

HALLOWEEN

As a parent, do you have the answer if your child asks, "Where did Halloween come from?" What is the purpose of Halloween? Why do our children dress up in outlandish costumes? Why do they go trick-or-treating?

Scottish and Irish immigrants brought Halloween to the United States in the 19-century. It has become prominent in America only within the past 50 years.

Halloween got its name from the Catholic Church. In the year 900, All Saints' Day was moved from May to November 1st. This is the day set aside to honor all saints who do not have their own holiday. All Saints' Day was also known as All Hallows. October 31, All Hallows Even was later shortened to Halloween. While Halloween picked up the name from the feast of All Hallows, it didn't pick up anything else from Christianity!

In the book, Halloween, D.J. Herda writes, "While All Hallows was a day for religious thought and church services, All Hallows Even was a night for magic and superstition." In moving All Saints' Day to November 1st, the church was trying to refocus the attention of the people away from unholy things such as the Vigil of Samhain. What is Samhain?

The Celts, who occupied northern and Western Europe (what is now France and the British Isles) practiced Druidism as their religion. These priests noted two important feasts: Beltane on May 1, and the autumn festival Samhain on the last day of October. Halloween was originally Samhain, a pagan celebration in honor of death. Coming after the harvests had been gathered, this holiday meant the end of summer and the beginning of winter. Their New Year began on November 1, and our Halloween was their New Year's Eve.

Druid priests were nature worshipers, and performed mystic ceremonies to the great sun god at this time. A supernatural element was part of the autumn festival, for the Druids tried to placate the Lord of Death (Samhain). It was believed that he allowed the spirits of those who had died during the past twelve months to spend a few hours at their homes at this time.

An Internet article entitled, "Hail to the Sabat, Samhain!" states the following:

In the Druidic calendar, this was the time when barriers between man and the supernatural were lowered.... On the eve of Samhain, the gates of the Abyss were unlocked and spirits from below flew free. Human souls that had been trapped in the bodies of animals were released by the Lord of the Dead and sent to their new incarnations.

One of the important rites in connection with the ancient observance of Halloween was the lighting of great bonfires on hilltops to honor the sun god and to frighten away evil spirits who had been released on that special night. People danced and sang around the flames often pretending evil spirits were pursuing them. Some of them would also wear grotesque masks. In order to please Samhain, the Celtic priests held cruel fire rites. Prisoners of war, criminals, and/or animals were burned alive.

This was the time too, when it was believed that witches rode through the skies on their broomsticks; for the idea was prevalent among the Druids as it had been among early Egyptians and Romans, that there were women who had sold themselves to the devil. On Halloween these witches were said to dance on the hilltops with goblins and imps, while the devil himself played the bagpipes, or castanets made from dead men's bones. As the people celebrated that night around the fire, they talked of the mysterious sights or weird sounds they encountered. No doubt this was a forerunner to telling ghost stories on Halloween.

Our modern Halloween also has some elements that originated in the ancient Roman feast honoring Pomona, goddess of fruits. After the Romans had conquered the Celts in 43 AD they ruled Great Britain for 400 years. There was a blending of the Celtic and Roman traditions into the holiday; hence the use of pumpkins, gourds, nuts, apples, and other harvest symbols. Halloween was also a time for fortune telling. The priests cut animals open and from the entrails foretold the future, or some used the peculiar shapes of vegetables or fruits for this purpose.

After the spread of Christianity, enemies of the church made fun of the Christians and on Halloween they worshipped the devil, set skulls on pretend altars or painted profane crosses on church walls. Understandably, Christians rejected and detested this idolatrous festival.

SOME OF THE HALLOWEEN SYMBOLS STEM FROM PAGAN RITUALS. THESE ARE:

THE BLACK CAT: Among the Druids, cats were dreaded as human beings changed into animals by evil powers. Linked with the Druid Samhain, and later with witches, the cat found a permanent place in Halloween. Its back arched, its hair on end, its yellow eyes glaring, the cat stood for the spirit of evil.

