

A Christian Perspective on Halloween Harmful or Hallowed?

I. Introduction

A. Why talk about Halloween?

1. Origins are not of God – Halloween is rooted in PAGAN RELIGION.
2. Important to see how world “evolves” into seemingly harmless activities
 - a) Story of Halloween and how it looks today IS TYPICAL of HOW SATAN USES the WORLD SYSTEM to DECEIVE PEOPLE.

B. Halloween and Associated Holidays

1. October 30th is included in festival as "Mischief Night".
2. Oct 31st: Halloween
3. Nov 1: All Saints' Day = Catholic's Religious Holiday
4. Nov 2: All Soul's Day = Catholic's Religious Holiday
 - a) southern Europe and Latin America
5. Nov 2: "The Festival of the Dead"
 - a) Mexico
 - b) Remember deceased family members and friends
 - c) Texas - this festival is called "All Soul's Day"
6. Nov5: Guy Fawkes Day -England,
 - a) commemoration of the British Parliament's escape from a bombing attempt by revolutionary, Guy Fawkes
 - b) Halloween-type celebration
7. Nov 5: Bonfire Night (Newfoundland)
 - a) Mirror of the British Guy Fawkes Day

II. History of Halloween

A. Celts (either Kelt or Celt)-Halloween can be traced back more than 2,000 years to the Bronze Age Celts,

- a) agrarian, tribal society
- b) primarily occupied Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, and the Brittany region of northern France, but also dwelled in parts of Europe
- c) polytheistic with gods of nature, and ancestors.
- d) 2 greatest religious celebrations
 - (1) Samhain pronounced "sow in"= "summer end" (November 1st) = end of summer / onset of winter
 - (a) herds were brought in to shelter,
 - (2) Belthane (May 1st,) = onset of summer
 - (a) herds were released to the pasturelands.

2. Let's dig into Samhain

- a) November 1st =
 - (1) "Changing of the gods"
 - (a) beginning of winter and the New Year, when Saman, the lord of the dead and darkness reigned;
 - (b) end of the season of the sun (summer), which the sun-god, Baal, had ruled.
 - (2) was a day of religious activity;
 - (a) most sacred of all Celtic festivals,
 - (b) = "festival of the dead", = communal feast to appease the gods.

3. On the eve of Samhain (October 31st)

- a) gates separating living and the dead were opened
 - (1) allowing evil spirits and the souls of the previous year's dead to return to the earth
 - (2) to harm crops and animals, and trouble families by stealing babies.
 - (3) People would dress up as "spirits" to fool wandering spirits into mistaking them as their own and leave them alone,

- (4) or to lead the demonic spirits to the edge of town;
- (5) leave gifts of finest food outside their homes
 - (a) to appease the evil spirits
 - (b) to nourish souls of their departed relatives.
- b) = night when Saman judged
 - (1) lost souls- sinning souls were sentenced to 12 months of afterlife as a lowly animal,
 - (2) good souls were sentenced to 12 months of afterlife as humans;
 - (3) gifts of food and gifts were given to him to cause him to allow their deceased ancestors a brief visit.
- c) also believed to be a time when the spirits could be contacted to foretell the future.
 - (1) The priests of the Celts, the Druids, were responsible for this communion between the dead and the living.
 - (2) Bonfires were lit outside of towns to draw evil spirits to their warmth and away from the dwellings of the Celts.
 - (3) Huge bonfires were lit on high hills to renew the sun-god, and on these bonfires sacrifices of crated animals (horses and cats) and humans (criminals) were made.
- d) Druids “divined” the future by observing the movements of the entrails of the sacrifices as they died. They continued this rite for centuries.

B. Romans

1. Romans conquered Britain just before the birth of Christ, in the first century A.D.
 - a) ruled the Celts from first to the fifth centuries A.D.
2. Romans celebrated a harvest festival on November 1st called the Festival of Pomona or Feralia.

