



A New You Ministry

"Revealing God's Way To A New Life"

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HALLOWEEN: ITS ORIGINS AND CUSTOMS

<http://www.jeremiahproject.com/culture/halloween.html>

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History traces Halloween back to the ancient religion of the Celts. The Celtic people were very conscious of the spiritual world and had their own ideas of how they could gain access to it - such as by helping their over 300 gods to defeat their enemies in battle, or by imitating the gods in showing cleverness and cunning. Their two main feasts were Beltane at the beginning of summer (May 1), and Samhain at the end of summer (Nov. 1). They believed Samhain was a time when the division between the two worlds became very thin, when hostile supernatural forces were active and ghosts and spirits were free to wander as they wished.

The Celtic priests who carried out the rituals in the open air were called Druids, members of pagan orders in Britain, Ireland and Gaul, who generally performed their rituals by offering sacrifices, usually of animals, but sometimes of humans, in order to placate the gods; ensuring that the sun would return after the winter; and frightening away evil spirits. To the Celts, the bonfire represented the sun and was used to aid the Druid in his fight with dark powers. The term bonfire comes from the words "bone fire," literally meaning the bones of sacrificed animals, sometimes human, were piled in a field with timber and set ablaze. All fires except those of the Druids were extinguished on Samhain and householders were levied a fee to relight their holy fire which burned at their altars. During the Festival of Samhain, fires would be lit which would burn all through the winter and sacrifices would be offered to the gods on the fires. This practice of burning humans was stopped around 1600, and an effigy was sometimes burned instead.

Samhain was the supreme night of demonic jubilation. Spirits of the dead would rise out of their graves and wander the countryside, trying to return to the homes where they formerly lived. Frightened villagers tried to appease these wandering spirits by offering them gifts of fruit and nuts. This is the origin of our present day "trick-or-treat." They began the tradition of placing plates of the finest food and bits of treats that the household had to offer on their doorsteps, as gifts, to appease the hunger of the ghostly wanderers. If not placated, villagers feared that the spirits would kill their flocks or destroy their property.





The problem was... if the souls of dead loved ones could return that night, so could anything else, human or not, nice or not-so-nice. The only thing the superstitious people knew to do to protect themselves on such an occasion was to masquerade as one of the demonic hoard, and hopefully blend in unnoticed among them. Wearing masks and other disguises and blackening the face with soot were originally ways of hiding oneself from the spirits of the dead who might be roaming around. This is the origin of Halloween masquerading as devils, imps, ogres, and other demonic creatures.

Trick or Treat has been thought to have come from a European custom called "souling". Beggars would go from village to village begging for "soul cakes" made out of square pieces of bread with currants. The more soul cakes the beggars would receive, the more prayers they would promise to say on behalf of the dead relatives of the donors. At the time, it was believed that the dead remained in limbo for a time after death, and that prayer, even by strangers could guarantee a soul's passage to heaven.

In many parts of Britain and Ireland this night used to be known as 'Mischief Night', which meant that people were free to go around the village playing pranks and getting up to any kind of mischief without fear of being punished. Many of the different customs were taken to the United States by Irish and Scottish immigrants in the nineteenth century, and they developed into 'trick or treat'.

When Christianity spread to parts of Europe, instead of trying to abolish these pagan customs, people tried to introduce ideas which reflected a more Christian world-view. Halloween has since become a confusing mixture of traditions and practices from pagan cultures and Christian tradition. The Romans observed the holiday of Feralia, intended to give rest and peace to the departed. Participants made sacrifices in honor of the dead, offered up prayers for them, and made oblations to them. The festival was celebrated on February 21, the end of the Roman year. In the 7th century, Pope Boniface IV introduced All Saints' Day to replace the pagan festival of the dead. It was observed on May 13. In 834, Gregory III moved All Saint's Day from May 13 to Nov. 1 and for Christians, this became an opportunity for remembering before God all the saints who had died and all the dead in the Christian community. Oct. 31 thus became All Hallows' Eve ('hallow' means 'saint'). Sadly, though, many of the customs survived and were blended in with Christianity.

Numerous folk customs connected with the pagan observances for the dead have survived to the present. The various activities traditional to Halloween are mostly associated with the idea of obtaining good fortune and foretelling the future. The idea behind ducking, dooking or bobbing for apples seems to have been that snatching a bite from the apple enables the person to grasp good fortune. Samhain is a time for getting rid of weakness, as pagans once slaughtered weak animals which were unlikely to survive the winter. A common ritual calls for writing down weaknesses on a piece



of paper or parchment, and tossing it into the fire. There used to be a custom of placing a stone in the hot ashes of the bonfire. If in the morning a person found that the stone had been removed or had cracked, it was a sign of bad fortune. Nuts have been used for divination: whether they burned quietly or exploded indicated good or bad luck. Peeling an apple and throwing the peel over one's shoulder was supposed to reveal the initial of one's future spouse. One way of looking for omens of death was for people to visit churchyards, because the spirits of those who were going to die during the coming year were thought to walk around the churchyard during this night.



