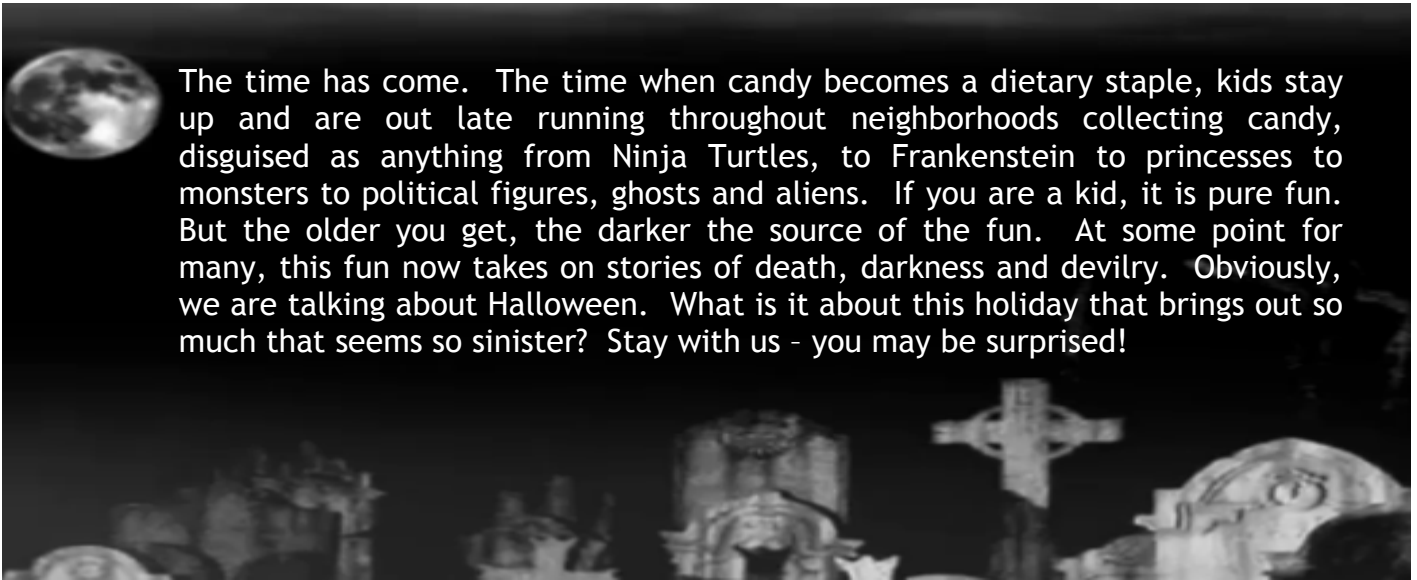




## Why Do We Celebrate Death and Witchcraft?

**1 John 1:5:** (NASB) *This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.*



The time has come. The time when candy becomes a dietary staple, kids stay up and are out late running throughout neighborhoods collecting candy, disguised as anything from Ninja Turtles, to Frankenstein to princesses to monsters to political figures, ghosts and aliens. If you are a kid, it is pure fun. But the older you get, the darker the source of the fun. At some point for many, this fun now takes on stories of death, darkness and devilry. Obviously, we are talking about Halloween. What is it about this holiday that brings out so much that seems so sinister? Stay with us - you may be surprised!

### Why was this particular night of this particular season chosen?

**Psalms 104:19-24:** (NASB) <sup>19</sup>*He made the moon for the seasons; The sun knows the place of its setting.* <sup>20</sup>*You appoint darkness and it becomes night, in which all the beasts of the forest prowl about.* <sup>21</sup>*The young lions roar after their prey and seek their food from God.* <sup>22</sup>*When the sun rises they withdraw and lie down in their dens.* <sup>23</sup>*Man goes forth to his work and to his labor until evening.* <sup>24</sup>*O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions.*



### Halloween History - The Origin, *National Geographic Channel*

- *On the rugged shores of the Irish Sea, the Celts formed an agricultural community. Like any people who lived off the earth, nature could be friend or foe. They were at the mercy of the elements. Winter was the scariest time of all!*

What elements do we notice play a major role?



