

# Hallowe'en - Is There an Alternative?

by Brenda Rishea

Although this newsletter will arrive at your doors past the time of Hallowe'en, it is still important to address the issue so one can be prepared for next year. This day remains a source of controversy for most Christians, mostly due to either ignorance about its origins, downplaying the spiritual aspect, or unwillingness to refrain from allowing their children to participate.

It is important to mention the origin of this day. The name is a contraction of "Allhallow's Eve", or "Holy Evening", and refers to a Roman Catholic holiday in prelude to their November 1st "All Saints' Day" that commemorates great Christians and martyrs of the past. Before the time of Christ, the Druids, an ancient order of pagan priests, participated in various pranks on October 31st (*some sources say Nov. 1*). They lived in caves and forests in Gaul (now France) and Britain and worshipped pagan gods including the sun god, the earth mother goddess, and Samhain (lord of the dead). They believed in reincarnation, which is contrary to the Bible (read Hebrews 9:27). They offered sacrifices to be forgiven from their sins, and eventually began the practice of human sacrifice. Druids believed 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."<sup>1</sup> The people to be offered on the altar would be chosen by the Druids. A pumpkin would be left on the doorstep to replace the victim and to prevent other family members from harm. The Jack-O'-Lantern is an ancient symbol of a damned soul. They were named after a legend of a man called Jack who was unable to enter either heaven or hell and was doomed to wander the earth with his lantern until Judgment Day.

To be free from evil spirits, one would have to set out food (give demons a treat), and provide them shelter for the night. If they were pleased, they would leave one alone. If not, they would "trick" the person and cast an evil spell on him or her.

The modern custom of "Trick or Treat" began in Ireland hundreds of years ago. People would go door to door to beg food for the Hallowe'en festival, promising "good luck" to the generous and harm to the miserly. This continues today as children masquerade in costumes, asking for treats or playing a trick.

The ancient Romans, when they conquered the Celts around 43 A.D., brought us the custom of bobbing for apples via the ceremony honouring their goddess of fruit and trees.

During the time of Constantine, who imposed Catholicism as his empire's religion, religious leaders had difficulty unifying their domain. The pagan populations resisted "conversion", so they allowed new converts to bring into church practice their pagan practices and celebrations, thereby "Christianising" them, Hallowe'en being one of them.

When the spirits of the departed were supposed to visit the houses of the villagers, they would be "fooled" by the people who were dressed in costumes and masks and the spirits would be led out of town. Is Christ glorified by this? It may appear seemingly harmless, but do we want to fool with a superstitious custom, or follow the example of Christ?

Bible-believing Christians cringe at the thought of worshipping Satan and participating in occult rites, yet some allow their children to participate in Hallowe'en. Is there any scriptural reason for approving of a day which is unmistakably associated with paganism, witchcraft, and devil worship? Deuteronomy 18:9-13 explicitly forbids believers to have anything to do with witchcraft, spiritism, or the demonic.

<sup>9</sup> ...thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.<sup>10</sup> There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.<sup>11</sup> Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.<sup>12</sup> For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee."

Leviticus 19:31 <sup>31</sup> Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards,

to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.”

1Thess. 5:22 “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

Some may claim that the history of Hallowe'en is not relevant to today. “It’s just fun, dressing up as princesses and super heroes,” they say. What spirit would motivate us to take an interest in this holiday? How is participation in this showing our neighbours the way of salvation? Remember the courage of Daniel and his three friends when they stood before an angry king and refused to worship his idol. They faced death (or so the king thought) rather than conform to paganism (see Daniel ch. 1-3).

As alternative activities, some churches now offer an evening of fun and fellowship by holding “Hallelujah” parties. Children may go dressed up, usually as Bible characters, and may recite a passage from Scripture which is associated with that character. A prize may be offered for the best costume. The entrance “fee” can be a bag of candy, which gets equally distributed and given out to each child before leaving. Games and activities have been set up for the children to participate in, and sometimes there is a craft table too.

A variation on this theme is a “harvest” party, children come dressed in farmers’ clothing, have hayrides, and perhaps some outdoor sports activities if the weather permits.

A church or a home can host a “drive-in movie” night, where the children bring large cardboard boxes (big enough for them to sit inside) and a bag of candy for the “admission fee”. They may also have to recite a Scripture passage to gain admission. They spend the first 30 minutes or so making “cars” out of the boxes, cutting out the doors, adding paper or pie plates for headlights, and using markers on the sides to customize their vehicle. Using shallow cardboard trays, adults, serving as “car hops”, prepare popcorn in small paper bags and beverages which the children can “buy” with fake paper “money” that perhaps the teens have created. Even pizza can be on the menu, if the costs have been covered. Children can happily munch their treats while watching a good Christian movie as they sit in their personalised “cars”. If the children may attend costumed, they may dress in only morally-appropriate clothing.

Some families choose to hand out Christian tracts along with some treats at their door. Other families choose complete abstinence, and keep their children away from school during activities dealing with witches, ghost stories, and sorcery. They might opt for a family time of bowling, playing board games, or watching videos. Churches sometimes host a food drive, and then distribute the food to the needy.

Whatever option you choose, Hallowe'en can be used as an opportunity to be a witness to others that we need not be afraid of the grave, that through Jesus we are victorious over death, fear, and the powers of darkness. Jesus offers total forgiveness and eternal life in heaven to all who will trust Him for their salvation. Remember 1Cor. 10:31<sup>31</sup> “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

<sup>1</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed., vol. 12, pp. 857-858

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