The Jack-o-lantern is the festival light for Halloween and is the ancient symbol of a damned soul. Originally the Irish would carve out turnips or beets as lanterns as representations of the souls of the dead or goblins freed from the dead. When the Irish emigrated to America they could not find many turnips to carve into Jack O'Lanterns but they did find an abundance of pumpkins. Pumpkins seemed to be a suitable substitute for the turnips and pumpkins have been an essential part of Halloween celebrations ever since. Pumpkins were cut with faces representing demons and was originally intended to frighten away evil spirits. It was said that if a

demon or such were to encounter something as fiendish looking as themselves that they'd run away in terror, thus sparing the houses dwellers from the ravages of dark entities. They would have been carried around the village boundaries or left outside the home to burn through the night. Bats, owls and other nocturnal animals, also popular symbols of Halloween, were originally feared because people believed that these creatures could communicate with the spirits of the dead. Black cats has religious origins as well. During the Middle Ages it was believed that witches could turn themselves into black cats. Thus when such a cat was seen, it was considered to be a witch in disguise.

Witches and witchcraft are dominant themes of the holiday. Witches generally believe themselves to be followers of an ancient religion, which goes back far beyond Christianity, and which is properly called 'wicca'. Witches are really just one side of a modern revival of paganism - the following of pre-Christian nature religions, the attempt to return to worshipping ancient Norse, Greek or Celtic gods and goddesses. The apostle Paul said Witchcraft is one of the acts of the sinful nature and those who practice it will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:16-21; see also Revelation 22:15).



"Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God. The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted

you to do so." [Deuteronomy 18:10-14]

Should Christians adopt such practices?

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." [Romans 12:2]

Can we borrow the pagan customs and superstitions of ancient peoples and "Christianize" them?

"Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. [1 Thesalonians 5:21-22]

Who can deny that virtually all of the symbols of Halloween are evil? Witches, monsters, ogres, vampires, ghosts, ghouls, goblins, devils and demons all portray evil.

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." [Ephesians 5:11]

The sort of practices celebrated on Halloween are what defiled the ancient nations [see Leviticus 18:24-30]. The Israelites were warned against such practices when they entered the Promised Land, "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations." [Deuteronomy 18:9]

Is Halloween just another innocent holiday that doesn't harm anyone? Is it really just childish fun? Should the church be compromised by accommodating itself to the culture? Vandalism and wanton disregard for the property of others is common on Halloween night. Even normally well-behaved children are driven by unseen forces to destructive behavior. Police officials everywhere report a great increase in such activities on Halloween. Worse yet are the horrifying accounts of poisoned candy and fruits booby-trapped with razor blades and needles. Such threats are so real that many hospitals offer free X-rays of Halloween treats in order to prevent children from being harmed. Who but Satan could inspire such monstrous actions?

As an alternative to the celebration of evil and death, Christians should rather do what Christians are supposed to do every day and that is shine the light of Jesus Christ. We should emphasize the Christian influences and strive to make Hallow's Eve a celebration of the acts of God through his people. We should make it a day when acts of charity instead of vandalism and hatred abound. A day that emphasizes the light of Christ instead of the darkness of evil. A day when people meditate on the acts of Godly people instead of ghosts and goblins.

When America and the world celebrates the Festival of Samhain and the powers of darkness by masquerading as evil creatures or decorating our homes, schools, businesses and churches with occult symbols, Satanic power is glorified. While you may have

participated "all in fun," be assured, Halloween is serious business for Satanists and witches. Those who oppose Christ are known to organize on Halloween to observe satanic rituals, to cast spells, to oppose churches and families, to perform sacrilegious acts, and to even offer blood sacrifices to Satan.

As evil prevails, Americans have embraced an evil day of Satan, with the pranks of 'would be' hoodlums, combined with 'demon faces' on pumpkins, clothing of 'death' being worn, and calling it fun. When Christians participate in Halloween, it sends a message to children that witchcraft, demonism, Satanism, and the occult are something fun, entertaining and harmless.

Many years ago, C.S. Lewis wrote that one of Satan's most deceptive tactics is to convince people that he doesn't exist. Apparently he has done a good job in his deception. Sadly, many people think of the devil as no more than a symbol of evil: like Santa Claus, he is just a fictional symbol. Many people today also do not think of witches as real people who practice magic, but simply as imaginary figures who represent the supernatural world and everything that is 'spooky.' Recognizing this pagan holiday gives the false impression that what is actually lethal is innocuous. Some children develop a fascination with the supernatural which leads them later into more sinister occult practices. It's the spiritual equivalent of painting a loaded gun to look like a toy and giving it to child to play with.

