

Up The Ladder of Holiness/Set Apartness

Part 4 of 4

Magic in the Cinema Part 2: Movie Magic

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Last month I defined magic to the best of my ability. Initially, I did this to better understand what place magic should have in my life. The process got me thinking about movies I had watched in the past and movies I had on my shelf that contained one or more of these elements. Now I had to decide how this was going to translate to the process of scrutinizing my collection. I knew that my out pile was about to get bigger.

Having grown up with I Dream of Jeannie and Bewitched, I had become a little desensitized to magic on television, so it wasn't a surprise to find that some of my movies also contained magic. When I focused my prayers on this subject, my attention was drawn to my Disney collection. I had started collecting the Classics in 1976, when my oldest son was born and had quite a few of them.

In an excerpt from the book Witchcraft: Age of Innocence is Over, the author talks about the progressive sanitizing of witchcraft over time to make it acceptable to the masses¹. This process is accomplished in part by repeated exposure of the public to the elements of magic. By making it a normal or acceptable occurrence in entertainment, we become desensitized to its true nature, that of wickedness.

In the 1938, Walt Disney Studios released Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. In following years, they released Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty; all three contain witches, magic, potions and spells. More recently, the studio released The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, and The Lion King, all containing elements of magic².

Another aspect of the desensitization process occurs in how it is presented and its effects are maximized when its victims are children who are like little sponges, soaking in every detail including attitude, language and movements. Even when they are too young to give it definition, they are still subject to its influence. When ungodliness is hidden behind cute cuddly characters and story lines interjected with just the right amount of humor, drama, and heartwarming moments, what message will our children take from this? Every time a new favorite kids movie is made, one most likely containing magical

¹ <http://cuttingedge.org/detail.cfm?ID=1751>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walt_Disney_Animation_Studios#History

elements, the media runs wild with promotional gimmicks and mass marketing, producing everything from lunchboxes to T-shirts. Next up is the birth of a weekly cartoon spin off, and every commercial pushing the latest got to have toy reflecting a character or some other aspect of the movie. This results in a generation of children who just can't get enough and also a generation that has bought the hidden lie that magic is okay, especially if it's used for good.

Now I understood which pile most of my movies belonged in, but I still had to get past the lie I had inherited. As a child I had been seduced by sanitized magic that was then and still is being poured out for our children in the guise of goodness. I have fond memories of watching Disney on Sunday nights with my family growing up. And though I still cherish the memories of that time spent with my family, I have learned to reject the lies.

Disney movies aside, there have always been a pretty steady stream of magic in the cinema. In 1996, when the movie *The Craft* was released the message it sent was clearly an enticement to sorcery, romanticizing its use to fight evil. This movie attracted a lot of teens to the Wiccan/Witchcraft movement³.

Harry Potter, a series of 5 movies about a young wizard, began release in 2001 with completion of the series projected for 2011⁴. It reinforces the idea of "good" magic and also portrays anyone who is apposed to witchcraft as stupid. It also contains other contra Scriptural messages. One example is, "death is a friend, the next great adventure". As believers, we understand that death is the result of sin (*Romans 5*), the last enemy (*1 Corinthians 15:26*) and will be done away with (*Revelation 20:14*). Another backwards message is, "truth is a terrible wonderful thing and should therefore be treated with great caution". The Bible teaches that YHVH's Word is the ultimate truth, a thing to be cherished and pursued diligently and certainly not a terrible thing.

I know some people might argue that these are just fantasies, fun stories, and that they are all about good triumphing over evil, but I disagree. If the Bible is our book of instructions on how we should walk, how we are to be set apart and holy for YHVH, shouldn't we heed its words concerning magic and not become defiled by it or allow it any chance to lead us off the path of set apartness?

All movies contain messages, and deciphering which are Godly and which are ungodly is a challenge. I know I couldn't have done this without divine assistance. I don't mean to insinuate that the process is

³ http://www.christiananswersforthenewage.org/Articles_HarryPotterSorceryAndFantasy.html

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_Movies

over, because it won't be as long as I am still watching movies. But I am making better choices about what I watch now.

Though our goal is to be set apart from the world, completely set apart for our Messiah's purposes, we still live in the world and have to contend with worldly things. Television and the theater are a part of that world. What we choose to view as entertainment can affect our mind, will and emotions, who we are and how we relate to our God and the world around us, both in positive and negative ways, depending on content.

All too often we turn on our TV for distraction, down time or even background noise. But does it then become a type of idol if we are seeking comfort or escape there, when we should really be finding it in our relationship with our Messiah, in the study of His Word, or in prayer and praise to Him? If we hold tight to the promises of our heavenly Father in *2 Corinthians 6:17-18* "*Come out from among them and be separate, says YHVH, and do not touch what is unclean, and I shall receive you. And I shall be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says YHVH the Almighty*", we will have victory through Him.

No person can convict you of your entertainment choices. Only the Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit) of our God and King can bring understanding of His will for us. When we seek to know Him through prayer, study and praise, He does reveal himself and His will. And He blesses with conviction, those who will choose His truth and a pathway up the ladder of set apartness for His purposes.