

Halloween

The Most Un-Christian Holiday

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Every year it seems we come home from the Feast exhilarated and rejuvenated from our eight days of both physical and spiritual fulfillment. Yet in the back of our minds we experience a feeling of dread, or at least a feeling of resignation.

You may think that this feeling comes because we know that we have to experience one more year of this world before we can all come back together again in one place. Surely that's only one part of it. The other part of this illusive dreadful feeling—this feeling of unease—is that we must begin to endure another holiday season from Halloween to New Year's Day, and even beyond.

It used to be that we had a little bit of a break between the Feast of Tabernacles and the annoyances of the Christmas season. We had time to prepare ourselves for it, to brace ourselves against the onslaught of incessant "Jingle Bells" and "Silent Night," which is the worst one. Maybe "The Little Drummer Boy" is even worse than that. It gets into your head and you can never get it out. It takes until at least March until you are normal again.

There is not only that, but there are constant advertisements on the radio, on billboards, and in magazines. It is everywhere. It is in movies that come out around that time. There are decorations and well-wishers from the checker at the grocery store who says "Merry Christmas," and you wonder how are you quite supposed to answer that wish of good cheer. Manger scenes and everything like that are there.

In the past we could ignore Halloween, enjoy Thanksgiving, and then worry about Christmas and New Year's, but not anymore. Lately people are making quite a bit out of Halloween. Decorations and that sort of thing have been going up earlier and earlier every year.

For instance, Hallmark, the greeting card company—the one who steals all of our money when we want to say something nice to someone else far away—recently developed a line of Halloween and Thanksgiving décor. Not only that, but other items and cards. You go into a Hallmark store and they just deluge you with gifts and things that they design for these times of the year.

I want to quote here from the San Jose Mercury News, on October 23, 1998 about this line of Halloween and Thanksgiving décor items. "The underlying marketing strategy is to use Halloween as the kick-off of our rolling holiday season that has an autumnal mood filled with images of Americana. The National Retail Federation projects that, industry-wide, 50 million Halloween cards will be sold this year."

That is about seventy-five cents, or \$2.25 or whatever, per card, unless you go to Win-Dixie where you can get them for 20% off every day. (That's a local joke for those people around here.)

Somewhere between 65% to 70% of adults plan to participate in Halloween activities this year, including wearing a costume. In 1996, 78% of households distributed treats to an average of 37 "trick or treaters," and 58% of children have caught adults stealing their candy. At least one-third of children hide their candy from others, because they found adults stealing their candy. And sadly, despite their best intentions, 7% of children eat all their candy on the first night.

And there's more! As a party day, Halloween is third behind Christmas, obviously, and Super Bowl Sunday. And bottlers—people who sell alcoholic beverages mainly, and also sell soft drinks—sell more beer around Halloween than around Saint Patrick's Day when the beer flows like water. (This particular stat is about beer.)

As far as retail sales go, Halloween is second only to Christmas. I bet you did not know that, did you? This year a conservative estimate is that Americans will spend \$3 billion on Halloween items and activities. Today I heard an updated stat on that which said it was \$3.3 billion. As much as \$1.8 billion of this \$3 billion goes to buy candy, and \$1 billion is spent on costumes. All the other decorations and things make up the other hundreds of millions of dollars. The average household will spend an average of \$81 a piece on Halloween. Most of this is spent on candy and decorations. I heard that up to \$50 a house will be spent on decorations alone.

Because today is October 31—Halloween, which is also called All Hallows Eve, or All Saints Eve—I thought I would speak on Halloween, this witches sabbath, which defiles God's holy Sabbath, which is today. This would be "meat in due season" if we refresh ourselves on why Christians should not observe this most un-Christian of holidays.

We all recognize the greed, the envy, the keeping up with the Joneses, and the rank consumerism that infests each worldly holiday. It is almost impossible to miss because it is blared at us all the time. In Halloween, however, it is combined with out-and-out paganism, spiritism, vandalism, hedonism, and demonism, in an eerie, spooky, and playfully horrific mix. It is a mix that human nature takes great pleasure in. It appeals to human nature for some reason, and a growing number of people say that it is their favorite holiday of the year. It is catching up with Christmas in a big way.

