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Should Halloween Make Us Happy?

Romans 1:25: (NASB) *For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*



There are some things that most everyone has in common. One of those things is our collective desire to celebrate. Granted, what we celebrate and the ways that we choose to celebrate are as varied as the seasons, but the desire to celebrate is a common thread. Today is one of those days where lots of people celebrate. It is Halloween and, believe it or not, it is not only the second most commercialized holiday in America, only being outspent by Christmas, half of all homes in America are decorated for the occasion. What is Halloween anyway? Where did it come from and what is the secret of its popularity? Stay with us as we examine some history, some tradition and the Bible!

Our only question for consideration:

What ingredients are in the mix that makes Halloween?

Unless otherwise indicated, the sound bites played today are from The History Channel documentary “*The Haunted History of Halloween*,” 1997

The Origin of Halloween

What elements do we notice play a major role?

- *The earth*
- *The seasons*
- *People*

Interestingly, we have a scripture dealing with all three of these things: Psalms 104:19-24: God placed these in an orderly fashion.

(Source: The Ancient Celtic Fire Festivals www.neopagan.net)

There appear to have been four major holy days celebrated by the Paleopagan Druids, possibly throughout the Celtic territories:.... These four major holy days have been referred to as “fire festivals”...Whether in Ireland or India, among the Germans or the Hittites, sacred fires were apparently kindled by the Indo-European Paleopagans on every important religious occasion....

Samhain or “Samhuinn” is pronounced “sow-” (as in female pig) “-en” (with the neutral vowel sound) — not “Sam Hain”... is often said to have been the most important of the fire festivals, because (according to most Celtic scholars) it may have marked the Celtic New Year....

Being “between” seasons or years, Samhain was (and is) considered a very magical time, when the dead walk among the living and the veils between past, present and future may be lifted in prophecy and divination.

The Importance of the Night

What elements do we notice play a major role?

- *The Unknown*
- *The Hereafter*

These are legitimate concerns, especially in a society living off of the earth and a victim of the seasons.

Daniel 2:19-22: Are we afraid of the dark? Note, God knows what is in the darkness and is in control. Our level of fear ought to be different, because we have far less unknown about God’s design. From the early Celtic perspective, there was little sense of comfort because there was so much unknown. Traditions were developed as a result of the darkness, the unknown, the seasons, and the hereafter.



Sweets to Appease Fear of the Dead

(Source: www.religioustolerance.org)

Samhain was a fire festival. Sacred bonfires were lit on the tops of hills in honor of the gods. The townspeople would take an ember from the bonfire to their home and re-light the fire in their family hearth. The ember would usually be carried in a holder - often a turnip or gourd. They felt nervous about walking home in the dark; they were afraid of evil spirits. So they dressed up in costumes and carved scary faces in their ember holders. They hoped that the spirits would be frightened and not bother them....

Wiccans and some other Neopagans base their religious faith on the religion of the Celts. They continue to celebrate Samhain today.

Appeasing the gods with Sacrifices

- *The veil between this life and the afterlife was thinnest at this time of year, so those that died during the past year could come back. It was a scary time.*
- *The Celts believed that the gods controlled the sun.*
- *They built fires to honor the gods and pray for the return of the sun.*
- *Blood (animal) sacrifices were offered to thank the earth for her bounty.*

God IS in control:

Genesis 3:19-21: God proclaims justice must be done because of sin. Where do you suppose those skins came from? The practice of sacrifices offered to God was an ever present practice from the very beginning of civilization: Genesis 4:2-4 Genesis 8:18-22: So, the very basic seeds of what was done in the Pagan Celtic societies can be traced back to the history recorded in the Bible - however, there is a vast difference between those seeds and the path that the majority of humanity took, which lead them away from God.

Exodus 34:12-17: The clear message: Stay away from idolatry!

Deuteronomy 12:2-3So, what is this **Asherim**?

(Source: **From Outside the Camp, Volume 1, No. 4**)

...The Old Testament mentions a pagan goddess from which the festival of Easter is derived. This goddess was the goddess of fertility and sexual lust, known as Ashtaroth or Ashtoreth...Each spring, the pagans would set up phallic poles called Asherahs under trees on high hills and celebrate their fertility festival with unbridled sexual perversion. This is how the May Pole originated.



Observations about the Pagan origins of Halloween:

They were founded in very real concerns about life, specifically -

- This was at the end of the Harvest and thanksgiving for it;
- The coming cold winter;
- The coming dark days; and
- The uncertainty of life, death and the hereafter.

These real concerns were expressed through ritual and celebration towards multiple gods. Right concerns - wrong execution! Where did these gods and this philosophy originate?

Ancient Roman Celebration of Pomona

Romans thanked the god Pomona for the harvest and would lay out apples and nuts. Yet another form of Pagan tradition of multiple gods.

Where and how did Paganism start? Isaiah 14:12-14: Satan's focus was on his desire to be God. He was the first created being to stop worshipping the Creator.

