

WHAT'S SO 'HALLOWED' ABOUT HALLOWEEN?

[Originally from the *Good News Magazine* of October-November 1985
composed by Clayton D. Steep, and edited by the Bible Fund Editors]

The name means "hallowed evening." But is it really? Where did it come from? What is it all about? And is it really good for children?

Creepy goblins, ghosts and demons, witches on brooms, spiders and bats, dead men's bones, flickering jack-o'-lanterns, black cats, eerie costumes and parties.

What a weird festival this is!

And an increasingly costly and dangerous one, too. Each year following this strange celebration, gruesome accounts surface of the giving of booby-trapped "treats" to children: apples with concealed razor blades, candy bars with hidden needles, cookies containing ground glass, bonbons laced with poisons. This is to say nothing of the cases, reported and unreported, of muggings and molestations that occur on the eve of "All Hallows."

In addition, there are those incidences of bodily harm inflicted accidentally during the course of Halloween festivities: the automobile driver failing to see the child dressed in black crossing the street at night, the burns from a flammable costume that is ignited by a candle in a jack-o'-lantern.

In many cases, extensive destruction is done to private and public property by vandalism.

Are these instances unrelated to the theme and purpose of this festival?

Is it good?

The Halloween period is big business. It is one of the three top candy-selling seasons of the year. Hundreds of millions of dollars sweeten the cash register tills in exchange for hundreds of millions of pounds of confections.

Greeting card companies, manufacturers and retailers of costumes and decorations take their share of the profits, too. For them it pays well to keep the Halloween "spirit" alive.

But in calculating the price of Halloween, we can't stop there. We must include the added cost – impossible to calculate – that all of those refined, chemical-laden "treats" ultimately impose in dental and medical bills.

Besides whatever physical harm children may suffer from Halloween, there is an as yet unmeasured damage inflicted on the child's standard of values. After all, are not children taught by Halloween to beg? Isn't it an attempt to get something for nothing? And what is "trick or treat" but extortion? "Give me something – or else!"

Impressionable minds cannot fail to see how richly it pays off, and then may expect the same to continue in the days and weeks that follow.

Still, every year millions of people refuse to let these negative aspects stand in the way of their Halloween fun and frolic. Children and adults alike adorn themselves with bizarre and frightening costumes and engage in a hectic night of partying, merrymaking and general mayhem.

But just how did these strange goings-on get started anyway?

The origin of Halloween

It really is no secret that Halloween has been around for thousands of years. Centuries before the birth of Christ, ancient Druids performed mystical rites and ceremonies in honor of the dead on their “New Year’s Eve” (October 31).

History books and encyclopedias openly describe this pagan origin. Even newspapers, as an item of curiosity, print articles at Halloween time explaining the pagan beginnings and their parallels to today’s customs.

The point is, Halloween is pagan.

Still, most people, particularly those who are parents, will justify Halloween’s observance by saying, in effect, something like this: “So what? So it was started by pagans. We aren’t thinking about pagan gods today. We’re just having fun. And it’s great for the children. What difference does it make where it came from?”

Well, it doesn’t make any difference unless...

Unless you care about what God says on the subject! Because if you accept the teaching of Jesus Christ and true Christianity, then it does make a great deal of difference. God’s Word, the Bible, as we shall see, has a great deal to say about why you should *not* be involved with customs such as those centering on Halloween.

Let’s be honest. One only has to look at Halloween costumes and decorations to see that they celebrate death, devils, witches and darkness. True Christianity stands for the exact opposite of these things! Christians are supposed to conduct themselves in a way that exemplifies light and life, not darkness and death.

The diametric contradiction between these two approaches is noted by Ralph Linton in *Halloween Through Twenty Centuries*: “Among all the festivals which we celebrate today, few have histories stranger than that of Halloween...it commemorates beings and rites with which the church has always been at war.” He then goes on to describe Halloween festivities as customs that were “once forbidden to good Christians.”

Somewhere along the line, these alien pagan customs worked their way into what the world considers Christianity.

G.W. Douglas discloses in *The American Book of Days* the shocking fact that “the mystic rites and ceremonies with which Halloween was originally observed had their origin among the Druids centuries before the dawn of the Christian era in the celebration on the eve of the festival of Samhain [the lord of the dead – Satan]... The early [medieval] Christian church adopted the eve and the day following and gave new names to them, as it did with many other Christian observances.”

Writer Dorothy Wood of the *Wichita Beacon* stated the case clearly: “This ancient night of revelry for the devil and his cohorts has degenerated... It’s the Christians who are to blame. For centuries, they’ve been grabbing off all the old heathen festivals. The midwinter feast with its greens and feasting and drinking has become Christmas. The wild spring festival has become Easter, and the worshipers of Christ boldly use the old pagan symbols of fertility – chicks and rabbits and eggs. Now they’ve completely taken over Halloween.”

God does not look at this lightly. He does not want His people to borrow pagan customs (Deuteronomy 12:29-31) with their inevitable detriment to the development of spiritual character. He plainly and directly commanded through the prophet Jeremiah, “learn not the way of the heathen” (Jeremiah 10:2, Authorized Version).

Through Moses, God condemned as abominable all that has to do with witchcraft, necromancy (black magic) and other demonic works of darkness (Deuteronomy 18:9-12).

