

Thanks for your interest in

Halloween

A Christian Perspective

*It is my hope that this information
will give you a better understanding of this
day and how you should respond*

About the Author

Chris Losey grew up in Calistoga, California. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, in 1973. After



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Halloween

Halloween has become a widely celebrated day in the United States. Stores are decorated with pumpkins, witches, spider webs and the like. Recently at one doctor's office I saw a small electronic ghost, which bobbed and wailed next to the pharmacy window. Close by, a plastic arm extended out over a soft drink machine and surprised many passers-by. Schools have Halloween art contests. Many businesses host large parties for their employees. The movie industry has even jumped on the bandwagon and produced a myriad of horror films with a Halloween theme. Halloween not only has wide acceptance, it is also big business.



Most people see Halloween as nothing more than a fun day to carve pumpkins, attend costume parties, trick or treat with their children or watch scary movies. But before participating in any holiday it is important to investigate its origin and purpose, and to ask the question, "Is this something that God wants me to be involved in?" The aim of this paper is to take a close look at Halloween in order to understand its origins and determine how Christians should respond.

The historical information for this paper was taken from common sources like: The Encyclopedia Britannica, The World Book Encyclopedia, Grolier's Encyclopedia and The American Book Of Days.

The Celtic Festival of Samhain

The Celtic festival, Samhain (pronounced SAH win) is probably the original source of Halloween. This festival honored Samhain, the Celtic lord of death, and marked the end of summer and the last day of the Celtic year, October 31. It also marked the beginning of the season of cold, darkness and decay. The ancient Celts who lived more than 2000 years ago in Great Britain, Ireland and northern France, believed that on this day, Samhain, the lord of the dead gathered all the souls of the wicked people who had died during the year and who had been condemned to enter the bodies of animals. He determined on that night what form these souls would take. The Celts believed that the punishment of wicked people could be lessened by offering gifts and prayers to Samhain. They also believed that the spirits of good people, who died, would enter the bodies of living people. The spirits who were gathered on this evening were allowed to revisit their homes.

The festival of Samhain was held in contrast to May Day (Beltane), the festival at the beginning of summer. These two festivals marked the two main seasons of the Celtic year.



On Samhain, the Celtic priests known as Druids ordered the people to extinguish all hearth fires. The Druids then built a huge bon fire of oak branches (considered sacred) from which the people could re-light their hearths for the New Year. During the ceremony there were animal, crop and possibly even human sacrifices. As part of the evening, the people often wore costumes made of animal skins and heads. They also told fortunes about the coming year by examining the carcasses of the sacrificed animals.

On the day after Samhain, November 1st, the Druids had a festival to their sun god and lit fires in his honor. These fires were to help him regain energy for the New Year so that summer could come again.

The Roman Festivals of Feralia and Pomona

In AD 43 the Romans conquered the Celts and ruled their homeland of present day Great Britain for approximately 400 years. During this time the customs of two Roman festivals: Feralia and Pomona, intermingled with Samhain. The festival of Feralia was held in late October to honor the dead. The festival of Pomona (the Roman goddess of fruit and trees) celebrated the harvest. Apples probably became associated with Halloween because of this festival.

Christian Influence

With the dawn and spread of Christianity, the Catholic Church saw the need to help believers break away from their pagan customs which included these occult festivals. Since festivals were an important part of society and gave the people a chance to celebrate and rest from their labors, it was hard to get people to divorce themselves completely from these seasonal celebrations. The church came up with a different strategy. It attempted to substitute Christian festivals or special days to take the place of the pagan ones. This would allow the people to still have a festival but remove the pagan influence. Thus in the 800's, November 1st was named "All Saints Day" to honor all Christian saints, especially those who did not have days named for them. This day was first celebrated on May 13, AD 610 as the Feast of All Holy Martyrs, when Emperor Phocas gave the ancient Roman temple of the Pantheon to Pope Boniface IV as a church. Gradually the feast was extended to commemorate all saints, in addition to those who had given their lives for their faith. In the Roman Catholic Church "All Saints' Day" is a holy day of obligation when Catholics are

required to attend Mass and to refrain from unnecessary work. The mass is called All Hallow Mass. Halloween takes its name from All Saints' Day because October 31st was called All Hallows Eve or Holy Evening, the day prior to All Hallow Mass. Unfortunately instead of creating a complete break with old customs, many of the pagan customs melded with and became part of Halloween.

Halloween Colors, Traditions and Games

The colors of Halloween, orange and black, are symbolic of the autumn color of the harvest and the darkness of death. In early times many people believed that all witches met on October 31st to worship the Devil. The day was thought to provide a good opportunity for divinations concerning marriage, health, death and luck. It was a day when the Devil was invoked to help in these areas.

