

“A TOUCH OF MAGIC?”

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(Last week, while looking through some material, I found an article in the Firm Foundation which I had written in 1988. Nearly 20 years later, it is still just as true today).

The basis of most “magic” is deception. The hand being “quicker than the eye,” the tricks performed through sleight of hand amaze youngsters and puzzle adults. Such deception is a part of the harmless game of innocent tricks. There is no such thing as “magic” (the supernatural control of objects). Nothing unexplainable by simple laws of nature exists. However, many claim a belief in such and take “magic” to the realm of the unnatural and supernatural. When this is the case, “magic” is condemned by the Bible. Sadly, there are many members of the Lord’s church who take “magic” to this extreme.

No, they are not witches or practitioners of voodoo. They are common people who see something mystical in many of God’s commands. Their speech and actions along this line betray them. Many in the Lord’s church see baptism as containing “a touch of magic.” One individual, who is an alcoholic and wayward member of the church, in speaking to me about his son, expressed grave concern because his son (age 20) had not been baptized. There was no concern about his continued faithfulness after being baptized; no stress upon his studying, teaching others or attending future worship services; no inclination upon the father’s part to return to the Lord and be the proper example for his son. There was only the expression, “If we could just get him baptized....” His prevailing idea was that there was something in being baptized that would take care of these other items. To this man baptism possessed a touch of magic! In his line of reasoning the “once saved, always saved” folks have nothing on us!

Why is there such ignorance among God’s people? No “Ouija –Board philosophy” can overcome such superstitious thinking. Only knowledge of God’s word will do that. Not only is faithfulness in being baptized commanded, but also obedience in every other phase of life (Hebrews 5:8, 9; Revelation 2:10). “Baptism only” is as powerless to save as “faith only.” There is no “magic” in it. Another source of pseudo-aura to many is the Lord’s Supper. Many think that if they can but partake of the Lord’s Supper at some point on Sunday, their having forsaken the assembling (Hebrews 10:25) and pushed aside the other items of worship will “magically” disappear. When traveling, it matters not whether time has been set aside during the week for Bible study and prayer, or whether arrangements have been made for mid-week services or Sunday morning worship. All that matters is that one makes it in just under the wire to partake of the Lord’s Supper on Sunday evening. Presto! But, is it magic or just a misconception and ignorance of God’s word? The Lord’s Supper is a vital and important part of worship to God. It should be esteemed as such and preparation made for it in advance. However, it is not “the” most vital or “the” most important portion of worship. Every item of worship should be esteemed highly and engaged in unreservedly by every child of God. The commands to sing, pray, teach/learn and give are just as important and binding. There

is nothing magical about the Lord's Supper. It is a memorial feast instituted by the Son of God for a forgetful people. It is to be engaged in remembrance of Him, as one looks forward to His coming again (I Corinthians 11:24-26). No, there is no magic here, but rather simple obedience to the will of God. The observance of one command to the willful exclusion of others does not result in magic. It results in condemnation. Still others see the approval of fellow peers as something magical. If worship services are forsaken, just excuse yourself the next time you show up by telling someone how bad you thought the weather was going to be or how that little something just came up at the last minute, and "abracadabra," all is forgiven. It matters little that that same individual offers the same lame excuses from time to time and thus "understands" your situation. It matters little that God's word condemns forsaking of the assembling (Hebrews 10:25). It matters little that the scriptures demand public repentance, confession and prayer for such public sins (I John 1:9). Because there is "conscience-easing magic" in the approval (or at least the noncondemnation) of a confidant, the word of God can be set aside. Though such teaching would be condemned if publicly proclaimed, the loud-speaking actions of many herald its soul-condemning message regularly. The idea that any sinful action will be forgotten if someone "understands" and approves of that action without its being repented of is an idea formulated in the halls of hell and based on "magic" (which does not exist). Although faults between individuals must be worked out between individuals (Matthews 5:21-24; 18:15-17), the ultimate forgiveness cannot be obtained by "magic," but by obedience to the will of God. Why is it that so many members of the Lord's church continue to practice such "magic?" The answer is found in two places: 1) Ignorance of God's word; 2) Stubbornness to conform to that which is known. Both of these will condemn one's soul, and no "magic" can prevent it. There is nothing magical about baptism. The grace of God, blood of Christ, and faithful obedience will save the soul. Although baptism is included in this and is essential to salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21), in and of itself it possesses no more power to save than does "faith alone" (cf. James 2:17, 20, 24, 26). There is no touch of magic in the Lord's Supper. Other commands of worship are just as binding. No sleight of hand by obtaining the approval of others for one's misgivings will "trick" the Lord into forgetting their occurrence. There is nothing magical in obedience. Simple obedience to the gospel and faithful obedience throughout life will assure one of an eternal home in heaven—no voodoo, no sleight of hand, no touch of magic. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). *Additional note:* The Lord condemns excuse making (Luke 14:16-24). In the continuing efforts of the elders to contact those who are absent from worship, many excuses are being offered by the unfaithful. Brethren, the Lord will not accept our lame excuses for disobedience to and defiance of His will. We can not glaze over or magically erase our disobedience with excuses. Whatever we put ahead of our service to Him is, in essence, our god. And we know that no idolater will make it to heaven (Ephesians 5:5). Instead of trying to "pull something out of our hats," we need to put something into our lives.

Please consider these thoughts and repent if there is a need.