Obviously we know that God put the seasons in place.

(Source: The Ancient Celtic Fire Festivals [www.neopagan.net](http://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.

Paganism revolves around worshipping the earth. The change of seasons and solstices were important patterns of change.

### Halloween History - the importance of the night, *National Geographic*

- *As winter approached, the Celts asked their priests, known as "druids," to pray for them. The most important night of prayers occurred late in their fall - the last day of the harvest and the first day of the dark of winter. On that night, the Celts believed that the boundary between the world of the living and the spirit world was unusually thin - so thin that the souls of the dead could roam free back and forth. That night was enormously important to the Celts. They called it, "Samhain," Gaelic for November.*

What elements do we notice play a major role?



We can observe how the superstitious beliefs of men abound when there is limited access to God. When you don't understand God, the imagination takes over.

Daniel 2:19-22: (NKJV) <sup>19</sup>Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven. <sup>20</sup>Daniel answered and said: Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. <sup>21</sup>And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. <sup>22</sup>He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.

### How does this fear of the dead and the unknown translate today?



We need to be cautious and learn what we are dealing with. Is it good or is it evil, and if it is evil, why would we have anything to do with it?

### Let's look at the very beginning to establish the whole life and death issue:

Genesis 2:7: (KJV) And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Genesis 2:15-17: (NRSV) <sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. <sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.



### Key Points:

- Adam became a living "soul." (Note he wasn't given a soul, he became a soul.)
- The penalty for disobedience was "death."
- There was no positive indication towards the death experience. It wasn't to become a different form from what he was; he was given life and it would be taken away.



- God never created or sanctioned a “netherworld.”

### Zombies, a Living History, *History Channel*

- *Zombies...you've seen them in movies. Zombies are the most frightening monster in history. Is there any truth to their story? Every culture creates its own version of zombies. Could they be real? There have been diseases throughout history that have mimicked the behaviors of a zombie. The plausibility is there. You would never be up against one zombie; you would be up against thousands or millions! How would you survive? What would you do day to day? Are you ready for a Zombie Apocalypse?*

(Source: News.discovery.com - Excerpt from, *A History of 'Real' Zombies*) Though many people treat the current “zombie apocalypse” as a fun pop culture meme, it’s important to realize that some people believe zombies are very real. Haitian culture -- like many African cultures -- is heavily steeped in belief in magic and witchcraft. Belief in zombies is related to the Voodoo religion, and has been widespread throughout Haiti for decades. The existence of zombies is not questioned, though believers would not recognize the sensational, Hollywood brain-eating version that most Americans are familiar with.

So, there is a legitimate fear of the “undead.” Hmm... where could that idea have come from?

Genesis 3:1-5: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, Indeed, has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden? <sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; <sup>3</sup>but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die. <sup>4</sup>The serpent said to the woman, You surely will not die! <sup>5</sup>For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

Satan plants seeds of doubt and directly contradicts God, telling Eve that she was not going to die. What are the undead? They aren’t dead, but they aren’t alive. People seem to be believing the lie! No wonder Satan is called the Father of Lies!

Whenever a perception of reality is altered, the way we look at the world around us changes. You can have a perception of reality, but it’s not the real thing. Satan inserted a lie that continues to be perpetuated, and therefore our perception of life and death is changed.

### Origin of modern Zombie, *The History Channel*

- *To understand zombies, you have to know where they come from. Our modern zombie comes from a film made in 1968 by a then unknown American director named George Romero, *Night of the Living Dead*.*
- *What George Romero did was rewrite the book about zombies. He turned zombies into an apocalyptic creature. He wanted a monster that didn’t have a definition. He created a creature that didn’t necessarily have a specific explanation of its origin.*
- *Romero’s vision for the end of civilization as a zombie apocalypse captured the primal fears of Americans in 1968. What started as a low budget horror movie became an international sensation.*



So, based on a fictional movie over 40 years ago, we have retold the story so many times with so many twists and such drama and special effects, that it looks real. If it *looks* real, what's to stop it from *becoming* real?

