

# Halloween

What  
you  
should  
know  
about it

## **What You Should Know About Halloween**

Laughing children dressed as witches, goblins, skeletons, vampires, and other shadowy creatures spread across your neighborhood. They appear at your door chanting, "Trick or treat." They carry bags for candy, bubble gum, money, or other treats. "Halloween is for kids," people say.

Teenagers drape toilet paper across bushes in people's yards. Others splatter fresh paint on cars, burn down barns, and play other destructive "tricks." "Halloween is for thrills," they claim.

A weirdly-clad group of Satan worshipers professing to be druids meets at a city park to celebrate their most important "holy day," Halloween. A coven of witches gathers in a forest clearing not far from suburbia. Halloween is their chief holiday, a night of casting spells and invoking the forces of evil.

These are a few of Halloween's varied faces. Is Halloween just innocent fun?

Where did this holiday originate? Why do people still observe it today?

## **Origins of Halloween**

Historians trace the origin of Halloween and many of its customs back to the pre-Christian Celtic people of Britain, Ireland, and France. Celtic religious leaders called druids sought wisdom through signs and omens. The Celts worshiped nature and the god Samhain, the lord of the dead and the prince of darkness. They believed Samhain controlled the cold and darkness of the winter months. The Celtic new year began November 1. The new year festival was meant to appease Samhain. Druids believed the spirits of all who had died the year before roamed the earth at the time of the feast of Samhain. They offered sacrifices to Samhain, built bonfires to ward off evil spirits, and consulted the powers of darkness to foretell the future. Sometimes the druids offered human sacrifices in attempts to appease their gods. Many Halloween customs having to do with fire,

fortune-telling, ghosts, and good luck can be traced to Celtic beliefs.

Another ancient Halloween custom is making jack-o'-lanterns. An Irish legend has it that a man named Jack was too greedy to get into heaven and could not go to hell because he had tricked the devil. The devil threw a hot coal that fell on a turnip Jack was eating. The turnip with the glowing coal lighted Jack's way as he wandered the earth until judgment day looking for a final resting place. People began to carve out turnips at Halloween and put lights inside to remember poor Jack. In America, the native pumpkin replaced the turnip.

At Halloween, the ancient Celts set out food offerings to appease the spirits of the dead. Later, the Irish had a custom of going from house to house asking for food. These early trick-or-treaters would play tricks on people who had no food for them.

The druids believed cats were sacred. During the Middle Ages people associated black cats with witches who used them as mascots. Witches supposedly consulted familiar spirits they imagined resided in

cats. Witches observed Halloween as their special day. Thus witches and black cats are symbols of Halloween.

By the late 800s A.D. the Roman Catholic Church had tried to Christianize most of Europe, even requiring some to become “Christians.” But many of these still observed their old practices. The church established November 1 as All Saints’ Day to remember all the saints who had died. The Celtic descendants observed All Saints’ Day, but the night before, they practiced many of their pagan customs. The mass the priests repeated on All Saints’ Day was called Allhallowmas. The evening before became known as All Hallow E’en or Halloween. To proclaim a churchholiday did not Christianize the pagan Celtic customs.

Unlike many other holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, Halloween has no origins in Christianity. Halloween is unmistakably pagan in its origin, its symbols, and in the ways people celebrate it.

## What Does the Bible Say?

Both the Old and New Testaments explicitly forbid God's people to become involved in witchcraft, spiritism, and the demonic. Consider these Old Testament prohibitions:

◆ Thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations [*the heathen*].

◆ There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, [*child sacrifice, exposing children to heathen worship, the demonic and occult*].

◆ or that useth divination [*delves into fortune-telling or occult knowledge of the future*],

◆ or an observer of times [*interprets omens or tells the future by astrology*],

◆ or an enchanter [*one who casts spells or practices the magic arts*],

◆ or a witch [*one who practices sorcery, a spiritist*],

◆ or a charmer [*one who casts spells*],

◆ or a consulter with familiar spirits [*a medium, one who consults demons or*

*evil spirits for guidance],*

◆ or a wizard [*a spiritist, one who seeks knowledge from the unseen world*],

◆ or a necromancer [*one who calls up and consults the dead for guidance and secret knowledge*]. *Deuteronomy 18:9-13*

The observance of Halloween with its focus on death, witches, luck, and foretelling the future, links one to the very things the Scripture forbids. At best, seemingly “innocent” Halloween practices weaken one’s position against the occult, and at worst, they openly invite the demonic.

The New Testament condemns witchcraft as one of the works of the flesh that God will judge.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, **witchcraft**, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, **revellings**, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not

inherit the kingdom of God.  
*Galatians 5:19-21*

The conversion of the heathen in the Book of Acts brought conviction against heathen and occult practices. The new believers wanted nothing to do with the practices from which God had delivered them.

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: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. *Acts 19:18-20*

How might God bless if Christians today would rid themselves of all the pagan customs of our society?

## **The Christian's Response**

Bible-believing Christians certainly do not want to become involved in occult practices or Satan worship. Yet many

professing Christians unthinkingly allow their children to dress as witches, ghosts, or even devils and take them out to trick- or-treat. How many churches hold Halloween parties or sponsor haunted houses “to keep the kids out of trouble”? How can Christian and pagan customs mix so freely?

Some may argue, “But we don’t worship Samhain or devils at Halloween. We do not believe in witches anymore. These things do not mean what they used to. Now Halloween is just a time of harmless fun for the children.”

On the other hand, can any thoughtful Christian give a Scriptural reason for observing a holiday so steeped in paganism and witchcraft? With the modern resurgence of witchcraft and Satan worshipers who openly claim Halloween as their holiday, how can Christians observe it, even in fun?

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is

acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

*Ephesians 5:8-11*

—Roger Berry

Christian Light Publications, Harrisonburg, VA 22802  
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