Genesis 1:26: Man, created not as God, but in His image - that of free choice and dominion.
Genesis 3:1-6




(Source: ds.dial.pipex.com/robotics1/pagan.htm “What Is Paganism”)

1. Paganism is a religion of nature, in other words Pagans revere Nature. Pagans see the divine as imminent in the whole of life and the universe; in every tree, plant, animal and object, man and woman and in the dark side of life as much as in the light. Pagans live their lives attuned to the cycles of Nature, the seasons, life and death.

2. Unlike the patriarchal religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism) the divine is female as well as male and therefore there is a Goddess as well as a God. These deities are within us as well as without us (imminent); they *are* us....

3. The Goddess represents all that is female and the God represents all that is male. But because nature is seen as female, the Goddess has a wider meaning. Often called Mother Earth or Gaia, she is seen as the creatrix and sustainer of life, the mother of us all, which makes all the creatures on the planet our siblings.

Divining the Future through their Sacrifices

 *Druids read burnt entrails of sacrifices like tea leaves, divining who would die and prosper in the coming year. This was the best night of the year for predicting the future.*

2 Chronicles 33:1-6: We can see that Paganism and its practices held a very obvious attraction of power, as there is record of a number of Kings of Israel - Saul, Manasseh and even the (formerly) wise Solomon all obliterated the sanctity of worshiping God by allowing Paganism a foothold in their nation.

Pomona /Samhain Combine and Christianity enters

Romans conquered Europe and merge traditions of honoring the dead and the harvest.

Mark 12:28-34: Here lies the principle laid out in the Old Testament regarding our clinging to God and HIS Ways...God first and from the heart! The sacrifices were for the purpose of focusing the minds of the people for good.

Early Christianity's Belief and Rise to Power

- *First century Christianity tried to conquer everything non-Christian.*
- *Christianity had the conviction that all the spirits that others worship are demonic beings.*
- *The spirit of the waterfall, the stars, the air and natural forces of the universe - all are hostile and evil.*

True early Christianity did not believe the force of nature itself was demonic - it was the worship of the created rather than the Creator that was wrong.



This was a constant battle throughout the ages and will apply to both Pagans and believers.

Micah 5:14: (NAS) *I will root out your Asherim from among you and destroy your cities. (also see verses 12 and 13)*



If we are with the Lord, we do not have to fear the darkness.

Micah 7:8: (NAS) *...Though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me.*

As a template, here is how the Apostle Paul dealt with overwhelming Paganism: Acts 17:22-31: What a combination of reason, kindness, instruction and firmness! The apostle Paul acknowledged they were religious, explained there were things they didn't know that he could help with based on reasonability and the need to change. Paul looked for a bridge without compromising the truth of God's word. Constantine (and Pope Gregory later) watered down the truth by interweaving it with Pagan faith. They were to keep it pure. Now, 240 or so years later:

Constantine/Conversion and Urgency to Save Pagans





The Pagan Emperor of Rome, Constantine, converted to Christianity. Missionaries found that it was so difficult to convert Pagans that it was easier to give them a Christian twist and sanctify the cultural influences in some way, rather than wipe them out.

Romans 1:18-25: The opportunity to know God and worship Him was available, but people chose to worship their own idols and in many cases, worship their own selves.



Differences between Constantine's Christianity and earlier Christianity:

- Paul looked for opportunity...
...Constantine ordered conversion
- Paul reasoned with Jesus as his basis...
...Constantine mandated by authority of government
- Paul lead them away from Paganism...
...Constantine pressed them towards Christianity

Around 600 AD (250 or so years later), Pope Gregory decided to meet Paganism halfway with a concrete plan: Rather than destroy the object of Pagan worship, it would be consecrated to Christ, and he would encourage the Pagans to keep meeting in the same place but bend their beliefs towards Christianity.

This was opposite of the instruction to keep separate and destroy the idols to avoid corruption.
2 Corinthians 6:14-17

Now, 100 plus years later:



8th Century, Pope Gregory III and All Saints Day

- *Now challenging Samhain directly trying to turn it into a day of the Church.*
- *November 1st proclaimed as "All Saints Day," to honor all Christian saints who did not already have a day of their own.*
- *All Hallows (Saints) Day, became the Eve of All Hallows/All Hallows Evening, from this came the contemporary word "Halloween."*

1 Peter 1:14-16

- *The first step was now in place to absorb Samhain, but still many Pagans carried on with the old beliefs and practices.*

The result was that they diluted Christian thinking but without gaining much.

1 Peter 2:9-12: Keep separated! Keep your behavior pure.

Our purpose here was to begin to understand the origin of Halloween and the pathway it took; understand the (failed) attempts by the church to bring Pagans into the fold; the only real accomplishment was the dilution of something more sacred. Make a choice based on knowing. Whatever we do, be God-honoring!

*So should Halloween make us happy?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Vicki!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*