Before we go into Halloween's origin, let us start in the Bible in Jeremiah 10 to lay the groundwork of a few principles that we need going in here. We'll read the first five verses of Jeremiah 10. The context of this is idolatry, and what the heathen do.

Jeremiah 10:1 Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel.

This is interesting, because much of the origins of our Halloween come from the Celtic people, which as we know are Israelites.

Jeremiah 10:2-5 Thus says the LORD: Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them, for the customs of the people are futile [vanity, vain, worthless]; For one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; They fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple.

They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; They must be carried because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor can they do any good.

Notice that he says, "Don't learn the way of the Gentiles." The old King James, I believe, has the word "heathen" there. "Don't learn the way of the heathen." This is the word gowy, or gowyan, and it is rightly translated Gentile. It is the people or the nations around who do not have the revelation of God. The Israelites were different from all the gowyan, because they had God's revelation of Himself, and God's law. These people have invented their own ways of worship, because they have not had God's revelation.

Jeremiah says that these customs that they have invented to fill this void of the need to worship, I guess you would say, are futile, vain, meaningless. That is what that word futile means—a breath, a vapor, like in Ecclesiastes when Solomon says, "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity." It is the same word. It is but a breath. It is nothing. It has no meaning. It has nothing good in it.

This is the first reason why we should not keep Halloween. It adds nothing good to our character. It is simply a waste. It is worthless.

Please go back to Deuteronomy 12: 29-32 and we will pick up a second reason. This is what God said to Israel just before they were going to go in and take the land.

Deuteronomy 12: 29-32 When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise. You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

The second reason why we need to avoid Halloween like the plague is that God Himself calls it an abomination. It is something He hates. It is one of the customs of those nations that Israel has adopted. If you strip everything away from it, it is idolatrous false worship. As much as people say that they are not worshipping anything on it—when you strip away all the mask, all the veneer of fun, the feasting—it is really a type of idolatry. God never told us to do it. He adds right at the end, "Don't do anything that I haven't told you to do. Don't add to it. Don't take away from it. I've told you the way that I want to be worshipped, and it is not the way that the heathen have chosen."

Notice also in the first part of verse 30 He says, "Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them." A snare is a trap designed to catch an unwary animal. The trap itself is hidden, like under some pine straw, or there is a hole where the trap is, and it is covered over so that an animal would drop into it and be trapped. There could be some type of lure or trick involved in the trap, that if the unwary person goes after the lure, he is caught. The gate comes

down, a hook comes out, the spring closes on a limb, and traps them.

What God is saying here is that heathen or ungodly practices—customs, ways of worship, tradition, whatever—usually have some or many characteristics that appeal to us. That is the lure. There is an appeal somewhere to human nature, and we get caught up in them before we are aware of it. We get sucked in. We do not see the trap, and we fall into the pit. We do not see that when we reach for the goodie, the spring is going to close on our wrist. So God says we are to watch out for the hidden dangers and the appealing entrapments that are designed right into the holidays. We have to keep this in mind.

Down a little bit further, in verse 30, He says, "Do not inquire after their gods." We could even say, "Don't inquire after their practices, and how they worship." "Inquire" here has the sense of "to endeavor to know more, so as to have a deeper understanding or a relationship." It is a search that we make so that we understand better.

It can be used positively. The verse in Amos 5 that says "Seek the Lord"—it is the same word. In Isaiah 55: 6 it also says "Seek you the Lord while He may be found." That is the same type of inquiry. It is a turning back and trying to follow.

It can be used negatively—inquiring after, let us say a medium, to have some sort of divination done, or inquiring, like it says here, how people practice their false beliefs. In effect, here God is saying that ignorance is bliss when it comes to moral and spiritual matters of other people that are not following the revelation of God. Making in-depth studies into this world's way may well draw us into the trap, so He says, "Don't even try to inquire about what they're like, and how they do things, because it is far better to leave the world's ways alone and be ignorant of them."