JACK-O'LANTERNS: These were originally carved images of demonic beings. These were also imagined by some people as the souls of sinners condemned to walk the earth (not going to heaven or hell) until the end of time. The Irish claim that a man named Jack made a deal with the devil and didn't keep to it so when he died he couldn't go to heaven, but the devil wouldn't let him into hell.

BOBBING FOR APPLES: This began as a method of divination. In some areas, this tradition continues.

GHOSTS, GOBLINS & GHOULS: These were thought by the pagans of Europe to have special freedom to travel about among the living at Halloween.

BATS & OWLS: Bats & owls have been associated with Halloween since ancient times. The pagan Celts believed these animals were able to communicate with the dead.

SKELETONS, SKULLS, & CORPSES: These belong to Halloween as a festival celebrating death.

THE HALLOWEEN MASQUERADE: When droughts, epidemics or other disasters struck, primitive people donned their most hideous masks. They hoped the demons that had brought the disasters would think they were demons too, and be frightened away. Also, Druids dressed in grotesque masks at the rituals to the Lord of Death (Samhain). Dressed as ghosts, witches, skeletons, or monsters, they stand for the spirits that frightened people long ago.

TREATS: The heathen Celtic tribesmen of Europe believed that ghosts and other spirit-beings visited the land of the living on Samhain. Even so they presented offerings to them on that night. Just as people once offered gifts of food to the spirits, people today offer treats to the children who represent them.

LIGHTED CANDLES: The bright candles are reminiscent of the great bonfires lit on the hillsides at Samhain.

COLORS: Orange represents the fire to ward off evil. Black represents death.

CAN HALLOWEEN BE AN ENTIRELY INNOCENT PRACTICE?

This is not to say that Christians who choose to participate in Halloween are necessarily sinning; however they need to decide whether by their participation, they bring honor to the Lord. We hope Christians will take a closer look at involvement based on this and other information available about Halloween. Not everything in life is clear-cut and not everything has easy answers. All things considered, however, we think the most prudent and wise decision for Halloween is abstinence. Why? Based on our discussion to date, we can see that Halloween symbolism and activities today, although technically removed from their ancient practices, nevertheless *retain* the underlying associations for which they were intended. In other words, the very act of dressing or costuming oneself heralds back to the original purpose for which this was done.

Can we truly align ourselves innocently with something traditionally and currently involved with the occult and be certain we will never be affected in any possible manner? In merely participating in Halloween, are we ignorantly skirting the territory of the devil? Historically, isn't *this* the day that the evil powers have chosen for themselves as special above all others--from the ancient Druids to the modern Druids, witches, and Satanists? Unfortunately, isn't it also true that most Christians don't even know this? But if the purpose of the Christian life is to glorify God, is it really possible to glorify God by imitating what occultists do on their special day, however innocently?

Most people think that imitating these things on Halloween is innocent enough since we are not engaging in the original practices or intent. Nevertheless, the Scripture repeatedly tells us not to *imitate* the evil practices of the pagan nations. For example, when it says in 3 John 11, "Do not *imitate* that which is evil," it means do not copy it, imitate it or act it out.

Can we, even indirectly, be setting up our own children to become familiar with the "flavor" or practices of the occult? Isn't it true that even when we send out our children dressed not as occult characters that it is impossible for them not to be intermingling with other kids who are dressed up as witches, sorcerers, the devil and demons, ghosts, and other occult themes? In fact, it is impossible for our children to avoid this. But could this exposure help pique at least some children's interest in such things?

Is it possible to abstain from every form or appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22) and also send your child out dressed as a devil? Is it possible to not imitate or learn evil while imitating or "learning" modern symbolism of ancient evil practices? When our kids ask us why they and other kids dress up in costumes and why they trick or treat, can we as their parents give them any other answer that is not tied back to evil, pagan, occult practice?