In Ireland it was believed that on this night spirits came out of the cave of Cruachan in Connaught, called the gate of hell. These spirits rampaged the countryside doing things like killing farm animals, stealing babies and leaving changelings in their place.

Fortunetelling Games

One game that people played involved a cake. A coin, a ring and a thimble were baked into a cake. The cake was then served. It was believed that the person who found the coin would become rich. The person who found the ring would get married soon, and the person who found the thimble would never marry. These items and other objects like small china dolls were also baked into other foods. There are many other fortune telling games associated with



Halloween. Many are described in detail in the American Book Of Days.

Trick or Treating

Some people believe that on October 31st when the spirits returned to their homes, they expected to receive food. Families would thus cook special items and leave them on their porches. If this was not done, the spirits might play tricks like sour the milk, burn the barn or cause some other harm. If they got a treat then they would not play a trick. People also dressed up in costumes that resembled demons and witches hoping to trick these beings into thinking that they were with them and thus avoid any possible harm. Today, as children trick or treat in ghoulish costumes they are mimicking these pagan and occult practices.

Jack-o-lanterns

Ireland has a story about Jack-O-Lanterns. A miserly old man named Jack was rejected from entering Hell because he played a trick on the devil. He also was barred from heaven. He was subsequently condemned to walk the earth with his lantern until Judgment Day.



Black Cats

The cat was sacred to the Druids who believed that cats had once been human beings who had been changed into animals as punishment for evil deeds.

There are also other superstitions connected with cats. If a cat sits quietly next to a person, it means peace and prosperity. If the cat rubs up against the person it means good

luck. If it jumps in ones lap it means greater good luck. If the cat yawns it means an opportunity awaits that must not be neglected. If a cat runs away it means that a person has a secret that will be made known within a week.

Bobbing for Apples

In Scotland, apples and a sixpence were put into a tub of water. The person who could get either of them out without using his teeth, or who could pin one of the apples with a fork was destined to have good luck the following year.

Halloween in the United States

Many Europeans who came to America brought Halloween traditions with them, but because of the strict religious beliefs of other settlers, Halloween celebrations did not become widespread until the 1800s. During that time there was a great influx of immigrants from the Celtic regions of Ireland and Scotland.

In many areas Halloween has become a time when vandalism abounds. The police are out in force on that evening. Occasionally a child will find a razor blade or needle in trick-or-treat items. To minimize these problems some communities have instituted parades, pageants and other activities to give people more constructive activities.

Satanism Today

Unfortunately, Satanism is alive and well in the world today. Witches and warlocks abound. I even had the experience of leading a witch to Christ. Many people are not aware of the fact that October 31st is one of the two most sacred days for the satanic church. On this day Black Masses (which denigrate Christ and the Catholic Mass) are said to



honor Satan. On this day animal and human sacrifices are made as witches take oaths of obedience to Satan, sign contracts with him in blood and desecrate crucifixes and other Christian objects. Most police stations are very aware of the recent rise of occult activity, as bizarre killings have taken place. In some areas it has been discovered that missing neighborhood pets were used in occult rituals. Some people believe that a few of the children reported missing each year wind up as occult sacrifices.

How Should Christians Respond?

Many Christian families choose to participate in Halloween because they feel it isn't a big deal. They see the costumes and customs as simply innocent fun. For them, any occult meaning or connection is in the distant past. Other parents feel it would be unfair for their children to miss the fun that so many others are having. No child would understand giving up free candy when all his friends were getting it. Eliminating Halloween traditions might even brand parents as religious fanatics in the eyes of their children.

In order to determine if Christians should participate in Halloween, here are some questions to consider:

- 1. Does the Bible have anything to say on the subject?**
- 2. Does the activity bring glory to God?**
- 3. How does Satan feel about such involvement?**
- 4. Are there other alternatives?**

Let's briefly look at each of these.

1. Does the Bible have anything to say on the subject?

Although the Bible does not specifically mention Halloween, there



are verses that relate to the subject of the occult. One key passage is Deuteronomy 18:9-13.

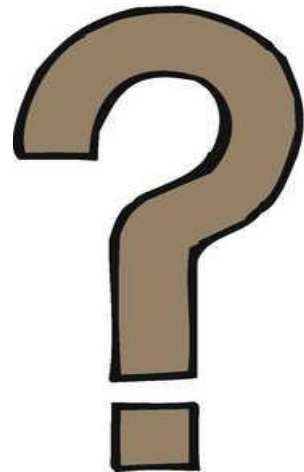
*When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to **imitate** the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, 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. (New International Version of the Bible - NIV)*

Some people argue that even to participate in Halloween is to **imitate** things that are detestable to the Lord. Others disagree. One Christian woman told me she once had no reservations about putting cardboard cutouts of witches and ghosts on her window. To her, it was actually fun. But then she realized she never put pictures of Jesus in her window. Was it possible that Satan had tricked her into supporting his special day? After thinking it over, she decided to remove any symbols of Halloween from her home.