This is kind of interesting, because it is diametrically opposite to the modern notion that one should look at all the alternatives and judge them on their merit. You hear people talk about this all the time. "Well, if you just see my side, and you'll see somebody else's side, you'll be able to judge it on its merit." You would do that if there was a decision to be made, or you had to make a judgment between two people.

When it comes to moral, ethical, spiritual matters, it is better not to even know about anything other than God's way of life. It is better to know just the one right way to do it. That really keeps the confusion out of it. It helps to keep our minds pure and untouched by sin and evil. It really reduces the sense of "missing out" that some people have. I know a lot of second-generation Christians think they have missed out on this world's pleasures because they have been in the church. They have not missed a thing. God says it is far better not to ever get into those things.

Let us check Titus 1 for a moment and see what Paul said to Titus about this sort of thing. He is talking about some of the Jews who had come into the church there on Crete where Titus was the pastor. They had been telling the people in the church some very untrue things. They were mostly trying to draw them back into Judaism, which in itself is a mixture of paganism and God's ways by this time.

Titus 1:10-16 For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert

whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, [That is the way we're trying to become. If we can keep from being defiled, so much the better.] but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; [They have been damaged. They're cynical. They see things from a very twisted point of view.] but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

When I was doing research on the Internet about Halloween, I did a simple search on Alta Vista, and I got nearly half a million hits on just the word Halloween. That does not mean there are that many web pages out there on it, but Halloween is a big topic. So many of them say that Halloween is a "Christian" holiday. I just thought of this: They profess to know God, but in their works they deny Him, and the things that they do are abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work, just as this verse said.

I just wanted to use this verse to shore up this idea that if you have not become involved in the ways of this world, leave them alone. Do not get involved in them at all. Do not even inquire after those practices. Just trust what God says. I know that is hard for human nature to do, because we have just got to know. There is the old commercial about the National Inquirer—"We've just got to know." It is better if we do not know the things that are evil, the things that God disapproves of that He calls abominable and detestable.

Unfortunately, though, very few of us are in that perfect position of purity. Most of us have been touched one way or another by this world. We cannot seem to escape the knowledge of Halloween in a culture that blasts it at us so much, so loudly, and incessantly.

Since we know of it already, and so many of us have practiced it in our lives before conversion, it is a good idea to review why we rejected it in the first place. I am now going to give you the origins of Halloween, just so we know from whence it came. Many cultures have a form of Halloween in their tradition. It seems to be something that all the peoples of this world desire—a kind of night or time period where things are turned upside down, and the dead take on more importance than the living.

The holidays, or feasts, may vary from place to place. They might fall on different days. They might have different customs, but the common denominator in all of them is that they have set aside time to honor or remember the dead, or the unseen spirits.

Mexico has its "Day of the Dead" where they do very many things similar to our Halloween. They give out little candies in the shape of skeletons. They go to graveyards and try to commune with the dead somehow. They leave them food and things like that.

In Japan there is a similar type of thing where they honor their ancestors. Different African tribes have Halloweenish type of days where they honor the unseen spirits. They ward off the

evil spirits. They try to placate the good spirits. There are many other places. It is all over the world. In Europe it is in Germany, Scandinavia, Spain, and Italy. They all seem to have some Halloween-type of holiday.

Halloween in English-speaking countries derives primarily from the Celtic festival of Samhain. It is pronounced "sow-in," because in Gaelic the diphthong "MH" is pronounced like a "W."

Samhain was a kind of New Year's celebration and harvest festival all rolled up into one. It was held on the three days around November 1. November 1 was Samhain, but October 31st and the 2nd of November were all rolled up into that holiday.

The Celts believed that these days of transition from the old year to the new year were special. They were special because they felt that the boundary between the physical world and the spiritual world relaxed or lifted. The veil was lifted between the two worlds, allowing spirits to cross over into our world more easily. This idea of course terrifies superstitious people, that among us could walk all the departed spirits of days gone by, but especially those who died in the past year because people thought these spirits wanted to come back. So they had to appease them somehow, and make them go into the spirit world and stay there.