In view of this biblical condemnation, we should want to **stay as far away as possible from whatever falls into these categories**. Instead, all across the land, children – and adults – dress as witches, demons and other manifestations that honor the “lord of death” on his special night.

People do not seem to realize that Satan and his demons are the enemies of God, while Halloween purposefully honors Satan.

The apostle Paul summed up the proper attitude that true Christians should have and should teach to their children: “For you were once darkness [in the past – before becoming Christians], but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [not dressed as demons, witches, zombies and other beings of darkness] (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), proving what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them [by letting your light shine]. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret [let alone to participate in them]” (Ephesians 5:8-12).

Counterfeit days

Few seem to realize that Halloween and the other religious “Christian” holidays are actually counterfeits that have been subtly introduced to take the place of the Holy days God instituted. (For a complete explanation of the days God ordained, read our booklet “Pagan Holidays – or God’s Holy Days – Which?” on this website).

The Holy Days of God are listed in Leviticus 23. These are the days that were observed by Jesus, the apostles and the early New Testament Church. Shortly after the death of the apostles, however, the keeping of these days was discontinued by a developing great counterfeit religious system – a system that ultimately brought in its own “sacred” days adapted from heathen religions.

It seems that throughout history man has sought to replace that which God originally gave for man’s good with that which is inferior and a corruption of the truth. Halloween is a classic example of such a counterfeit.

Some of the feast days God established (see Leviticus 23:24, 27, 34) fall in the seventh month of the sacred calendar, at a period that varies slightly from year to year but centers on early October. Ancient Israel was ordered to observe these God-ordained days. But instead of keeping the feasts of God in the seventh month, King Jeroboam ordained his own feast one month later (1 Kings 1:27-33).

The counterfeit festival, in the middle of the eight month, was approximately equivalent time-wise to Halloween today!

A provable connection? No. But the point is, God rejected the inferior substitute that was made for something He had instituted – and rejected the whole nation because they had rejected Him.

There is a lesson in that for us!

What could be better – for children and adults, too – than restoring the observance of God’s Holy Days according to His instructions? Better than Halloween, Christmas, Easter or any of the other humanly devised false substitutes.

During the early part of October, while commercial advertisements begin to prepare people for yet another Halloween, the members of the Church of God observe the Feast of Tabernacles, one of God’s festivals. They enjoy themselves in good, clean fun at some of the most beautiful locations on earth, while rejoicing in light and truth, learning how to give and share – the exact opposite of the “get” mentality of death-oriented Halloween observance – and preparing themselves for the soon-coming world tomorrow.

Once a person properly keeps the days God has commanded, he realizes what cheap, inferior, meaningless substitutes are the religious holidays of the world. If you haven’t yet experienced them, you’re really shortchanging yourself and your children. You’re missing something inestimably good!

GUY FAWKES DAY

In Great Britain, Guy Fawkes Day is celebrated every November 5.

This holiday has its origins in a religious conflict involving the banishment of Roman Catholic priests from England. In protest, several laymen plotted to blow up the Houses of Parliament when King James I was to open the new session.

Nearly 40 barrels of gunpowder were prepared and secreted in a cellar underneath the Houses of Parliament. Authorities discovered the plot and the conspirators were arrested and executed.

Guy Fawkes – an apparent ringleader – had been chosen to set off the ill-fated explosion, hence the use of his name.

Guy Fawkes Day in England is reminiscent of Halloween celebrations. Marguerite Ickis tells us, “Guy Fawkes Day has many customs in common with a Halloween celebration in the United states” (*Book of Festivals and Holidays World Over*, page 120).

Young people in England observe this holiday somewhat like Americans observe Halloween. *The Book of Days* tells us:

“English juveniles still regard the 5th of November as one of the most joyous days of the year. The universal mode of observance through all parts of England is the dressing up of a scarecrow figure, in such cast-habiliments as can be procured (the headpiece, generally a paper cap painted and knotted with paper strips in imitation of ribbons), parading it in a chair through the streets and at nightfall burning it with great solemnity in a hug bonfire... The procession visits the different houses in the neighborhood... One invariable custom is always maintained – that of soliciting money from the passerby, in the formula, ‘Pray remember Guy!’ ‘Please to remember Guy!’ or ‘Please to remember the bonfire!’ [The common expression now is “Penney for the Guy”]” (pages 549-550).

In times past, Guy Fawkes Day was celebrated by many of the adult generation. “In the old days the festival was celebrated heartily with bonfires and parades of masqueraders, who carried aloft ‘popes’ or ‘guys’ of straw” (Dorothy Gladys Spicer, *The Book of Festivals*, page 14).

But as Marguerite Ickis explains: “Today Guy Fawkes Day is mainly a holiday for children, who observe it by dressing up in funny costumes, having parades, lighting firecrackers and making straw dummies of Guy Fawkes” (*Book of Festivals and Holiday World Over*, page 120).

Like Halloween, Guy Fawkes Day has its religious overtones. *The Book of Days* informs us: “Till 1859, a special service for the 5th of November formed part of the ritual of the English Book of Common Prayer; but by special ordinance of the Queen in Council, this service ... has been abolished” (page 549).

Guy Fawkes Day, like Halloween and many other days observed the world over, has no biblical basis as a religious holiday.