

The Christian and the Media



The history of the Kings of Israel and their people seem to us like a roller coaster ride of peaks of holiness and depths of complete apostasy. How could a nation which knew God's blessing so clearly fall quickly into idol worship and rebellion?

Perhaps the key is in Leviticus 19:31, where God warns them *"Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God."* Turning to mediums was often the starting point for the slide, and what they heard from the mediums was clearly not the Word of God. The nation truly was defiled by the medium's message and turned to full scale rebellion and apostasy very quickly, until God raised up the next prophet or godly King.

As I reflected on this it struck me that there are two plurals, in English, for the word *medium*. These are *mediums*, which surely no born-again, Spirit-filled Christian would dream of consulting; and *media*, which most of us consult daily, if not several times each day. But can what the Old Testament warns about consulting *mediums* be applied to consulting the *media*, reading newspapers or tuning in to a broadcast programme? As I considered it carefully, I realised it can and does! It may well be that the warning from Leviticus above needs to be made again to Christians today: *"Do not turn to the media, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God."*

What basis do I have for suggesting this "translation" of this verse? Let us look at the reasons God had for "setting (his) face against the person who turns to mediums" (Lev 20:6). There are several, three are:

Isaiah gives us the first one, in 8:19: *When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people enquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?* The person going to the medium wanted to know something, and went with a question. God wanted them to consult Him, to seek their counsel from Him. With Him is truth, and the medium is not sourced in Him so does not have Truth, instead there is "death" instead of "life".

More than just not being sourced in God, the medium often got their messages from evil spirits (as opposed to 'just' making them up themselves), and so the message would be diametrically opposed to God's will for His people.

We are to seek God's face, which is not always easy. It is far easier to go to a medium to find out what is happening. They are readily available, give rapid results and cost only money (or so it appears). This was what Saul reasoned when he went to Endor instead of praying to God, who in contrast can be apparently distant, take ages answering and cost time and sweat in prayer (e.g. Saul waiting for Samuel to offer the sacrifice, or Moses

waiting a week on Mt Sinai before God spoke). However, the waiting produces discipline and character, which is what God wants in His children.

Why do people today consult the media?

Because they want to know something. At the extreme the medium provides an occultic horoscope, but it might be to find answers to questions such as

“How should I use my money?” (the medium provides answers by reporting the stock market, city trends, etc)

“How should I occupy my time?” (the medium suggests a range of entertainments to passively watch or actively do, and places to visit)

“What should I believe?” (the medium teaches the latest scientific discoveries of how life began, how it will end, faults in the Bible, etc)

“How should I live?” (the medium teaches through graphic ‘real life’ stories or ‘soaps’ the way life is meant to be lived today)

Because life in the 21st century is so rushed and pressured that we need to know what we want to know *now*. We cannot afford to wait. Decisions are required urgently.

These reasons for using the media are *exactly* the same reasons that God forbade the children of Israel to consult mediums. What’s more, we can see that, for the most part, the media of today is not getting *its* information from the source of God. Increasingly it is coming directly from evil spirits. A few hours watching television on any evening will fill your mind with images of fornication, proofs that we are here by random mutation, words that you’d better not use in church, and many other things that, frankly, ‘*you will be defiled by*’. Its interesting that when, in 2 Kings 23:24, good King Josiah ‘got rid of the mediums’ it also says he got rid of *the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem*. I can think of nothing today that better fits the description of a household god in most Christian homes than the television. Or perhaps for some the radio, or the newspaper.





We are obsessed with a need to know, a need to find out, what is happening around the world and what might or what will happen globally or personally. Why? This is a secular outlook on the world, and is in stark contrast to God’s call for us to trust Him. When He led the children of Israel through the desert He gave no warnings of when they would be moving on, how long they would be stopping for, whether they would travel tomorrow east or west. They had to keep their eyes on the Pillar of Cloud *each* day, and to be ready each day to move or stay. Our obsession with tomorrow is not one that comes from God!

This consulting of the media is far more readily accessible than the Word of God and far more graphic because it absorbs our ears and our eyes with less effort than reading scripture ... even reading a newspaper with its pictures and short articles is simpler than the Bible. And as we absorb it I believe we should listen to the warning Paul gave in 2 Thessalonians 2: 9 - 12 :*The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that*

deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. There has never been a more powerful medium of delusion on this planet than television.

Let me take just one genre of programme as an example of a very subtle, orchestrated brainwashing that has been going on these past few decades: Science Fiction. Now I am a fan of sci-fi and enjoy it greatly, but I am slowly waking up to just what is being 'taught' through these stories. I've seen the Star Wars films loads of times, used the story to get across Gospel truths *but* also recognise that it has contributed greatly in distributing the Buddhist/Hindu/New Age idea of a "Force" and the great Oneness of Nature. Many, many believe that now, and I've heard Christians buying into parts of the message.