It is the kind of celebration that encourages kids like the 16-year-old in Pearl, Mississippi who stabbed his mother to death in her sleep and then opened fire at his high school, killing two students and wounding seven. Authorities found this student along with at least six others involved in a small, avowedly satanic clique that calls itself "Kroth."

How some people can defend this kind of activity as just another innocent holiday that doesn't harm anyone is beyond me. "Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." [John 3:19-20]

Central to Satan's goals is the widespread acceptance of the supernatural, including the occult, on the part of North Americans, accompanied by a great revival of spiritism all over the world. Over the last 30 years, the occult has moved into the mainstream of America - in television, movies, magazines, business, and various aspects of daily life. Movies, books, magazines and encyclopedias of the supernatural have abounded. Turn on your TV and hear from the ever-present "Psychic Friends" hotline, or see lead characters in TV shows meet their "spirit guide." Entire bookstores devoted to the occult have become common. Universities regularly offer courses on witchcraft and magic - usually the so-called "white" variety. Myriads of mystical Eastern religions, bizarre and often demonic, have invaded North America and found in most cases an amazing responsiveness.



Increasingly the curriculum in many public schools is becoming a primer in occultism. Impressions, a curriculum used in many school districts instructs teachers and students in how to cast spells. One teacher's manual reads, "Tell the children that a magician has cast a spell on some children. Have them work in pairs to write the magic spell the magician used. Have each pair write another spell to reverse the first spell. Have them chant their spells." About 16,000 school districts use the Pumsey the Dragon curriculum, by Jill Anderson. Many of the relaxation techniques used are identical to those used in hypnosis. Another curriculum called Duso the Dolphin employs relaxation techniques and sends hypnotized youngsters off on guided fantasies to a place called Aquatron.

Recently, a California skateboard manufacturer used a package enclosure similar in appearance to a gospel tract to encourage purchasers to sell their souls to the devil. The brochure titled, "Let's Make a Deal" has a smiley-faced devil who explains to Flame Boy what happened in heaven after he was banished: "First off, they set up a bunch of dumb rules, and then they imposed a really strict dress code. I'll wager that people must be quite bored up there, but hey, that's what they get for being good." He contrasts this with, "Flame Boy, even a dimwit like you can see that hell is by far the best place to retire. Just look at all the fun to be had." Children are asked to sign and return a contract, by which they give possession of their souls to the devil for eternity.



Satanism has become a phenomena that crosses the city limit into the rural areas of our nation. It is reported there are some 6000 witches, and approximately 10 million people are involved in the occult. However, it is very difficult to establish how many actually participate. These individuals are involved in a wide variety of activities from simply casting spells to human sacrifice. The news wires carry story after story about young children being kidnapped, only to be found later as victims of some bizarre ritualistic crime.

As satantic involvement among our youth increases, we begin to see the primary goal of such activity. According to Scripture (2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9), Satan's goal is to deceive man by blinding him to the truth of the gospel and to receive worship for himself (Matt. 4:9; Isa. 14:12-14). It has become clear that the primary goal is to alter an individual's values and turn him against himself, his beliefs, family, God and society.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." [1 Peter 5:8]

Young satanists believe the strong will rule with Satan. Once an individual becomes involved, they often make a pact with Satan. They commit themselves to a future date when they will take their own lives by suicide. They believe if they submit themselves to Satan in death, they will come back in another life as a stronger being and rule with him forever. According to recent statistics, fourteen young people a day take their own lives.

What's wrong with Halloween? It does not have even one single redeeming virtue. It is custom born out of pagan superstition. It is a demon-inspired, devil-glorifying, occult festival. It is an evening holy unto evil, death, and divination. The Scriptures tells us to "Abstain from all appearance of evil." [1Thess. 5:22] Wake up Christian! This is the night of evil and those who love the Lord Jesus Christ should have nothing to do with it.

We are all accountable for our choices and decisions. Ignorance is no excuse. The choice is up to you. Have you been involved in this satanic holiday? Do you struggle with giving it up because "it's just fun" and an innocent opportunity for children to dress up and collect candy? Don't take my word for it. Let God show you what he would have you do. You might begin by praying the following:



Father in heaven I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ to confess that I'm a sinner. I'm sorry! Please forgive me. I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ is Your Son and that You raised him from the dead. I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins and that I might be saved. Each and everyday Father I turn my will and my life over to Your care, and may Your Holy Spirit lead and guide me in all the things I think , do and say. I'm Yours and You are mine. Father, please use me

that I might help others come to know and love Your Son Jesus Christ. Thank you for saving me. Amen