

The Christian and Halloween

Christmas has become a “winter holiday” and Easter is more and more being called the “spring break.” Halloween, however, is increasingly becoming the number one annual festival in some parts of the world. And in our day, many well-meaning church people are looking at Halloween as just another harmless activity.

Every year as the final days of October creep upon us, many Christians are caught up in the observance of a man-made tradition known as Halloween. (Many of these same people vehemently oppose traditions observed by the church even if they are clearly based on biblical principles.) Multitudes of parents in our churches enter into the Halloween season with a serious sense of obligation, and seem to think that they must have their families participate in an observance of the special day—lest they become earmarked as odd or different.

In recent years, there have been Halloween parades and Halloween parties. Judges award prizes for the ugliest faces and the most bizarre outfits. Costume shops do 25% of their business at Halloween. Innocent fun, ugly pranks, and horrible screams are all part of the Halloween celebrations. Ghosts and skeletons decorate everything from discount store windows to public school bulletin boards. Of all the worldly holidays that are celebrated by our society, Halloween is the most openly anti-christ. There is no question about its satanic origin.

The Druids, a pagan priestly cult group among the ancient Celts in northern Europe, celebrated October 31 as a holiday long before the Christian era. They engaged in lots of merry-making activities to herald the “Festival of Samhain.” The *World Book Encyclopedias* says that “the Festival of Samhain is probably the source of the present-day Halloween celebration.” The Druids believed that Samhain was the Lord of Death who gathered all condemned souls together, and commanded each to enter the body of an assigned animal for the coming year. First, however, they were granted one night of general amnesty to scatter and pillage the world at will.

Halloween has, for many, been considered an evening of harmless fun, but sincere Christians are more and more beginning to question its history, nature, and influence. The renewed interest in Satanism and witchcraft in our day, and their association with Halloween, has caused some Christians to wonder whether they should participate in it at all. Yet many churches see no harm in it and participate fully with costume parties, Halloween decorations, and trick-or-treat activities.

What is wrong with Halloween? Is anything right about it? What should be the attitude of a conscientious Christian toward it? Is Halloween a harmless observance, or is it a dangerous practice?

1. Halloween Is Rooted in Paganism and the Occult

The origin of Halloween goes back more than two thousand years to a time before the days of Christ, to the practice of the ancient Druids in the area which later became known as Britain, France, and Germany. The celebration honored their god Samhain (lord of the dead). The ancient Celtic sorcerers

considered November 1 as being the day of death because it was the end of autumn and the beginning of winter for them. The celebration marked the beginning of the season of cold and darkness and decay. The time of falling leaves seemed to be the proper time to celebrate death, which is what Halloween was to them—a celebration of death—honoring the god of the dead. The Druids believed that on the evening before November 1, the spirits of the dead returned to their former homes to visit the living. If the living did not provide food for the evil spirits, all kinds of terrible things would happen to those living in the community.

Much of the symbolism and terror associated with Halloween is related to the fact that most people fear death. One movie actor said some time ago, “My hair stands on end when I get awake in the middle of the night and think that some day I must die.” The thing that frightens people more than anything else is death. Yet the Christian believes the message of the Bible which says that Jesus came into the world for a number of reasons, and one of those reasons was to “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). The devil promotes sin and rebellion, and these things lead to death—but the Bible (in Hebrews 2:14-15) assures us that when Jesus died on the Cross, He delivered us from the bondage and fear of death.

When people today dress up as the dead, and knock on doors, and say “Trick or treat,” they are following the tradition of the ancient Druids. (Before Christianity was introduced to the countries of northern Europe, the celebration of death was not called “Halloween.” It was a celebration honoring the pagan god of the dead, but over the years it was observed by church folks as the eve before an especially hallowed day. The church had instituted a holy evening called “All Hallows Eve,” designated as such to honor the saints of church history. Most historians believe that October 31 was eventually designated as the date for “All Saints Eve” in order **to counteract** the pagan influences of the celebration of death which was observed by the pagan people of the various European communities.)