Let's ask the final question. How does God, as He looks down on Halloween night, in full awareness of the events that have happened on this night historically and today, view little children, especially Christian children, dressed up as ghosts, devils, witches, and goblins? Or even dressed up as innocent characters but going out on that very night so dedicated by occultists to their own activities. How does God view Christian parents, His own spiritual children, participating in an event, that on that very day, is so honored by occultists and the devil--the day on which so much evil has been committed historically, and **IS ACTUALLY BEING COMMITTED ON THAT VERY NIGHT?** (Let us not forget that it is perhaps the most common of days on which human sacrifices are made.)

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY

Halloween was always a pagan holiday that worshiped the lord of death. As Christians, we serve a LIVING GOD!!

Jesus said, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me. John 14:6

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16

Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me though he were dead yet he shall live and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. John 11:24,25

**IF WE BELIEVE THIS,
WHAT ARE WE DOING PARTICIPATING IN A HOLIDAY THAT CENTERS ON DEATH?**

Death and sin go together as the Bible tells us in Romans 6:23. For the wages of sin is death.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light. Romans 13:12

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT WITCHCRAFT

Thou shall not suffer a witch to live.

Exodus 22:18

Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards to be defiled by them, I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 20:6

And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits and after wizards to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul. Leviticus 20:6

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT EVIL ASSOCIATION

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? II Corinthians 6:14

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

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. I Thessalonians 5:21, 22

WHY DO AMERICANS CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN?

Many parents are uncomfortable with the gruesome aspects of Halloween, but feel reluctant to deprive their children of a holiday that seems so much a part of American life. But remember, Halloween is not really an American holiday.

The little Pilgrim children never learned to say "Trick or Treat!" When he was a boy, George Washington never went out hunting for candy on October 31 and Abraham Lincoln never dressed up as a pirate or a robber to celebrate Halloween. This holiday was not nationally known and observed until the middle of the 1800's when a large wave of immigrants from Celtic areas of Europe brought the old Halloween customs with them.

WHICH WITCH IS WHICH?

Many of us were raised to think of witches as mythological characters found only in fairy tales and cartoons. That was close to the truth. Until the last half of the 20th century, there was relatively little interest in witchcraft in the United States and other industrialized nations. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. Some Halloween witches are for real! In fact, Halloween is one of the most important days for witches. So before you send your little ones off to celebrate with make-believe witches, pause to reflect: actual witches are celebrating the same holiday in earnest.

Witches today celebrate eight major festivals throughout the year with Halloween being the one celebrated above all others. In her Internet article entitled "Samhain Ritual", Lady Ardane (a modern day witch) writes:

We are here tonight to celebrate the most sacred of our holidays, Samhain. A time outside of time, a time when the boundaries have been lifted, normal laws are suspended, and spirits from the other world can seek entry into ours. The doors are opened, the thresholds can be bridged. Samhain is a night for divination, the past, present and future merge. The dead and the still to be born are celebrated.

She goes on to say:

We remember our dear ones who died during the Burning Times and weep for their sacrifice. We remember and honor those who were our ancestors, mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, children and dear friends who have departed this life and who have gone to Summerland to await rebirth. We invite them to come to us this night and join in our circle of love lending their energy and essence to our circle.

Symbolic of the ritual fires of Samhain lit centuries ago, witches today use fire in their Magic Circles to build a shield of protection and to light the Path for the future according to the article taken from the electronic magazine Salem Tarot Page entitled "Samhain (October 31st)...".

An article taken from Darkcastle electronic magazine claims that Samhain or Halloween is "perhaps the most important holiday among witches and pagans." It goes on to pronounce Samhain as a "perfect time for various forms of divination or scrying as the veil between the worlds is at its thinnest and one can ask for assistance from spirit guides and ancestors."

According to the Salem Tarot Page electronic magazine in an article entitled "The Official Salem Witches Halloween Ball", (this was taken off the internet in October 1999), the ball will be held on October 29 and "A Witches' magic circle will be cast at midnight to work spells for the coming year. ...Guests are encouraged to wear their traditional Witches robes...."

In an article entitled "Welcome Halloween", Salem is touted as the Halloween capital of the world where festivities begin long before October. Salem expects witches to visit their town in October "from every area of the world, converging in wisdom on this sacred night between the worlds." Halloween is called "...the most magical time of the year for Witches around the globe and especially here in Salem...."

