

THE GHOST OF HALLOWEEN

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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 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 K-Mart 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 before the Christian era. They engaged in lo merrymaking activities to herald the “Festival of Samhain.” The World Book Encyclopedia says that “the Festival of Samhain is probably the source of the present-day Halloween celebration.” 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.

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.” 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 asinine 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 more than 40 events are planned for the expected crowd of 50,000 visitors who come to the city during the Halloween season. And so, even though Halloween has become prominent in our land 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 archenemy of God. Witchcraft today embraces dozens of unbiblical beliefs and practices and has many thousands of adherents. The Old Testament and the New Testament make repeated references to the practice of witchcraft, and God always condemns all such practices. Note the following references:

“Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God” (**Leviticus 19:31**).” “They used divination and augury; and they 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**). “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery...those who do such things will 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 the night, step on and walk across a large wooden cross, and renounce any belief in Christ; and then they had to drink the blood of animals that had been skinned alive. Surely these are gruesome 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.

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. Briefly note 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 rarer blades in apples. Getting involved in Halloween celebrations cannot be consistent with the Brethren peace position. 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 ritualist 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 American church members. Many churchgoers 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 "Wit 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 foods 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 pastor (or an older member of the church) could give some vignettes of 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 Brethren across the 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.