3. Pomona, or Pomorum, was originally regarded as the goddess of orchards and harvest who fell in love with Vertumnus, the "god of the turning year" (or seasons); and together they held sway over the harvest.
 - a) Her celebration featured feasts of apples, nuts, grapes and other orchard fruit.
 - b) People laid out apples and nuts for Pomona to thank her for a bountiful harvest.
 - c) There were games and races and a time of thanksgiving and joy on that day.
 - d) *Over time the practices of Samhain merged with those of the Festival of Pomona.*
 - (1) *Apples and nuts and romance became part of Halloween customs along with the original concept of a night devoted to the dead with ghoulish parades, divination, fire and spirit magic.*

C. Catholic Church

1. Christianity spread across the Roman Empire from the first through the fourth centuries A.D. but it did not fully eradicate longstanding pagan practices.
2. The Emperor Constantine, who ruled from A.D. 306-337, officially declared Christianity to be the religion of the empire in A.D. 313;
 - a) this caused thousands of pagans to become "instant Christians"
 - (1) through water baptism
 - (2) without true conversion and renunciation of their old ways.
 - b) Pagans began to be instructed in Christian truth but a syncretistic of religious thought was the only result—pagan worship would not be eradicated.
3. *Samhain remained a primary pagan festival.*

4. Though Catholicism came to Britain through Saint Patrick and others in A.D. 300-400, the old Samhain traditions continued, especially in Ireland, and especially by the children.
 - a) These would act out the Samhain appeasement of evil spirits by dressing-up as "spirits" and going house to house demanding a "treat"; if they were refused they would perform a "trick" of punishment.
5. The Catholic Church, faced with such a situation, set about to assimilate pagan rites into the Church using a version of the "if you can't beat 'em join 'em" philosophy.
 - a) 601- Pope Gregory I decreed that pagan temples should no longer be destroyed but be converted to places to worship God and that pagan celebrations should be supplanted by religious festivals to God.
 - b) 610- Pope Boniface IV created "All Saint's Day" on May 13th = memorial to St. Mary and the Martyrs who died for their faith without official recognition.
 - c) 8th C - Pope Gregory III moved this festival to November 1st
 - (1)to honor the saints of St. Peter's Church,
 - (2)intentionally coinciding with Samhain.
 - d) 835- Pope Gregory IV extended this festival to include all saints so that it could be universally observed as "All Saint's Day" or "All Hallows" (or All Hallow's Day).
 - (1)Sundown on the eve before All Saint's Day (October 31st) marked the beginning of the celebration
 - (a)called the Eve of All Saints, the Eve of All Hallows, or Hallow Even—
 - (b)where the name Hallowe'en comes from.
 - (2)celebrated much as it always had been... it

was regarded as a night of the wandering dead, and a time to leave food and drink for costumed revelers and to light bonfires.

- e) 9th C - in an attempt to satisfy the pagan desires of Samhain, November 2nd was set aside by Amalarius to be "All Soul's Day" to honor the faithful dead;
 - f) 993 St. Odilo of Cluny requested that it become an official Church festival;
 - g) around 1,000 A.D. the feast day "All Soul's Day" was approved by Pope Sylvester II.
6. The Church tried to transform Samhain.
- a) On All Saint's Day the people were encouraged to remember the dead with prayers instead of with sacrifices, and to bake "soul cakes" and go house to house to give to those who would agree to pray for the departed.
 - b) Villagers were also allowed to masquerade on this day as Christian Saints. – churches held processions of costumed parishioners.
7. But Church's attempt to change Halloween failed.
- a) Didn't end a pagan holiday it sanctioned / perpetuated it
 - b) instead of ridding Europe of superstition and idolatry it added to it with representations of ghosts and human skeletons, the devil, witches, black cats and other evil forces which were then blended with the other symbols of the festival of the dead.

D. Reformation

- 1. October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his 94 theses on the door of the Wittenberg, Germany, church he pastored. = the Protestant Reformation.
- 2. Led to many of the practices of Catholicism, including saint's days to be abandoned.
- 3. And - Without All Saint's Day there could be no All Hallows' Eve.

4. But Halloween did not completely die - it was still observed in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and some parts of western and northern England.
5. However, it reemerged among the Protestant English on November 5th, 1606, as Guy Fawkes Day.
6. This holiday was instituted as a celebration of the triumph of Protestantism over Catholicism in England on the anniversary of a foiled gunpowder plot which was to have blown up the predominantly Protestant House of Lords.
 - a) The bomber, a fanatical Catholic named Guy Fawkes, was apprehended when he entered the building to set off his bomb, and was later executed.
 - b) Guy Fawkes Day was marked by great bonfires and the burning of effigies of Guy Fawkes, fireworks, masquerades, and the carrying of hollowed out and carved turnip lanterns.
 - c) The eve of Guy Fawkes Day became known as "Mischief Night" when pranks were played.

