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Trick or Treat - Really?

Daniel 2:22: (NASB) *It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.*



So, it is fall and once again we are all gearing up for the big holiday. You know the one - the holiday where kids rule and get stuff, where everyone suddenly seems to be in a giving mood, and for one night anyway, freely gives to anyone who passes by. It's the holiday where adults can be more like children and all seem to be willing to step out of their normal roles. Yes, it is that jolly holiday called Halloween! You know, the night when darkness, death and horror are center stage and evil is king! Okay, so, which is it? Is Halloween a good holiday or a bad one? What should we do with it?

(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.

 **Permeable veil, History Channel, *The Real Story of Halloween (2010)***

- *There may or may not be enough food to last through the winter. So, I think this is where this nightmarish quality possibly comes from. It is a bit of a warning. It is going to get cold and dark, gather together, come home, and don't send anybody out alone in the dark. But the Celts believe that there was even more to Samhain. What marks Samhain in this transition from light to dark was that time and space became permeable. Flexible. And so that spirits not only of the dead but of the past or of other realities could sort of wander into our reality and humans could wander out and get lost in the other world as well. The veil between life and death was at its thinnest and the living and the dead could mingle, and that's at the root of all the Halloween celebrations.*

Psalms 104:19-24

 **Traditions preserved, History Channel, *The Real Story of Halloween (2010)***

- *But how did these ancient traditions survive into our modern era? In Western culture they were preserved by, of all people, Christians. In a bizarre twist of history as Christianity spread, it had adopted and re-imagined Pagan folkways rather than try to stamp them out. This made it easier to convert Pagans.*

(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 immanent 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 (immanent); 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.

What elements do we notice play a major role? The earth, the seasons, people, the unknown, and the hereafter.

What role did Christianity play in the preservation of Halloween traditions?

Some foundational perspectives on post-Apostolic (after the Apostles died) Christianity:

- First century Christianity tried to conquer anything non-Christian;
- There was a conviction that all the spirits others worshiped were demonic beings;
- The spirit of the waterfall, the stars, the air and natural forces of the universe - these were all hostile and evil to Christianity.

Lemuria is Christianized, *History Channel, The Real Story of Halloween (2010)*

- *A key Pagan festival destined to get a Christian makeover was Lemuria, when celebrants placated the dead culminating on May 13th. Of all the different days that they have on the Roman calendar to celebrate the dead, it was the spookiest. So on the Lemuria, what are called the larvae, the ghost of the departed, would come up and haunt people. To quell the dead, Pagan Romans poured milk onto their graves or offered them little cakes. But the church co-opted Lemuria in 609 AD turning May 13th into All Saint's Day, a day to honor the most holy of dead Christians. Some decide this day was an attempt to Christianize a very Pagan festival and yet at the same time what it did was it kept a lot of the same themes going.*

If the people were going to focus on the dead, they would now at least focus on dead Christians, or "saints," even though the Bible never authorized praying to them or worshipping them.

(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... (sounds like today's Jack-o-Lantern!) Wiccans and some other Neopagans base their religious faith on the religion of the Celts. They continue to celebrate Samhain today.

Christianizing Samhain, *History Channel, The Real Story of Halloween (2010)*

- *The Christianized version of Lemuria was such a success that church leaders made a decision that eventually gave rise to Halloween. They moved All Saint's, or Hallow's Day, to November 1st to drain the life out of Pagan Samhain. And then to be safe the church went one step further, adding a holiday to honor not just saints but everyday Christians. November second became All Souls Day, a church-sanctioned holiday to honor the departed.*

Deuteronomy 12:1-4: KEY POINT: Destroy all vestiges of idolatry, don't absorb them or transform them!

Sixteenth century witch scare, *History Chanel, The Real Story of Halloween (2010)*

- *A witch panic in the 16th century helped establish the look of the character that for many epitomizes Halloween. Almost always women witches were seen as in league with Satan. Over time as more and more women were accused of witchcraft their practical kitchen tools acquired sinister dimensions and became model Halloween icons. Even something as mundane as a broom became an instrument of evil as well as handy transportation.*

Isaiah 14:12-14

The Pagan origins of Halloween 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. These were legitimate concerns but with the wrong execution!

The following gives us scriptural perspective for seasons, light and darkness: Daniel 2:19-22

17th century mask and destruction, *History Channel, The Real Story of Halloween (2010)*

- *This period saw the continued influence of one of Halloween's most colorful icons: the mask. It often appeared in tandem with another Halloween tradition: destructiveness. Rowdy beggars at All Hallow's Eve also guzzled their share of alcohol and demands for food and drink became more threatening. Masks helped hide their identities. These boundaries between the living and the dead, and between society's rules and anarchy were tested as day turned to night on All*

Hallow's Eve. Was this trick or treat? Not quite, but the resemblance was there. In 17th century England many of these customs survived only in rural areas, but they would soon turn up in the city streets thanks to a pro-Catholic terrorist named Guy Fawkes.

Whenever you get permission to darkness, it will be sure to grow. 2 Chronicles 33:1-6: We can see that Paganism and its practices hold a very obvious attraction. There is record of a number of kings of Israel as well as Saul, Manasseh and even the (formerly) wise Solomon who all obliterated the sanctity of worshiping God by allowing Paganism to have a foothold in their nation.

 **Guy Fawkes, History Channel, The Real Story of Halloween (2010)**

- *On November 5th, 1605, Fawkes tried to blow up London's House of Lords with thirty-six kegs of gunpowder. Guy Fawkes was tried, found guilty and hanged. The next year on the anniversary of the failed plot and every year that followed, the children of London mocked the memory of Guy Fawkes by causing chaos in the streets: parading, begging, and building bonfires. Today all over England this is called Guy Fawkes Day or Bonfire Night. Guy Fawkes Day fell on November 5th, which is very close to Halloween, so a lot of the energy that was focused on Halloween sort of shifted toward Guy Fawkes Day.*

Please refer to the Full Edition Bonus Material for more on Guy Fawkes.