### Could zombies actually be real?

#### First zombie in literature, *The History Channel*

- *Zombies first appeared in one of the earliest works of literature, The Epic of Gilgamesh. In one of our oldest known works, Ishtar says, “I will raise up the dead and they will eat the living - the dead will outnumber the living. This sounds a lot like a zombie apocalypse. The word “zombie” means animated corpse and comes from the Haitian Voodoo religion. It has its roots in western Africa. Historically a zombie is a person who has had their mind controlled by someone else and is working like a slave.*

Once again we have a story - a fictional story - that sows the seeds of a new perception of reality.

(Source: Wikipedia) *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, an epic poem from Mesopotamia, is amongst the earliest surviving works of literature. The literary history of Gilgamesh begins with five independent Sumerian poems about 'Bilgamesh' (Sumerian for Gilgamesh), king of Uruk.

Satan will take a kernel of truth and build all kinds of deceptions around it. Without a good understanding of death, Satan can play with our imagination. Let's take the example of the Apocalypse. This is a scriptural concept, but Satan litters it with the fantasies we adopt as being real.

Psalms 119:105: *Thy word is a lamp until my feet, and a light unto my path.*

Satan takes God's truth and twists it. But all we need to do is stick with the Scriptures, because God will give us light on a dark path if we stay close to Him.

Back to the realities of Halloween's origin:

(Source: [religioustolerance.org](http://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.

The whole idea of gods and spirits interacting with humanity does have a basis in reality.

**Again, all of the perversion of these things really does go back to Satan as the Father of Lies:**

Exodus 34:12-17: (NASB) <sup>12</sup>Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. <sup>13</sup>But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their **Asherim** <sup>14</sup>for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God-<sup>15</sup>otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, <sup>16</sup>and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his



daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods. <sup>17</sup>You shall make for yourself no molten gods.

God sets a principle in place for Israel: Don't get mixed up in idolatry. Paganism is idolatry. The core of it is self-worship by teaching that "we are gods." This is exactly what Satan put in place, and this thinking should not permeate any part of our lives.

Let us make sure that fantasy and fiction do NOT become reality!

### How to Survive a Zombie Attack from the Centers for Disease Control, ABC News

- *The Apocalypse, folks, is no joke. Unless you work at the CDC! The agency took a light-hearted approach to its guide to prepare people for a Zombie Apocalypse. Don't laugh! The CDC's Zombie Preparedness Plan bears close resemblance to the tips for surviving other epidemics or disasters like, "keep an emergency kit handy," and "have an evacuation plan in place." The zombie blog is such a hit; it crashed the CDC's site.*

Deuteronomy 12:2-3: (NASB) <sup>2</sup>You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. <sup>3</sup>You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and burn their **Asherim** with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place.

So, what is this **Asherim**?

(Source: From Outside the Camp Vol. 1, No. 4) Asherim: ...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 Ashtaroath 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.



### How did the church try and combat the prevalence of Paganism?

#### Observations about the Pagan origins of Halloween:

The Pagan origins of Halloween were founded in very real concerns about life:

- 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.

Deuteronomy 12:2-3: (NASB) <sup>2</sup>You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. <sup>3</sup>You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and burn their **Asherim** with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place.



This would seem to serve as a template for how we are to deal with Paganism. This will be the purpose of the real Armageddon - to obliterate all that is not in line with God's righteousness and love.

 **The dead and Papal Influence, National Geographic Channel**

- *On Samhain, the villagers gathered and lit huge bonfires to drive the dead back to the spirit world and keep them away from the living. But as the Catholic Church's influence grew in Europe, they frowned on the Pagan rituals like Samhain. In the 7th Century, the Vatican began to merge it with a church-sanctioned holiday, so November 1<sup>st</sup> was designated, "All Saints Day," to honor martyrs and the deceased faithful.*
- *Both of these holidays had to do with the afterlife and about survival after death. It was a calculated move on the part of the church to bring more people into the fold.*

The very nature of compromise says that you give a little and take a little, which is fine when the two who are compromising are looking for the same objective. When the compromise is between opposing forces, then danger lurks...