E. Americans and Halloween

1. Halloween in Europe at time of colonization
 - a) In Europe three types of Halloween celebrations existed at the time of the original colonization of America:
 - (1)the pagan Samhain,
 - (2)the Catholic half-pagan half-Christian All Hallows Eve
 - (3)the secular Guy Fawkes Day of Protestant England;
 - b) all three were carried to America by immigrants.
 - c) Quote: The seeds of Halloween were planted in Virginia where the Anglican Church, which observed "All Saint's Day", observed Hallowmas as a

boisterous festival of harvest, romance, spiritism and commerce. In Massachusetts, New York, and New Hampshire Guy Fawkes Day was enthusiastically observed, but Halloween was regarded as a pagan celebration of the spirit world. Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia celebrated Hallowmas, with Georgia (which comprised much of the South) being influenced by the superstitions of African black voodoo and English folktales from the settlers. By the early 1800s Halloween rituals could be found across America in the form of autumn play parties and private superstitions among the people.

- d) Quote: But the birth of modern American Halloween observances can be traced to the mass immigrations of Irish Catholics who were fleeing the potato famines of 1820 and 1846. These people spread westward across America seeking work as miners, mill workers, railroad construction hands, and domestic servants. Everywhere they traveled they spread their blend of Irish Halloween customs (which stemmed from the Celtic Samhain and the Catholic All Hallows). The Irish reinforced the latent American Halloween traditions of the early settlers, of the superstitions of blacks and the American Indians, and added many more--costumes, trick or treating, carved pumpkin jack o' lanterns, bonfires, divination and witchcraft, and pranks against for those who were objectionable in some way.

2. 1880 Victorians =Begin SANITIZATION of Halloween

- a) Upper and Middle class Victorian America (1880s) believed that Halloween was a holiday brought to America by the genteel of England.
- b) = holiday concerned with entertainments and games, which had its origins in Scotland or England, not Ireland.

- c) Halloween's original focus, communing with the dead, was not mentioned;
 - (1) instead, romantic fortune telling was the emphasis of Victorian Halloween fun.
- d) Divination, ghost stories, parlor games (such as bobbing for apples, jumping over candle sticks and the like) and matchmaking were the Halloween pastimes intended for Victorian adults, not children.
- e) But in the early twentieth century a "harmless" celebration of Halloween became the domain of children, consisting of games such as scavenger hunts, races, ball games, games of skill, musical chairs, wheel of fortune games or a fortune-telling booth.

3. Halloween Today: Dual Nature

- a) Among most children and adults it is still regarded as innocent, though mysterious, fun.
 - (1) Sales of costumes, masks and other Halloween "stuff" is at an all-time high.
 - (2) There has recently been a strong resurgence of interest in Halloween among adults, who see it as an opportunity to dress in costume and become childlike and carefree for one day in the year.
- b) But Halloween's original purpose is also observed by Satanic cults, witch covens and Neo-pagans.
 - (1) Witches regard it as one of the eight great festivals of paganism, and witches
 - (2) Satanists hold that Halloween is the most powerful day of the year on which to cast a spell.
 - (3) The Black Mass of Satanic worship is held on October 31st.

- (4) On Halloween most practitioners of witchcraft engage in the "drawing down the moon" ceremony in which the chief witch of the coven becomes a "channel" (actually becomes possessed) of the moon goddess.
- (5) Ancient Druid sites like Stonehenge are the location of occult gatherings.
- (6) On Halloween animal sacrifices are openly offered in semi-pagan parts of the world like the Philippines and South America, and
- (7) there is evidence that Neo-pagans in America are increasingly embracing the old ways; animal and, it is said, human sacrifices are made by Satanic and voodoo groups on Halloween.
- (8) Fires, a symbol of pagan Halloween, are at an all-time high on Halloween in America.

III. Does Scripture Explain Halloween?

- A. Yes...*Death is a universal truth and, generally speaking, all ancient peoples employed festivals that emphasized death and the supernatural.***
- B. God has placed eternity in the hearts of men (ECC 3:11) so that they will long for the answers about death, life and the after-life.**
- C. Never forget man's *DOWNWARD SPIRAL* away from *KNOWING God to REJECTING God to IDOLATRY!***

