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The Truth About Halloween

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Excited Children masquerading as witches, ghosts, goblins, demons, and other grotesque characters skipping through the neighborhood knocking on doors chanting "trick or treat" while holding out a sack in which one is to drop a piece of candy or other goodies ... the party at school, or church, or Sunday School where they bob for apples, tell fortunes, or go through "haunted houses"... decorations of jack-o'-lanterns, witches on brooms, and black cats with arched backs ... It's "Halloween"--one of the strangest days of the year.

Are Halloween activities really just the simple, innocent holiday fun most people believe them to be? Where did this holiday originate? Why is this holiday celebrated?

History provides the answers. Though it was the Roman Catholic Church who designated the October 31st date as All Hallows Eve, or "eve of the holy ones" day, in prelude to their November 1st All Saints' Day, it was earlier pagan peoples who gave the annual holiday the sinister meaning and traditions it still holds.

"The American celebration rests upon Scottish and Irish folk customs which can be traced in direct line from pre-Christian times. Although Halloween has become a night of rollicking fun, superstitious spells, and eerie games which people take only half seriously, its beginnings were quite otherwise. The earliest Halloween celebrations were held by the Druids in honor of Samhain, lord of the dead, whose festival fell on November 1st." ¹

"It was a Druidic belief that on the eve of this festival, Saman [Samhain], lord of death, called together the wicked souls [spirits] that within the past 12 months had been condemned to inhabit the bodies of animals." ²

"The Druids, an order of priests in ancient Gaul and Britain, believed that on Halloween, ghosts, spirits, fairies, witches, and elves came out to harm people. They thought the cat was sacred and believed that cats had once been human beings, but were changed as a punishment for evil deeds. From these Druidic

beliefs come the present-day use of witches, ghosts, and cats in Halloween festivities." ³

Halloween "was the night for the universal walking about of all sorts of spirits, fairies, and ghosts, all of whom had liberty on that night." ⁴

The pagans believed that on one night of the year the souls of the dead returned to their original homes. "There was a prevailing belief among all nations that at death the souls of good men were taken possession of by good spirits and carried to paradise, but the souls of wicked men were left to wander in the space between the earth and moon, or consigned to the unseen world. These wandering spirits were in the habit of haunting the living ... But there were means by which these ghosts might be exorcised." ⁵

To exorcise these ghosts, that is, to free yourself from their supposed evil sway, you would have to set out food--give the demons a treat--and provide shelter for them during the night. If they were satisfied with your treat, it was believed they would leave you in peace. If food and shelter were not provided, or if they were not satisfied, these spirits, it was believed, would "trick" you by casting an evil spell on you and cause havoc.

TRICK OR TREAT

"The modern custom of 'Trick-or-treat' began in Ireland hundreds of years ago ... A group of farmers went from house to house begging food for the village Halloween festivities in the name of their ancient gods. Good luck was promised to generous donors, and threats were made against those who would not give." ⁶ Thus these ancient pagan traditions continue today as youngsters, masquerading as ghosts, skeletons, and demons go "trick-or-treating"--begging in a sense for food while promising to refrain from evil deeds.

OCTOBER 31

"It was the Celts who chose the date of October 31 as their New Year's Eve and who originally intended it as a celebration of everything wicked, evil, and dead. Also during their celebration they would gather around a community bonfire and offer as sacrifice their animals, their crops, and sometime themselves. And wearing costumes made from the heads and skins of other animals, they would also tell one another's fortunes for the coming year." ⁷

"The celebration remained much the same after the Romans conquered the Celts around 43 A.D. The Romans did, however, add a ceremony honoring their goddess of fruit and trees, and thus the association with apples and the custom of bobbing for them." ⁸

JACK-O'-LANTERN

The apparently harmless lighted pumpkin face or "Jack-O'-Lantern" is an ancient symbol of a damned soul. Jack-O'-Lanterns were named for a man called Jack, who could not enter heaven or hell. As a result, he was doomed to wander in darkness with his lantern until Judgment Day." ⁹

"Fearful of spooks ... folks began hollowing out turnips and pumpkins and placing lighted candles inside to scare evil spirits from the house." ¹⁰

HALLOWEEN "CHRISTIANIZED"

Since Halloween is unmistakably pagan in its origin and practice, how did the professing church come to accept and keep such a day? Again history provides the answer.

Ever since the time of Constantine--who made Catholicism the state religion--the Roman emperors realized how essential it was to have a unified empire, where as many as possible would be of one mind. The civil and religious leaders saw how important it was for the sake of unity to allow only one religion within the Roman domain.