A caller suggested: **Proverbs 14:12:** *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

**2 Chronicles 33:1-6:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>He did evil in the sight of the LORD according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel. <sup>3</sup>For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he also erected altars for the Baals and made Asherim, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. <sup>4</sup>He built altars in the house of the LORD of which the LORD had said, My name shall be in Jerusalem forever. <sup>5</sup>For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>He made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

We can see that Paganism and its practices hold a very obvious attraction, 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.

**What is the difference between black and white witchcraft?**

 **White Wicca and witchcraft are bridges into darker occultism, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)**

- *Witchcraft is an ancient practice, the belief that a person can manipulate nature and destiny by casting a magic spell, but there may be a terrible price to pay. Spells can go one way or the other depending on the timing of the working, the reason for the working, and the result that they want. Some witches practice a Nature-based religion called Wicca. They worship ancient Pagan deities and perform rituals that celebrate the seasons and the phases of the moon.*



(Source: [religioustolerance.org](http://religioustolerance.org)) The Wiccan Rede: "An (if) it harm none, do as ye Will." Wiccans have ethics which are different in nature than most "one-god" religions which hand out a list of "do's and don'ts." We have a single extremely powerful ethical principal which Initiates are responsible for applying in specific situations according to their best judgment. That principle is called the Wiccan Rede (Old English for rule) and reads: "An (if) it harm none, do as ye Will." Based on the earlier mention of "True Will," you will understand that the Rede is far more complex than it sounds, and is quite different than saying, "Do whatever you want as long as nobody is hurt." Finding out your Will is difficult sometimes, and figuring out what is harmful, rather than just painful or unpleasant is not much easier.

### Where and how did this self-expression of "your will" start?

Isaiah 14:12-14: (NASB) <sup>12</sup>How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! <sup>13</sup>But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. <sup>14</sup>I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.

The focus was on Satan's desire to be like God. The result has created destruction, havoc and misery. His original intent was to lift himself out of the context of where he belonged. That was the expression of his will. We believe this Wiccan Rede is directly found in this desire of Satan.

What damage Satan did by "doing as ye Will!" In his mighty spiritual mind, would this exercising of his WILL hurt anyone? NO! It would simply give him authority as God.

When we put our will before the will of God, we are stepping in an area we don't belong. White witchcraft, no matter how love-oriented it is, puts your own will before the will of God. So the basic premise is very wrong and leaves the decision for what is right and wrong up to you and not God as the highest authority.

### Our Christian way:

John 4:31-34: (NASB) <sup>31</sup>Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat. <sup>32</sup>But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about. <sup>33</sup>So the disciples were saying to one another, No one brought him anything to eat, did he? <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Compare Jesus' approach to life - he was to do the will of God and do God's work. That's the opposite of the white witchcraft rule. Doing God's will gave him ultimate peace.

 **Black Wicca and Witchcraft are bridges into darker occultism, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)**

- ...but there are other witches who practice darker arts. Usually the black witchcraft is for power or greed. Black witchcraft is so much more inviting because you get quick gratification. Usually you find that the witches that get into the most trouble are usually the black witches. Tradition has it that once the dark forces have been released, even the experts at black witchcraft can't escape the consequences.



## With Witchcraft and Satanic influence mainstream, what are WE left with?

Witchcraft, sorcery and media, [whitehorsemedia.com](http://whitehorsemedia.com)

- *Television producers and publishers have discovered that sorcery sells! And they are capitalizing on this! They are producing a vast array of movies, and shows and books that all make witchcraft seem to be fun for kids. Parents are naïve when they see no connection between the popularity of Harry Potter and the popularity of real witchcraft. Revelation 18:23 says through sorcery, all nations were deceived.*

First point in how to deal with this:

- Know the sources of your belief!

1 John 1:5-8: (NASB) <sup>5</sup>This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; <sup>7</sup>but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup>If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

The source of Christian belief is God. In God, there is only light and there is no darkness. We want that to permeate our every thought.

- You have been delivered - live a delivered life!

Colossians 1:12-14: (KJV) <sup>12</sup>Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: <sup>13</sup>Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: <sup>14</sup>In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

We have to live as though we have been delivered from the power of darkness. **But make no mistake, the power of darkness sometimes looks like light.** That makes it more difficult! Remember the Old Testament principles we discussed? Destroy the idolatry. If we are wearing our armor at all times, we will be ready for the fight. Compromising with darkness is *not* a scriptural principle.