2. Does the activity bring glory to God?

Deuteronomy 5:7 states, "*You shall have no other gods before me.*" (NIV) Deuteronomy 6:5 states, "*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*" (NIV)

Some people say that by participating in Halloween a person is not bringing glory to God but actually paying tribute to Satan.



3. How does Satan feel about such involvement?

Satan is a deceiver. He has deceived people from the very beginning. His goal is to get them to participate in things that are not God's will. I'm sure that a Christian's involvement in Halloween brings Satan much pleasure. On the one hand Christians denounce Satan but on the other they often participate in a celebration that carries many of his trappings and actually promotes evil practices on one of the two most special days of the satanic year.

Some Christians argue that if they are supposed to stop celebrating Halloween they also must stop celebrating Christmas and Easter since both of those days were also pagan holidays the church sought to influence. It is true that Christmas and Easter were once pagan holidays but the difference is Halloween is the only such holiday that still maintains an evil focus. The other two days are now Christ-centered.

4. Are there other alternatives?

If a family decides not to participate in Halloween, are there other alternatives? Yes. Here are a few:

- Do nothing. This is an alternative but may be met with resentment from your children who want to be like other kids and go trick-or-treating.
- Remove any cultic influence from the day and celebrate a true All Saints Day. Spend time talking about the contributions of the various saints in the Bible and others through history who have made great contributions to the cause of Christ (Check out the Hall of Faith in Hebrews chapter eleven). Why not focus on one or a few people and do an in-depth study followed by a time of prayer thanking

God for all who have gone before and lived dynamic Christian lives. Maybe invite a friend or family over to celebrate. Provide special snacks and drinks.

- Have an All Saints Party where people dress up as Bible characters or portray a particular biblical theme. At one such party one person came as "A Rock." Another came as the "Rich Young Ruler" with one-dollar bills pinned all over his white jacket. Another came as a tube of toothpaste "Christ Toothpaste" which removed the decay of sin. Others came dressed as runners; they were running the race for Christ. Another came as the "Bible Promise Man" and handed out Bible promises to all he met. Be creative!
- Use Halloween as a time to share Christ with trick-or-treaters. Place a tract in each sack along with some goodies.

The possibilities for alternatives to Halloween are only limited by a person's creativity.

Conclusion

Each individual and family must decide whether they will participate in Halloween. In making the decision it is important to be informed. Our family has decided not to participate in Halloween but to provide creative alternatives. My prayer is that this short paper has been helpful in your decision making process. May God bless you as you seek His will for your life.

God's Plan of Salvation

At this point, you may be interested in knowing what it takes to have a personal relationship with God. If so, here is what you should know.

- God created humans as His finest creation. He created them with the ability to make moral choices (Genesis 1-3)
- Mankind chose to disobey God (i.e. to sin) – Genesis 3
- Sin separates mankind from God – Isaiah 59:2
- All humans have sinned – Romans 3:23
- The penalty for sin is death – Romans 6:23 (All men will die physically. Their sin also causes them to be spiritually dead. If they die without having their sin forgiven, they will be eternally separated from God.)
- After physical death comes judgment – Hebrews 9:27 (Men will stand before God and be judged. Those whose sins are not forgiven will be eternally separated from Him in Hell.)
- No amount of good works, or any other human effort can pay the penalty for a person's sin & get him into heaven – Ephesians 2:8,9
- Only Christ can/did pay the penalty for man's sin – 1 Peter 3:18
- A person's salvation is not automatic. Instead it comes when a person believes in God by placing his faith in Him – John 3:16 (This is not just head belief, it is wholehearted commitment.)
- A person can place his trust in Christ by receiving Him as Lord (the One who now calls the shots in a person's life), and Savior (the One who saves him from sin). – John 1:12, Romans 10:9,10

If you would like to place your faith in Christ today, here is a prayer you can pray. As you pray, remember that God is more concerned with the attitude of your heart than the exact words you use. He loves you.

Salvation Prayer - *Lord, I admit to You that I am a sinner. I have sinned in thought, word, and deed. I repent of my sin and ask You to forgive me, and to come into my life through the power of the Holy Spirit to be my Lord and Savior. I give myself to You. Make me the person You want me to be.*

If you sincerely prayed this prayer you are saved. Your salvation is not based on any good thing you have done, but on Christ's death for you on the cross. In order to grow as a Christian you are encouraged to get a Bible and to begin reading and studying it. You are also encouraged to get involved in a good church and to pray. If you have Christian friends, tell them about your decision and allow them to help you grow in your faith. Blessings...