



No God in Israel?

Main Truth

Pursuing supernatural avenues to knowledge and power other than pursuing God alone is a dangerous and slippery slope that God wants to protect us from.

Four Questions

Question 1 — “To be, or not to be...”

Would you want to know when you are going to die?

That was the question this king had when he was injured in an accident. It’s an interesting question. One that many people would ask if they could. This kind of curiosity started in the Garden of Eden. When the serpent held out the possibility of being “like God,” Eve bit! God is all-knowing, and we want that! We want to know the future...to profit financially, to have power over others, to prepare for what will happen next so we can plan the best (in our opinion) outcome for ourselves.

I was given the gift of being diagnosed with something that, at the time, was believed to be fatal by the age of 50 in more than half the people who have it. I say it was a gift because it caused me to really think about some things in a very different light, and from a different perspective.

Making It Personal

Let me encourage you to think for a few moments as if you were going to die soon. What thoughts come to mind? Take a blank piece of paper and jot down your thoughts, your reactions, any questions or scriptures that come to you—and then take some time to process those.

- What are you not ready for?
- What are you anxious to leave behind?

- What reassurances do you have about eternity?

Even though we all know, intellectually, that we *will* die and cease to live on this earth (unless Jesus returns during our lifetime), it is not something we like to think about every day. We tend to put it out of our minds and live like we have years, if not decades, ahead of us. It's a very sobering realization to be told you might have only a few years, or a few months, to live. You begin to rethink your priorities and what you want to do with your remaining time. Think now about the time you have left on earth.

- Are there things you feel impressed to change?
- To do or stop doing?
- Are there things you want or need to say to someone?
- Relationships that need to be reconciled?
- Matters that need to be attended to or resolved?

Question 2 — Is there no God in Israel??

This was Elijah's response to King Ahaziah's request for information from the other fortune-telling spirits. It was the practice of the time—at least for the pagans. But God had called His people out from among the occult practices and beliefs of the pagan cultures around them. He had another plan for them, a better plan. But all did not hear His voice and obey. This king wasn't listening to God; he wasn't even seeking God.

There are many options in our world today. List ways people seek to know about their future and gain wisdom.

- Where do you go for spiritual insight and wisdom? Take a minute to answer this question.

In Jeremiah 33:3 God tells us, "Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and wonderful things that you do not know."

- Has God ever revealed something to you?
- How does God "speak" to you?

Question 3 — What's wrong with a little "magic"???

The Egyptians were masters of "magic arts." Remember when Pharaoh had his sorcerers turn staffs into snakes to combat Moses' serpent/staff? Babylonians consulted astrologers to divine future plans. So these things have been around for a long time. The Bible never says there is no power there, but that we, His chosen and set apart people, are to have nothing to do with it.

These occult ways of getting in touch with supernatural forces are not just harmless curiosities. They are the opposite of a lifestyle that exhibits faith and trust in God to tell us what we need to know, and when and how we need to know it.

Read Deuteronomy 18:9–14 in as many translations as you have.

Moses warns the Israelites against occult methods of dealing with the supernatural world in one of the strongest terms a Hebrew can use. He calls these practices *to'ebah*—abomination! They are repulsive to God. And we are not to dally with them. Even seemingly harmless exposure may contaminate your thinking and open your heart to evil powers. They are so evil and so dangerous that Moses says they must be wiped out. In today's language, these practices are like a "virus" that can wipe out your "hard drive."

This is the serpent's way, beloved. If a person feels they can see, plan, manipulate their own future and the world around them through supernatural means, they will chose their own way over God's way. And going your own way, rejecting God's way, is rebellion; it is sin.

Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; each one turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all."

Question 4 — "Tell me I'm a good man."

Saving Private Ryan. If you're not familiar with it, consider renting it and watching it. At the end, a much older Private Ryan visits the cemetery where one who literally died to save him is buried. Ryan is overcome with emotion, feeling the weight of wanting to have lived a good and purposeful life worthy of that sacrifice.

Not many of us have the experience of knowing someone who actually died so we could live. Or do we? Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, lived and walked on this earth in a physical body. He ultimately and literally laid down that life here on earth for us, for you and for me, so that we could live an eternal life with God.

Let me encourage you to take a good look at your life as it is now. Regardless of how much time you have left, or think you have left, be honest about where you are—physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, professionally, spiritually. Then prayerfully ask God to show you where you can make changes, set goals, move forward. There's a question I find meaningful, and I ask it almost every day. Ask yourself:

Am I living the life Jesus died to give me?

When you identify a purpose, it becomes easier to eliminate things that don't move you toward that purpose.

For Further Study

- Personal Goal Setting Sheet
- *The Purpose Driven Life*, by Rick Warren, published by Zondervan