- Build on people's desire for spirituality -  
NOT on their Pagan beliefs.

Acts 17:22-25: (NASB) <sup>22</sup>So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. <sup>23</sup>For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; <sup>25</sup>nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;

Athens was one of the most Pagan areas of all. The Apostle Paul acknowledged their enthusiasm for spirituality but saw that they were worshipping an "unknown god," to cover all their bases. He patiently explained to them what the truth was. His lesson undermined all of the other gods they had. He took their spiritual enthusiasm and redirected it to truth and light. That is one way we can build on people's desires, by showing them true light.





- Beware the subtlety of sin.

2 Corinthians 11:14-15: (KJV) <sup>14</sup>And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

We have to check light against those things we know to be true.

- Seek holiness.

1 Peter 1:14-16: (KJV) <sup>14</sup>As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: <sup>15</sup>But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; <sup>16</sup>Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

When you are holy, you have been set apart, out of the mainstream. The walk of Christianity is a walk of holiness.

We want to understand dark and light and make a choice to follow the unadulterated light in the word of God. All else will take us away from true holiness in our lives.

**Why do we celebrate death and witchcraft?  
For Jonathan and Rick (and Kathy!) and Christian Questions,  
Think about it...!**



**And now even more to think about...  
only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!**



**Kathy came to the studio prepared for this subject! She was ready with the “armor” we discussed in the previous week’s program!**

Galatians 5:16-23: (KJV) <sup>16</sup>This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. <sup>18</sup>But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. <sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, <sup>20</sup>Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup>Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Flee those things that should be avoided and find all of the light and goodness you can possibly handle in the worship of the one true God and the following of His Son Jesus!



## First, an explanation of “The Epic of Gilgamesh” from Wikipedia

The *Epic of Gilgamesh*, an epic poem from Mesopotamia, is amongst the earliest surviving works of literature. The literary history of Gilgamesh begins with five independent Sumerian poems about 'Bilgamesh' (Sumerian for Gilgamesh), king of Uruk. Four of these were used as source material for a combined epic in Akkadian. This first, "Old Babylonian" version of the epic dates to the 18th century BC and is titled *Shūtur eli sharrī* ("Surpassing All Other Kings"). Only a few fragments of it survive. The later, Standard Babylonian version dates from the 13th to the tenth centuries BC and bears the title *Sha naqba īmuru* ("He who Saw the Deep"). Fragments of approximately two thirds of this longer, twelve-tablet version have been recovered. Some of the best copies were discovered in the library ruins of the 7th-century BC Assyrian king Ashurbanipal.

The story centers on a friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Enkidu is a wild man created by the gods as Gilgamesh's equal to distract him from oppressing the people of Uruk. Together, they journey to the Cedar Mountain to defeat Humbaba, its monstrous guardian. Later they kill the Bull of Heaven, which the goddess Ishtar sends to punish Gilgamesh for spurning her advances. As a punishment for these actions, the gods sentence Enkidu to death.

The later half of the epic focuses on Gilgamesh's distress at Enkidu's death, and his quest for immortality. In order to learn the secret of eternal life, Gilgamesh undertakes a long and perilous journey to find the immortal flood hero, Utnapishtim. He learns that "The life that you are seeking you will never find. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping." His fame however lived on after his death, because of his great building projects, and his account of what Utnapishtim told him happened during the flood.

## The full article on Zombies:

(Source: [news.discovery.com](http://news.discovery.com)) A History of 'Real' Zombies

Zombies are all the rage these days -- on television, in movies, books and now in the news. Of course zombies aren't new -- they were co-opted decades ago by pop culture, especially in George Romero's 1968 classic zombie film, *Night of the Living Dead*.

Or were they? Actually, notes Blake Smith, zombie aficionado and co-host of the monster-themed *MonsterTalk* podcast, "Though many people think of *Night of the Living Dead* as being all about zombies, Romero never called them zombies; he wanted them to be ghouls. The public called them zombies, so the name stuck."