Today Halloween is largely a secular holiday which becomes an excuse to get dressed up in silly uniforms, and to have spooky parties. True followers of witchcraft however, still preserve the early pagan beliefs and consider Halloween a sacred time to invoke the help of Satan in performing their dark trade. A visit to Salem, Massachusetts on Halloween night will confirm the seriousness with which witches and leaders of the occult take the holiday. Each year several dozen events are planned for the expected crowd of many thousands of visitors who come to the city during the Halloween season. And so, even though Halloween has become prominent in America only during the last several generations, its origins are ancient, and its associations with witchcraft and sorcery are very real.

2. Halloween Glorifies Satan and Witchcraft

Halloween is filled with darkness and paganism, and it is saturated with the influences of Satan. Satan is a very real person. Jesus used personal pronouns when referring to Satan (John 8:44). To accomplish his purposes, Satan uses many “devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11). He has his own synagogue (Revelation 2:9); his own gospel (Galatians 1:6-9); his own ministers (2 Corinthians 11:14-15); his own doctrines (1 Timothy 4:1); and his own communion service (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

Halloween is not just a fun day. For witches and worshippers of Satan, Halloween is serious business. Halloween is a time when Satan makes light of his own operations. He presents himself as a hoodlum—a kind of cartoon character rather than who he is—the real arch-enemy of God. Witchcraft today embraces dozens of unbiblical beliefs and practices, and has many thousands of adherents. The Old Testament and the New Testament both make repeated references to the practice of witchcraft, and God always condemns all such practices. Note the following references:

“Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:31).

“They . . . used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord . . . therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight” (2 Kings 17:17-18).

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft . . . and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

The initiation rites for those involved in witchcraft and the worship of Satan are indeed very gruesome. Two girls described their experience. They had to go to a graveyard in the dead of night, step on and walk across a large wooden cross, and renounce any belief in Christ; and they had to drink the blood of animals that had been skinned alive. Surely these are loathsome anti-Christian activities.

Halloween is the chief holiday of Satanists, and those who practice witchcraft. To participate in the celebration of the pagan festival called Halloween is to give an open invitation to the forces of Satan to gain more influence on our lives.

There is a note of caution which we need to consider at this point. While Satan is indeed very real, it is important to remember that we are not to become **preoccupied** with the study of Satan and demons. Some people seem to think that every negative experience, every illness, and every problem is the work of the devil in our lives. They see a demon “behind every tree.” As we observe calamity and suffering in our own lives, and in the lives of those around us, we must keep in mind that we live in a fallen world, and that good behavior is not always rewarded and bad behavior is not always punished. God allowed the good man Job to suffer for no apparent reason. Sin has twisted justice and made our world unpredictable and ugly. God is still in control—even over Satan and his multitude of helpers.

3. Halloween Clearly Has the Appearance of Evil

One of the wholesome principles which God’s people are to carefully observe, is expressed in the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:22, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

All the symbols of Halloween are evil. Note briefly each of the following symbols:

Jack-o’-lanterns—were originally carved images of demonic beings and thus have been in league with Halloween celebrations. The carved out pumpkin was lighted with a candle to scare off ghosts and witches and goblins and other supernatural forces wandering around on “the night of the dead.”

Black cats—have long been associated with witchcraft and miscellaneous superstitions related to sorcery and Satanism. Ancients believed that black cats had once been humans who had changed into animals because of evil deeds which they had committed.

Bats and owls—have been related to Halloween since early times. The pagan Celts believed that bats and owls were able to communicate with the dead.

Skeletons, skulls, and corpses—belong to Halloween because it is really a festival celebrating death.

Trick-or-treating—is nothing less than extortion. The concept of “You either give me a treat, or I’ll play a trick on you” is hardly in keeping with the integrity and second-mile honesty which Jesus taught. (Historically, food and drink were often left on outside porches in the hope of appeasing the demonic night creatures who were roaming around seeking shelter. Mischievous children capitalized on this practice, and disguised themselves with a costume and mask to scare off the ghosts—and then they themselves would steal the food set out for the spirits. This is the origin of the “trick or treat” custom.)

