

# The Egyptian Sorcerers: *Jannes and Jambres Withstood Moses*

## **2 Timothy 3:8**

*Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.*

## **Exodus 7:11-22**

*Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts:*

## **The Reality and Power of Sorcery**

### **Acts 19:19**

*Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.*

### **Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24), opposed Peter**

*Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, 10. and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." 11. They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. 12. But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. 14. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16. because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 17. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18. When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money 19. and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20. Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! 21. You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. 22. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. 23. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." 24. Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."*

**Elymas the sorcerer**, the false prophet and Jew in Cyprus (Acts 13:6-12).  
*They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, 7. who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. 8. But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. 9. Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10. "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? 11. Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. So the false teachers shall exhibit lying wonders in the last days*

## **The Possibility of Sorcerers Doing Real Miracles**

### **Matthew 24:24**

*For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*

### **2Thessalonians 2:8-9**

*And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie,*

### **Revelation 13:13-15**

*And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. 14 Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.*

### **1 Timothy 4:1-2**

*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

## Who were Jannes and Jambres?

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses.—To one brought up, like Timothy, by a pious Jewish mother, and who from a child knew the Holy Scriptures and all the history and ancient traditions connected with the early history of the people, such a comparison would be very striking.

No child of Israel could hear the name of Moses, the loved hero of the chosen people, unmoved; and to be told that these false teachers of Ephesus stood in the same relation to him and the Church of Christ as, in old days—in the never-to-be-forgotten Egyptian episode—those famous magicians Jannes and Jambres stood to Moses, would throw for Timothy a new light on all the words and works of these wicked and ambitious men.

We can well imagine the comparison being repeated in many an assembly of the faithful, long after the great Apostle's death: how St. Paul had likened these early Heresiarchs to those evil men who before Pharaoh had dared to resist God and His servant Moses.

These magicians, also termed wise men and sorcerers (Exodus 7:11-22) at the court of Pharaoh, appear as the enemies of Moses.

**The names “Jannes” and “Jambres,” though not given in the sacred text, are preserved in the oral tradition of Israel.**

The names are found in the Targum of Jonathan on Exodus 7:11.

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### **Benson Commentary**

Now as Jannes and Jambres — Some ancient writers speak of these persons as the chief of Pharaoh's magicians, whose names, though not recorded by Moses, yet being handed down by tradition, are preserved in Jonathan's Chaldee Paraphrase on Exodus 7:11; withstood Moses —

We learn from Exodus 7:11; Exodus 7:22, that Pharaoh's magicians imitated three of Moses's miracles by their enchantments; that is, by repeating a form of words known only to themselves, in which they invoked certain demons, and, as they fancied, constrained them to do the things desired.

By thus pretending to work miracles equal to those of Moses, they resisted him in his attempts to persuade Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. So these also resist the truth — That is, the true and genuine gospel; namely, as he seems to mean, by false miracles. In the early ages of Christianity the heretical teachers are said to have been much addicted to the study of magic, and that some of the Gnostics pretended to have the secret books of Zoroaster. Clemens. Alexand. Strom., lib. 5. p. 104.

And we know that in later times the monks and friars have been great pretenders to miracles. Hence (2 Timothy 3:13) they are called γοητες, magicians. Men of corrupt minds — Impure notions and wicked inclinations; reprobate, αδοκιμοι, disapproved, with respect to the faith — And worthy of being rejected as enemies to it. Or, as some render the clause void of judgment as to the faith; quite ignorant, as well as careless, of true spiritual religion. But they shall proceed no further —

Or, as Doddridge renders the clause, they shall not proceed much further, in these artifices, and in gaining proselytes; for their folly shall be made manifest unto all — Ανοια, their want of understanding. The apostle might justly call the errors of the authors of the apostacy, and the base arts by which they established their authority, foolishness, because, though they thought themselves superlatively wise in the methods which they devised for obtaining power and wealth, their doctrines and practices were as void of reason as are the imaginations and actions of fools.

As theirs also was — To the Israelites, and even to the Egyptians themselves. That is, “the vile arts by which the corrupters of Christianity established their errors being discovered, their folly and wickedness shall be very plain to the people, even as the folly and wickedness of Pharaoh’s magicians were made plain to the Israelites, by the stop which God put to their enchantments. And thus, the truth being set in a more clear light, the wisdom and righteousness of God, in permitting these corruptions to take place for a while, will be demonstrated.”

They who are acquainted with the history of the ancient heretics, and of the Romish Church, and of the Reformation, need not be informed how exactly this whole prophecy hath been fulfilled.