[Ro 1:18](#) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, [19](#) because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. [20](#) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. [21](#) For even though they knew God, they did

not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

D. That describes the CELTS and everyone AFTER THEM who CELEBRATES Halloween RELIGIOUSLY!

E. Today's extreme Halloween popularity has been partly fueled by retailers used by Satan!

Quote: They call it America's "second-biggest consumptive holiday, right behind Christmas", orchestrated by modern marketing. According to The Philadelphia Inquirer, who quotes Ad Age, this Halloween will account for \$170 million in advertising for products as diverse as McDonald's, Coors, FTD, Oreos, greeting cards, make-up, costumes, masks and decorations. It's one of the three or four biggest snack food days of the year with product manufacturers packaging special versions of their products (like orange filled Oreos) especially for Halloween. Halloween is the third biggest party of the year, preceded only by Super Bowl Sunday, and New Year's Day. Approximately \$800 million worth of candy will be purchased this year (1996) for Halloween. It's the single biggest day for costume sales, the 2nd biggest for party paper goods and plastic accessories and for home decorating. The magazine, Selling Halloween, boasts that marketing has been, "taking a season that really didn't have a lot of product, and creating lines of product that will get the consumer into the store". Halloween has become big business and will continue to be promoted without any moral considerations for as long as consumers will buy.

F. Remember what Satan does!

2 Co 4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that

they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

G. And that is why - Ultimately,

1. Halloween remains popular because of only one reason—
2. it is the date when Satan receives glory from 10s of thousands of men, women and children whether knowingly or unknowingly.

H. Scripture and Witchcraft

1. Witchcraft Was Forbidden By The Mosaic Law

- a) “You shall not allow a sorceress to live” (Exod 22:18)
- b) Deuteronomy 18:9–14 says:

9 When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. 10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you. 13 You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. 14 For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you *to do so* (NAS).

- c) A wide variety of terms for occult practices are used here and elsewhere in the Old Testament.

2. Witchcraft Was Condemned By The Prophets

- a) Saul sinks to his lowest when he turns to a medium when the Lord doesn't answer him (1 Sam 28:3–9; 1 Chr 10:13).
- b) The kings and people are condemned for their use of the occult in the former prophets (2 Kgs 9:22; 17:17; 21:6)
- c) Josiah is explicitly commended for removing all this junk!

[2 Ki 23:24](#) Moreover, Josiah removed the mediums and the spiritists and the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

- d) Isaiah 47:9–13 condemned God's people for their use of the occult
(1)compare Ezekiel 13 and 21; Micah 3:6; 5:12; Nahum 3:4; Malachi 3:5.

3. Witchcraft Is Condemned By The New Testament

- a) Those who practiced the occult were clearly opposed in the early church (Acts 8, 13, 16 [the girl at Philippi with demon of divination]).
 - b) Those who converted to Christianity at Ephesus publicly destroyed their magic books (Acts 19:19). Galatians includes
 - c) "sorcery" in a list of works of the flesh (Gal 5:20). Revelation condemns sorcery on at least four occasions (9:21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15).
4. The universal testimony of Scripture, then, is that the very practices which Halloween treat as harmless and fun are an abomination to God and belong solely in the realm of the occult.

IV. A Christian Response to Halloween

- A. Do not observe it!

B. Halloween originated as a pagan worship festival – AND remains pagan worship

1. There is NOTHING Christian IN IT
2. AND – IT WORSHIPS / EXALTS ANTI-GOD themes!

C. So - If you participate in Halloween you become a part of a pagan celebration.

1. Part of Worship AGAINST God
2. EXALTING things AGAINST God.

[1 Co 10:20](#) No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.

D. The basic elements of spiritism and witchcraft have remained the same throughout it's history.

E. Paul went on to say,

[1 Co 10:21](#) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

F. To involve themselves in Halloween or any other pagan worship is to partake of idolatry.

[Eph 5:11](#) Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;

- a) He could not have used stronger language: have nothing to do with the deeds of darkness.

G. We are not to celebrate with idolaters and demon worshipers: we are to let the light of God's holiness shine on such practices and expose them for what they are.

H. But there is more to this issue than just the celebration itself.

1. Jesus said,

Jn 8:44 “You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

2. Paul wrote in EPH 6:12,

Eph 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

3. Not only is Halloween pagan, it is a vehicle that exalts the spiritual forces of evil. We must not allow ourselves to be tricked into honoring these evil forces in any way.

I. Some Christians: use it as an opportunity to hand out gospel pamphlets and tracts, along with candy, to trick or treaters. But when we hand out candy aren't we really participating in Halloween?

1. Isn't this using worldliness to bait and switch people into Christianity? (=seeker sensitive movement)

J. BOTTOM LINE: IGNORE Halloween OR Find an Alternative

1. Hold a Bible study on the occult and Halloween witchcraft.
2. Hold a prayer or praise meeting on Halloween.
3. Go somewhere that doesn't involve Halloween celebrations.
4. Or JUST stay Home and EAT! ;)