NEWS: Did Zombies Roam Medieval Ireland?

Though many people treat the current "zombie apocalypse" as a fun pop culture meme, it's important to realize that some people believe zombies are very real. Haitian culture -- like many African cultures -- is heavily steeped in belief in magic and witchcraft. Belief in zombies is related to the Voodoo religion, and has been widespread throughout Haiti for decades. The existence of zombies is not questioned, though believers would not recognize the sensational, Hollywood brain-eating version that most Americans are familiar with.

Unlike today's malevolent movie zombies, the original Haitian zombies were not villains but victims. They are corpses who have been re-animated and controlled by magical means for some specific purpose (usually labor). Historically, fear of zombies was used as a method of political and social control in Haiti. Those people believed to have the magical power to zombify a person -- mainly witch doctors called bokors -- were widely feared and respected. Bokors were also believed to be in service of the Tonton Macoute, the brutal and much-feared secret police used by the oppressive Duvalier political regimes (1957-1984). Those who defied authorities were threatened with becoming the living dead—a concern not taken lightly.

NEWS: Zombie Prankster Almost Shot

In popular fiction there are several ways to destroy zombies (decapitations or gunshots to the head are popular), though according to Haitian folklore the goal is to release the person from



his or her zombie state, not to outright kill the person. There are several ways to free a zombie; one is to feed the zombie salt; others say that if a zombie sees the ocean its mind will return and it will become self-aware and angry, trying to return to its grave.

So are zombies real? Many believe so, but evidence is scarce. There are a few supposed cases of real zombies, including a mentally ill man named Clairvius Narcisse, who in 1980 claimed that he had "died" in 1962, then become a zombie and forced to work as a slave on one of Haiti's sugarcane plantations. He offered no evidence of his claims, and could not show investigators where he had supposedly worked for almost twenty years.

#### Scientific Evidence for Zombies?

Outside of Haiti (and a few other places where belief in Voodoo exists), zombies were widely assumed to be nothing more than a legendary boogeyman, not unlike werewolves and vampires. However this changed in the 1980s when Wade Davis, a Harvard ethnobotanist, claimed to have discovered a secret "zombie powder" while doing field work in Haiti. The main active ingredient was said to be a neurotoxin which could be used to poison victims into a zombie-like state.

#### NEWS: Deadly Fungus Turns Ants Into Zombies

Voodoo magic was an unlikely source of zombies—but could science and medicine explain them? Davis wrote several books on the topic, including *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, later made into a horror film by director Wes Craven. Though the book was a public success, many scientists were skeptical of Davis's claims, suggesting that they were exaggerated and that the amounts of neurotoxin in the powder samples he found were inconsistent and not high enough to induce the zombifying effects. While in theory the zombie power might work under certain ideal conditions, in the real world it would be very difficult to create a zombie with it; too little of the toxin would have only temporary effects, and too much could easily kill its victim.

Pharmacological doubts aside, there are other reasons to doubt the claim that people had for decades been turned into zombie slave labor. For one thing, the very process that would turn people into zombies (assuming it didn't kill them) would leave them brain-damaged, uncoordinated, and slow -- in other words, hardly ideal farm workers.

Furthermore, the economics of zombie-making don't make sense: Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with no shortage of very cheap labor to work farms and plantations. In a country where the average annual income is less than \$2,000 there are plenty of able-bodied, non-zombified people willing to work for almost nothing. Unpaid zombie workers would still need to be clothed, housed, and fed, negating most of the potential profit from using them. And, of course, the sugar plantations allegedly filled with fields of zombies have never been found.

#### How Zombies Work

With the main reason for creating zombies pretty well debunked, the question remains -- even if Davis's zombie powder is all he claims it is -- why anyone would bother to make a zombie in the first place? It would be a lot of time and effort to abduct someone, fake their death, get the toxins just right, revive them, and put them to work.

There are easier ways to give someone brain damage, and even if it worked there's no guarantee that the person would be docile or compliant; it's just as likely that they would be left in a vegetative state. While zombies are infesting television and film (and, some cases, news headlines), true zombies remain an unproven myth.