HALLOWEEN MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR CHILDREN'S HEALTH

There are witches in earnest celebrating death, performing rituals, casting spells and calling up the dead. Even before the current resurgence of witchcraft, Halloween was a day to focus on death and sometimes-gruesome rituals. Yet, parents who ordinarily treat these sensitive topics very carefully sometimes assume that a callous attitude suddenly becomes harmless on this one night of the year. They wouldn't let their children watch gruesome "slasher" movies, but on Halloween they'll allow them to saunter forth as Freddy Kruger, or as Jason from the movie "Friday the Thirteenth."

Halloween is a time plagued with senseless vandalism and random crime. In recent years, this has taken an alarming turn, as malicious adults have occasionally hidden drugs and razor blades inside Halloween treats.

WHAT'S A PARENT TO DO?

There are several biblical principles that can guide you as a parent in deciding how your family should look at Halloween.

HATE EVIL - DON'T DELIGHT IN IT: God views witchcraft and all other occult activities as evil (Galatians 5:17-21). He despises them. So the question is, "How much do I hate the things God hates? And if I really hate what He hates, just how often will I want my children to celebrate what He calls an abomination?"

RECOGNIZE SATAN'S POWER - DON'T MAKE FUN OF IT: Celebrating Halloween can encourage children to take lightly the forces of darkness. That's a serious mistake (See Jude 8-10). We should always take the occult seriously.

BE TRANSFORMED - DON'T BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD: Christians belong to God: the world is in rebellion against God. So we're not supposed to fit in here. God very clearly tells us to be different from our neighbors (see Romans 12:1-2).

PROTECT WEAKER BELIEVERS - DON'T PROVOKE THEM: Even if you are confident that exposing your children to occult influences will not harm them, what about other young believers? Can you guarantee the continuing spiritual health of Christian children who may be encouraged by your children's example to participate in a satanic holiday? Consult Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8.

IF YOU DECIDE TO "JUST SAY NO"

If your children are accustomed to celebrating Halloween and you decide as parents that your family should not participate in the festivities this year, you can expect opposition and complaints. To avoid making Halloween a bigger issue than it needs to be, explain the reasons for your decision and remember the following principles:

DON'T APOLOGIZE FOR HONORING GOD: Some parents express their opposition to Halloween so apologetically that their children are encouraged to believe that something's wrong with Mom and Dad, rather than with Halloween. But there's nothing wrong with a child standing apart from the crowd, standing alone for the truth, like young Daniel (Daniel 1:8-20). And there's nothing to apologize for when you challenge your children to honor the Lord.

CHALLENGE YOUR CHILDREN TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH: Use the Halloween season as an opportunity to educate your children spiritually. Describe the spiritual battle being waged in the world today (see Ephesians 6:10-18). Help them gain a discerning and godly perspective on Halloween, and challenge them to take a personal stand.

DON'T DISCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN: It's good for children to have fun. Having fun is not what's wrong with Halloween! If you provide plenty of enjoyable family activities for your kids, they will be less likely to feel cheated when you say "no" to Halloween (see Colossians 3:21).

Information for this newsletter was quoted from a newsletter published by *The Art of Family Living*. Information was also taken from HALLOWEEN and SATANISM by Phil Phillips and Joan Hake Robie, and THE FACTS ON HALLOWEEN: What Christians Need to Know by John Ankerberg and John Weldon. Additional sources included Halloween by Katherine Leiner, Halloween by D.J. Herda, Take Warning! A Book of Superstitions by Jane Sarnoff and Reynold Ruffins, Ghosts and Goblins – Stories for Halloween compiled by Wilhelmina Harper. Other authors quoted included Ingpen and Wilkinson, Sharon Cade, Edna Barth, and others. Articles were quoted from the following electronic magazines: Salem Tarot Page, TripleMoon Witchware: Pagan, Witch & Supplies Information, Paganet News, DarkCastle. Some of it was taken from history books and encyclopedias as well as other miscellaneous sources. The indisputable quotes were taken from the Bible, the Holy Word of God!