderful effects by the invocation or aid of demons, or the agency of certain supposed spirits; the use of magic arts, spells or **charms**; incantation.

### 1. Irresistible influence; overpowering influence of delight.

**Charm**, n. 1. Words, characters or other things imagined to possess some occult or unintelligible power; hence, a magic power or spell, by which with the supposed assistance of the devil, witches and sorcerers have been supposed to do wonderful things. Spell; enchantment. Hence, **2. That which has power to subdue opposition, and gain the affections; that which can please irresistible; that which delights and attracts the heart;**

generally in the plural.

**Charm, v.t. 2. That which has power to subdue opposition, and gain the affections; that which can please irresistibly; that which delights and attracts the heart; generally in the plural.**

1. **To subdue or control by incantation or secret influence.**
2. **To subdue by secret power, especially by that which pleases and delights the mind; to allay, or appease.**
3. **To give exquisite pleasure to the mind or senses; to delight.**

By these English definitions we see that Sorcery, Enchantment, and Charm are all demonically or satanically motivated. We also see, however, that the effect they have describes things we may experience in the world every day. Babylon comes to power and subdues opposition by gaining the affections, irresistibly pleasing and influencing opponents, delighting the mind and attracting the heart. This pleasing, attracting, delighting influence is not inspired by God, and it turns us aside to ensnare us, which is why God describes Babylon as the Mother of Harlots and abominations, beguiling all humanity from its walk with God in order to ensnare them and empower itself. There are many things in our world today that are not of God that please, attract, delight, and influence us.

Now would be a good time to remember that “sorcery” is a work of the flesh: *“Now the works of the **flesh** are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, **sorcery**, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions”* (Galatians 5:19-20). All the works of the flesh were evident in Babylon, who is seen *“holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality”* (Revelation 17:4b). Paul describes Believers as once belonging to this Babylonian system: *“You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our **flesh**, carrying out the desires of the **body** and the **mind**, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind”* (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Peter describes the war against our soul as coming from our flesh: *“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the **flesh**, which wage war against your soul”* (1 Peter 2:11). Babylon gains power and subdues opposition by waging war against souls with the passions of the flesh that carry out the desires of the body, the mind, and the deceitfully wicked heart (Jeremiah 17:9). This is a tactic of war as seen in Sun Tzu’s 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Chinese classic, *The Art of War*: “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.”<sup>2</sup> The US Department of Defense defines psychological warfare as “the planned use of propaganda and other psychological actions having the primary purpose of influencing the opinions, emotions, attitudes, and behavior of hostile foreign groups in such a way as to support the achievement of national objectives.”<sup>3</sup> This “supreme art” is Babylon’s staple – avoid open conflict but rather tempt, lure, and deceive into submission. As Peter warns us, we are at war with the passions of our flesh, which Babylon employs against us.

Just as our bodies are to be temples for God (1 Corinthians 3:16), our minds must be renewed by God (Romans 12:2) to keep them from the delightful intellectual sorceries that often turn us aside. *“For the **mind** that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot”* (Romans 8:7).

Throughout our walk as Believers, we follow Jesus who is the Truth, the Way, and the Life (John 14:6). We obey Him and He keeps us from the passions of the flesh. Along the way, however, we also meet people or come upon doctrines that seduce us with their pleasing promises or delightful notions, which distract us from the simplicity of the Gospel. Paul warned the Corinthians of this because they readily accepted anyone, no matter what they preached: *“I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully”* (2 Corinthians 11:3-4 NASB – or *“you put up with it readily enough”* in ESV).

The deceptions Babylon weaves are as numerous as the sand of the sea. We should not be surprised if we are surrounded by these deceptions even inside the Church, for Babylon works tirelessly in its “many sorceries” and is “wearied” with its many councils to gain and maintain its power over peoples and nations (Isaiah 47:12-13) and destroy all who witness against its sorceries and enchantments. The “witnesses of Jesus” (footnote to Revelation 17:6 ESV) reveal through the discernment of the Spirit of God that Babylon’s alluring powers are nothing more than soul-destroying illusions. For this, Babylon persecutes and seeks to destroy them. In Isaiah, God taunts Babylon: *“Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed; **perhaps you may inspire terror.**”* (Isaiah 47:12)

“Terror” is from the Latin word meaning “extreme fear.” Anything in our world that causes fear may be a product of the sorceries of Babylon that lure or herd people like sheep aside from safety to ensnare them.

For a Believer, what greater fear can we have than the fear we are deceived and will not be saved? We are told over and over in Scripture to be cautious in our walk. While this is true, we should not become fearful of being deceived. Many false teachers prey on this fear by warning people of hidden dangers and offering to lend their “wisdom,” “teachings,” and “discernment” to help these ailing Believers navigate the dangers, take back their country, rescue their children, grow spiritually, discover their spiritual gift, feel useful for God, etc. Whatever the perceived desire or need is, they have a solution or a “product.” All that is required is that you part with your money or come under their interpretation of Scripture, their teaching, their authority, their church, their law, ministry, etc. These Babylonian harlots lure people into their fold with various enticements and lock them down with a false sense of security.

We must not depart from the simplicity or sincerity of the Gospel, for outside of this all these charms are employed against Believers. Let us say with Paul, *“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except **Jesus Christ and Him crucified**”* (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). Our weapon in this war on our soul is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. To us, the Word of the Cross is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). *“Let the **word** of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God”* (Colossians 3:16). Let us not look to man to solve our needs but to our Heavenly Father and His Holy Spirit, who tests our minds and hearts and *“bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”* (Romans 8:16). At the same time, look to the life of Christ and the Believers in the New Testament – *“those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life,*

*and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”* (Hebrews 13:7-8). Let us be always looking for His coming.

*“Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end, and may you establish the righteous— you who test the **minds** and **hearts**, O righteous God!”*  
(Psalm 7:9)

1. All definitions from Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language(**emphasis added**)

2. III. Attack By Stratagem #6. different translation:  
“Therefore the skillful leader subdues the enemy's troops without any fighting”

3. Phil Taylor (1987). "Glossary of Relevant Terms&Acronyms Propaganda and Psychological Warfare Studies University of Leeds UK"