To appease them, the Celts put out food and treats so that when these spirits came walking by their house they would pass on. They would eat the treats or whatever, and they would say, "These are good guys. Let's go on to the next guy who doesn't have treats out in his yard." They thought that if they did not appease the spirits, these spirits would play tricks on them, things like ghosts would do, whatever that is. I do not know. The people thought that the spirits would put curses on them, or on the whole village. Whole villages got into the act to make sure that their upcoming year was a good one by driving away the evil spirits.

Others would hold seances. They would conduct other kinds of divination, however divination was done, so that they could contact their dead ancestors. Remember that the veil was much looser at the time, so if they wanted to go the other way, that instead of the dead spirits coming back into the physical world, they felt if they used divination, they could cross over and contact their dead spirits themselves. So they would go both ways.

If they could do this somehow, one way or another, by use of some sort of incantation, or potion, or meditation, that they would then receive guidance and inspiration. Of course the Druids would do this, and the Bards would want inspiration from the other world so that their poetry and all that would be that much the better.

Another interesting thing about this transition time—these three days of Samhain—was that it was considered to be "no time." What I mean by that is since this three-day period really was not part of the old year, and it really was not part of the new year, then it was a time unto itself. They called it "no time." Thus they felt (it became a tradition) that the strictures, the order, the rule by which people lived, were held in abeyance for those three days, and people pretty much did anything they pleased.

All the laws were stopped. All the normal order in society—let us say the chief versus the servant—would get turned all upside down, and the servant could run the town for those three days because the chief was not himself. He would go do something else wild and crazy, because

this is "no time."

What you had then was men dressed as women, and women dressed as men. People took on different personas. They put on disguises and acted like whatever they thought was fun. They took gates off pastures and let the domesticated animals roam free, because they were not held to the law of being domesticated animals. They were allowed to do whatever they wanted to do.

They would take doors off houses. They would climb in windows instead of doors, because things were different during these three days. It sounds weird to us. They did not do any work. It was generally a time of total abandon. It was a time for revelry, drinking, eating, taking dares, disguising oneself and acting like somebody else. In a word, it was chaos. It was chaos time—those three days.

Then Roman Catholicism arrived on the scene and converted the pagans. Now it also had a day for the departed saints, but it fell on May 13—All Saints Day. The pagans were told that this is when they should honor the departed saints, May 13. But these newly converted pagans held on to their rite of the celebration of Samhain, because it was a whole lot more fun than going to church and praying for those hallowed saints of yesteryear. They could not do anything that was fun. Say a few "Hail Marys" I guess, and that was about the extent of it.

To hold them in the fold, Pope Gregory IV, in 835, officially authorized All Saints Day to be moved to November the 1st, when the pagans were celebrating Samhain. He did that specifically to coincide with Samhain. Thus he allowed the pagans to keep their old customs as long as they put a gloss of Christianity on them, that they were doing all these riotous things in the name of Christ, and that they were supposedly doing these things in honor of all the saints who have gone on before. So since All Saints Day began the evening before, this celebration was no longer called Samhain, but All Hallowed Eve, or Halloween. That was more than ten centuries ago. Since then Halloween has evolved into its present form in which nothing remotely Christian has stuck in it. It is known for all its pre-Christian Celtic practices, believe it or not, recognition of the spirit world in form of fairies, witches, ogres, goblins, evil spirits, demons, ghouls, ghosts, vampires, and other spirits that you will probably see parading up and down your street today are recognized.

"Trick or treating," which is simply a form of extortion. Divination and seances—this is supposed to be the time when the spirit world is closest, and so people decide if they want to contact somebody, it is best to do it on Halloween.

There is hooliganism. Remember that in Detroit for many years, maybe even now, they have what they call "hell night." The young people in Detroit pretty much trash the place, set fires. Hooliganism and vandalism.

There are drinking parties. Remember I said this is the big time for drinking. More beer is sold on Halloween than on Saint Patrick's Day. Total chaos again.

The Celtic's feast of Samhain still survives in our Halloween. It does not have a shred of Christianity in it. We have just reverted back to our old Celtic practices.