Again notice the trend - wherever there is an allowance for unfettered behavior, things always become darker! The passage of time + entertaining idolatry = destruction of life! 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: (For hundreds of years, Christianity did the exact opposite - they sought to build upon a foundation of Pagan tradition rather than replace it with the sure foundation of Christ. They relabeled the Pagan traditions.

The depraved human mind is always eager to absorb those things, which are not healthy: Romans 1:28-30: All of these things are glorified...and marketable...on Halloween night! Here is an example of how to properly deal with Paganism: Acts 17:22-31: The Apostle Paul used a combination of reason, kindness, instruction and firmness. He acknowledged that they were religious, but then explained that there were things they did not know that he could help teach them and help them to change. He did not tell them it was okay to bring their baggage.

So, did the 20th century continue the predictable pattern of going from bad to worse?

 **1933 Black Halloween and diversions, History Channel, The Real Story of Halloween (2010)**

- *The Halloween of 1933 was actually labeled "Black Halloween" in a lot of newspapers because of all of the destruction that the cities incurred. The kids were no longer just doing innocent silly things; now they were smashing light bulbs, they were setting fire to buildings, they were smashing car windows. If Halloween were to survive it would have to change. Schools, police departments and other civic groups consciously and very actively promoted the idea of "taming" Halloween. And so they started to invent all sorts of things for kids to do, to divert them. Town-wide parties, costume contests, games, everything that you could think of to get the kids away from pulling tricks and into "the light."*

The pattern of godlessness ALWAYS produces the same results. We want to accelerate the light faster than the darkness! 2 Timothy 3:1-4

 **1966 Charlie Brown, History Channel, The Real Story of Halloween (2010)**

- *Halloween was becoming a pop-culture phenomenon, a national festival attended by millions, celebrating the joys of scavenging for mass-produced candy. Then in 1966 Halloween found a home where all pop culture ultimately goes, TV. Halloween's stature zoomed off the charts when America went trick-or-treating with Charlie Brown. The whole idea of the Great Pumpkin, of course, came from the comic strip when Sparky Schulz decided it would be very funny if one of the kids got his holidays mixed up. And that's how Linus ends up in the pumpkin patch every year. "Who are you writing to Linus?" "This is the time of year to write to The Great Pumpkin." Television and America's most popular comic strip had given Halloween its unofficial seal of approval. The holiday had never in its entire history been so mainstream, but Halloween-themed cartoons aimed at kids were one thing; a movie for adults with Halloween as its theme was another.*

So, society pulls back on the reins, only to open the door to a newer and more devious form of the darkness of Halloween night - "slasher" movies - the glorification of gore.

2 Timothy 3:5-9: ...this sounds kind of like Halloween - always developing and evolving but never bringing true goodness. It just brings an excuse for depravity. For more on Jannes and Jambres, please see the Rewind Bonus material.

 **Dressed to kill - adults, too, History Channel, The Real Story of Halloween (2010)**

- *Today, that trend has escalated to an obsession. Film franchises like, "A Nightmare on Elm Street," "Scream," and "Halloween" are inspiring growing legions of kids to dress to kill. To wear the mask of the killer, of the ghost, of the skeleton, it gives the kid a sense of a lot of power and also of safety, because the monster can't get you if you are the monster for that moment. Crazy killer masks are just a part of Halloween's evolving taste in costumes. The only rule now is that "There are no rules." Masks take their inspiration from pop culture, religion, politics, you name it, and a growing number of faces behind them belongs not to kids, but adults. Halloween has become a huge adult activity, and I don't think that was the case 50-60 years ago.*

There is another way: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Being different from everyone else is a costly way but consider the alternative: Paul advised Timothy to choose to rely on what he learned from childhood and not to compromise.

 **Adults only, History Channel, The Real Story of Halloween (2010)**

- *But haunted houses aren't the only places to find adults getting out on Halloween. In places like New York City's Greenwich Village Halloween Parade and West Hollywood's Halloween Carnival, the holiday takes a walk on the wild and naughty side. This sexually liberated Halloween sometimes crosses the line from adults to "adults only." If you look at the costumes that are sold to adults these days, the costumes for women are all kind of borderline prostitute costumes: The sexy nurse, the sexy maid, the sexy anything.*

Bottom line: Halloween began as a way to cope with the dark and unknown and transformed into a way to seek recklessness, thrills and the fulfillment of any desire. 1 John 2:15-17

 **Conclusion, History Channel, The Real Story of Halloween (2010)**

- *Halloween doesn't like to have its energies tamed. You know, the rebellious aspect is going to pop-up somewhere. Look close enough and you will see that Halloween is a showcase of everything the human race fears. Through the centuries, we've learned to live with what scares us most. And now, on October 31st, we turn our fears into fire.*

Halloween continues to numb us to the personal effects of sin and evil. This is not a good thing. So, what do we do? Choose the image to which you will confirm! 1 Peter 1:14-16. Know the sources of your belief! 1 John 1:5-8. You have been delivered. Live a delivered life! Colossian 1:12-14. Beware the subtlety of sin! 2 Corinthians 11:14-15. Seek holiness! 1 Peter 1:14-16. You have been chosen to live a life that is different than those around you. That life is supposed to be as an example to those around you of what Christ-likeness looks like - a light shining in the darkness. Remember, the fallen human mind will always find ways to go from bad to worse, while the enlightened spiritual mind will always find ways to rise above the fray! We need to be careful with our choices and seek holiness.

***So, trick or treat - really?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***