A stringent state policy was implemented to force all non-Christians to accept the state religion. The condition for "conversion," of course, made it easy for the pagan population of Rome and elsewhere to "accept" 'Christianity'. Since "acceptance" of 'Christianity' was made simple, refusal was made difficult. This plan resulted in large numbers of the heathen population within the empire to flock into the membership of the church. These people brought with them many pagan practices and celebrations, Halloween merely being one of them.

How could the church deal with this problem? The church realized that to excommunicate these pagans would only reduce the membership of the church. This they were unwilling to do. The church had also learned in past times that it was not possible to force the people into discarding all their heathen practices and adopting Roman ones.

There remained only one other way.

It was reasoned that if a pagan practice or festival could not be forbidden, let it be "Christianized." Let the recently converted pagans keep certain of their heathen festivals, such as Halloween or All Souls' Day--but label it "Christian." Of course they were asked not to pray to their ancient pagan gods on this day. They would now use this day to commemorate the death of "saints."

"In the A.D. 800's, the [Catholic] church established All Saints Day on November 1st so that people could continue a festival they had celebrated before becoming Christians. The mass that was said on this day was called All Hallowmas. The evening before became known as All Hallow e'en or Halloween ... It means hallowed or holy evening." ¹¹

"The celebration of Halloween is a survival of ancient pagan beliefs. When the early [Catholic] church was unable to stop pagan practices, it accepted them and gave them a religious tune." ¹²

HALLOWEEN TODAY

Most of the ancient symbols and traditions of Halloween still exist today. Youngsters still dress in costumes and go trick-or-treating, begging in a sense, for food while promising to refrain from evil deeds. And, too, they still light their candles, although much smaller than a torch, and place them inside their pumpkins.

"It is the one night of the year in which a child experiences the emotion of fear, fantasy, and mystery." ¹³

In advising on what to do on Halloween, The Good Housekeeping Book of Entertainment says: "Orange, black, and red, the devil's colors, are the colors associated with Halloween, and this scheme should be carried out as far as possible ... Have paper streamers and lanterns hanging from the ceiling, or if you would like to have something less usual, you could make a giant spider web with black and orange strings, or in narrow strips of crepe paper coming from the four corners of the room, complete with a large spider--one of the devil's followers." ¹⁴

INCONSISTENCY OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS

Bible-believing Christians cringe and shudder at the thought of Satan worship and occult rites. But how many of these same people will dress their children as

witches, ghosts, skeletons, or devils and send them out to "trick-or-treat"? How many smile approvingly at the church or Sunday school and youth organizations that have Halloween parties and sponsor "haunted house" activities?

Can any Christian give any scriptural--or even logical--reason for participation in, or approval of, that which is unmistakably associated with paganism, devil-worship, witchcraft, and Romanism?

GOD'S PEOPLE GOVERNED BY THE SCRIPTURES

The 18th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, (vv 10-13) very explicitly forbids Christians to have anything to do with witchcraft, spiritism or the demonic. In verse 10 of that chapter we read:

"There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire (this has reference to the worship of the pagan god, Moloch, which was state worship), or that useth divination (a false and pagan counterpart of prophecy; the art or act of foretelling secret knowledge, especially of the future), or an observer of times (astrology), or an enchanter, (to cast under a spell; charm; enrapture; to chant [magic words]), or a witch (divinations in connection with the worship of idolatrous and demoniacal powers), or a charmer (a fabricator of material charms or amulets to be worn especially around the neck as a charm against evil or injury), or a consulter with evil spirits (an inquirer by a familiar spirit), or a wizard (a false prophet, especially a conjurer; one who summons a devil by oath, incantation or magic spell), or a necromancer (one who in one form or another seeks to find information by consulting the dead)."

"Thou shalt not learn to do after their abominations ..." (Deuteronomy 17:9). Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I Am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:31).

It is obvious that the elements, symbols, and traditions of the Halloween observance with its emphasis upon goblins and demons, witches, and skeletons, ghosts, and apparitions rising from cemeteries constitute a dabbling with the very things which Scripture forbids to God's people and an open invitation to demonic activity.

It is at this point that many will say, "But we don't worship demons or Halloween. It doesn't mean the same thing today as it did in the past. It's now just a harmless, innocent time of fun for the children and the young people."

Yet, history clearly shows that Halloween is unmistakably a "religious" (pagan and Roman) holiday. Religion is the adoration, obedience, and service rendered to the object of one's worship. It presupposes profession, practice, or observance of whatever belief and practice--in this case Halloween--as required by some superior authority. It is indisputably clear that Halloween is not commanded or sanctioned by the Lord God--the true Christian's Superior Authority--in the Scriptures.

"Abstain from ALL appearances of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

"And many that believed came and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men" (Acts 19:18,19).

"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do ALL to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

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