With all that, where do I start in disproving all of this? There is still much obviously wrong, that I could spend all day just going from verse to verse saying, "Look, God says this isn't right, and

this is evil, and this is abominable, and this is detestable," because it is all plainly there in the Bible.

The only thing we are going to get to is the "spiritism" of Halloween. Let us start in Deuteronomy 18: 9. This is only six chapters after He said pretty much the same things to Israel before. Remember, we went to Deuteronomy 12. Six chapters later He repeats Himself, so it must have been something that the Israelites tended to want to do.

Deuteronomy 18:9-14 When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations [the detestable acts] of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead [a necromancer]. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless [perfect] before the LORD your God, for these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.

This is quite a list—all the soothsayers, sorcerers, omen interpreters, spiritists, mediums, necromancers. As I said, you will probably see some of them in your neighborhood as people pretend to be these things. He calls these abominations, or detestable things, things that He hates. What He says here is very interesting. He says they are a reason why He is sending Israel in to dispossess these people. These practices cause ultimately dispossession. They cause destruction in the end, and these people have to be given the heave-ho from the land. We will see that in Leviticus 18: 24-30. This comes at the end of a section on sexual practices, but the principle holds.

Leviticus 18:24 Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.

The situation is the same. God says He is casting these nations out before Israel, and He is warning Israel not to make the same mistake.

Leviticus 18:25 For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.

This is a judgment from God. He is punishing these people for their wicked practices, and the land itself helps God in getting rid of them.

Leviticus 18:26-30 You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who sojourns among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them

shall be cut off from among their people. [They will be killed.] Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God.

This is scary, is it not? But people do these detestable things, which in Deuteronomy 18 include spiritism, occultism, necromancing, all that type of stuff. The land is defiled. Not just the people are defiled, but the land itself becomes defiled, and it reacts and throws the inhabitants out by means of natural disasters, unproductiveness, famine, disease, war, and things of that nature. The land simply has it up to here, and throws the people out.

God's creation all works together. It's all based on living the righteous way of God. The land can only take so much before God uses it to punish the nation that does these things.

Leviticus 19:31a Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them.

This is the second time it says that. Remember, in Deuteronomy 12 it says do not even inquire after them. Here it says, "Do not seek after them."

Leviticus 19:31b Do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

This is interesting because these three Scriptures that I am going to go to all occur within what is called "the holiness code." The holiness code begins in Leviticus 19:2, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." That is the holiness code. God wants us to be just as holy as He is, and so He gives us a code—the ordinances here—to help us to do that. I picked these Scriptures out of here because they have to do with this idea of holiness, and of course spiritism and occultism.

Leviticus 20:6-7 And the person who turns after mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God.

These are getting very interesting, and very serious. First we find that it is defiling. Then we find out that God compares it to prostitution.

Leviticus 20:26-27 And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples [the goyim], that you should be Mine. [They are a different people and they need to be holy, like God.] A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.

Notice within the holiness code that spiritism and consulting with mediums is relegated to the same level of badness, of evil, as fornication and prostitution. In the one verse there in Leviticus 19, it is right between keeping the Sabbath and honoring the elderly. In chapter 20, it comes

right after idolatry.

It is very interesting the way these things work in the Bible—the way God inspired them to be set in here. This returns us to the notion of purity. Remember we talked about that before when we went to Titus 1, "To the pure, all things are pure." The spiritism defiles. The occultism of Halloween defiles. It makes us impure. Like I said, God calls it prostitution, which is the physical counterpart to spiritual prostitution—idolatry .

It seems to me that what we are seeing here is that abominable sexual practices are to God the same as witchcraft and demonism. One is physical, and the other is spiritual. Remember, He says directly that whoever turns after mediums and familiar spirits to prostitute himself with them, that this spiritism, which is nothing more than idolatry, is spiritual prostitution.

Which is worse—the physical prostitution, or the spiritual prostitution? Both defile the purity God wants in our flesh and in our spirit. I bet you thought we never looked at spiritism in quite that way. God did. He put it here in the Bible.

Go back to Exodus 22:16-20 and let us see that it is in