Halloween has been a time dedicated to ghosts and ghouls and goblins and monsters and senseless vandalism. Malicious people have hidden drugs in candy and razor blades in apples. Getting involved in Halloween celebrations cannot be consistent with the New Testament teachings about gentleness and peace and going the second mile. Also, police departments in various parts of the country have warned people to guard their animals on Halloween night, because frequently dogs and cats and other animals are mutilated as a result of the ritualistic slaughter of animals in sacrifice to Satan at Halloween time. Actually, Halloween not only has **the appearance of evil**; it is **clearly associated with** the wicked practices of the god of this world.

Those who get involved with Halloween celebrations must remember that what was once the accepted practice of European pagans, has now become the accepted practice of many church members in various parts of the world. Many church-goers despise the vandalism and destructive behavior often associated with Halloween, but they go along with it as a necessary once-a-year evil. What was once modified from the pagan **Festival of Samhain** to the Christian **All Saints Eve**—has now been further modified to become a semi-pagan ritual honoring ghosts and goblins and witches. Many youth fellowships sponsor Halloween parties in church recreation halls and award prizes for the most outlandish costumes. They usually have some group singing and a short devotional to make the evening seem more sanctimonious.

What’s wrong with Halloween? Everything about it is wrong. It does not have one single redeeming virtue. Halloween is a festival which glorifies the devil. Those who go by the name “Christian” should have nothing to do with Halloween celebrations. It is time that we expose Halloween for what it is—a ritual for the occult.

We should never make fun of Satan’s power. Celebrating Halloween can encourage children to take lightly the forces of darkness (Jude 8-10). God’s people are not to be conformed to the world. We are not expected to “fit in” with the practices of our society (Romans 12:1-2). How seriously do we take the words of Jesus about being “in” the world, but not “of” it? (See John 17:14-15).

It is proper for children to have good times. "Having fun" is not what is wrong with Halloween. Parents and church youth leaders should provide plenty of family and group activities for children and youth. If there must be an activity on October 31, you can plan an evening of Bible study on demons and sorcery and death. October 31 is a good time to study the Reformation period of church history (Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on October 31, 1517). You can spend an evening reading a youth version of Bunyan's **Pilgrim's Progress**. You can have a Harvest Festival, gathering food and grocery items and delivering them to the poor and to those who may have had a variety of misfortunes.

Another alternative, which could be a worthwhile event, is to plan for an "All Saints Eve." The first weeks after a death in the congregation, the bereaved family receives much attention, but a year or two later, many widows scarcely hear their husband's name mentioned. People who were once a major part of a congregation's life are easily forgotten (except by the family of loved ones). Perhaps on an "All Saints Eve" the minister (or an older member of the church) could give some little anecdotes describing the lives of some of the numerous departed saints from the congregation, and point out specific characteristics of that person's life and faith that are worth remembering.

It is our prayer that Christians in every land will resolve to stand apart from the crowd, and dare to stand alone for the truth like the young man Daniel did when he was carried into the land of Babylon many years ago (Daniel 1:8-20). Let us decide to no longer participate in a pagan holiday which commemorates the activities of the powers of darkness.

Christians must remember that while Satan and his kingdom are very real, it is a wonderful truth that the devil is under the dominion of our Heavenly Father. Satan is God's enemy, but he is limited by God's power and can do only what he is permitted to do (Job 1:12; Job 2:6; Luke 22:31-32). We should avoid involvement with satanic practices, but most of all, we must focus on worshipping God and seeking day by day to honor the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you have never invited Jesus to come into your heart and make you a new creature, why not take that step today? If you believe the message that Jesus died on the Cross and shed His blood as the full payment for your sins, you can face the future with the freedom of a forgiven person. Why don't you make this a **real** Halloween—a hallowed evening—by doing what will please God most? And the thing that pleases God most is to see human beings accept the atonement which Jesus provided when He died in our stead on the Cross, and then make a firm commitment to live for Him during the rest of your days.

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