Recently on holiday I switched on the tv in my room to see "Babylon 5", about which I knew nothing except that it was Science Fiction. At the end I reflected on what I'd watched and realised the story had contained:

-  the human race was started by a super-race who were still watching over us;
-  we were supposed to be evolving upwards to reach them;
-  they could possess us.....there was a scene involving a super-being temporarily coming out of its carrier. This was pure demon possession made respectable;
-  no ultimate accountability, it was survival of the fittest and most cunning.

One programme would not make much difference, but our generation have absorbed *thousands* of stories about aliens, visitors from other worlds, etc. This is not just un-Biblical it is also directly from the spirit of the enemy, because it leaves no room for God and there being a purpose to human life. If we are just part of a vast universe and insignificant, then what matter how we live?

Paul told the Philippians *:whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.*

We often quote that verse and highlight "whatever is pure, whatever is lovely", but Paul starts with "whatever is true". Is Eastenders *true*? I don't believe this verse is a condemnation of all fiction. Jesus Himself used fiction in the telling of the parables, but behind those stories lay Truth. The same Truth, or facets and out-workings of it, lies behind much of great human literature. The story of *Macbeth*, for instance, shows the results of breaking God's laws, and how Macbeth was defiled by mediums and spiritists. Some films and television stories do the same, but many do not. We need to ask ourselves "Is the spirit behind this true....should I be watching it?"

"Whatever is noble". Are the antics of some of the Friday night "comedy" shows noble?
"Whatever is pure". Is the content of *The Sun* or *The Metro* pure?

“Whatever is lovely”. Are the lyrics of the songs played on the radio station you listen to lovely?

“Whatever is admirable”. Can you admire the “entertainers” who swear on the television?

So what can we do or should we do?

Firstly, reflect very carefully about what we watch, hear and read. I will leave it to you to decide the answers for those programmes or publications I have used as examples; in some cases your answers will be positive whilst in others not. Sometimes something that was once positive will change, we need to keep reviewing these questions as we absorb certain types of media.

I haven’t mentioned the newspapers much, but even the Broadsheets are full of stories that suggest the normal lifestyle we should aim at is far different to that God lays before us. The answer will not be the same for each of us, but I believe it should be radical for each of us. Paul wrote: *Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling-block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, won’t he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.* (1 Corinthians 8: 9 - 12). In other words someone may be strong enough not to be affected by something that another cannot handle, but we all need to ask God what He wants us to do, and not ask the media! We must also be careful not to encourage others to watch programmes which might not affect us but which do affect them.

It may very well be that many Christians need to get rid of their televisions. Imagine the impact if thousands and tens of thousands were dumped and letters sent explaining why the licence at that address was not being renewed. There are other ways of getting visual entertainment (I have a DVD player without receiver which plays selected discs through my computer system). Perhaps we need to know more of the ethos of those who own the television channels we watch, the radio stations we listen to or the news media we read.

I wrote the above before the sad death of the Princess of Wales. The media has been surprisingly exposed since then, particularly in the week between her death and her funeral.

Diana was elevated by the media to become their goddess. She sold papers for them, and they printed any picture they could get, and any story they could make up! Rosa Monckton, friend of the Princess, wrote in the Sunday Telegraph just after her death that *The Sun* reported her and Diana as having spent a day on one Greek island doing certain things, when they had in fact been on another doing quite different things. The story was a lie.

The very press that hounded Diana to death cleverly turned public criticism from itself onto the Royal Family during the week, because they were remaining in privacy whilst they grieved (who else appears in public before the funeral of a loved one?) Public opinion was carefully manipulated that week, the press carefully presenting the picture it wanted to give. and the broadcast media joined in. So the same voices that were condemning the press at the beginning of the week for not giving Diana space and privacy were now condemning the Queen and Prince Charles for wanting privacy at this most private of times.

I have discovered that, in areas where I know something about the subject, reports in newspapers are invariably wrong. Is it just sloppy journalism or is it deliberate? It is fashionable to knock the Church. It's not perfect, we know that, but the negatives are always reported and the positives are often sneered at. I believe we need to think carefully about the papers we read and pray about what God would have us do...in many cases I suspect, stop reading them!

Behind much of Fleet Street is the Enemy, the father of lies and yet many of us spend as long or longer reading his written word as we do reading God's. Very slowly, very deliberately, our minds are turned to think his way, and this does not just happen to Christians. I believe democracy is in great danger in our society, simply because the masses are fed the information in the way that suits the barons of the media. So if they want us to accept devolution, the euro, a federal europe, a republic, gay sex, Sunday trading, etc, in the end we will. It will have been presented in such a way over the days and weeks and years that we will come to see each thing as being reasonable. Arguments against will get different treatment, be shown as unreasonable. Gone is the opportunity for an individual to make a real choice in the light of real facts. (I am not suggesting, by the way, that all of the above list are wrong necessarily, just that these are areas which the media has been 'dripping' its own agenda on us over the years).

Before we get too poisoned by Satan's media lies, and base our comments and opinions on what was on the news at 7 this morning rather than on Scripture, let us remember what God's Words says about our attitude to the Royal Family and Government:

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

(1 Timothy 2:1,2)

Whatever else it may be that the media is telling us, I'm sure God's Word has something more Truthful which we should be standing on!