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Halloween, A Result of Religious Apostasy

First Timothy 4:1-2



October 31st is when Halloween is celebrated in our country. Let me show you how the growth of Halloween in the United States is directly tied to our country's turn away from the faith of our fathers, Biblical Christianity.

The Los Angeles Times said that Halloween had grown enormously in the last few decades: "Once considered a children's holiday, it has grown in recent years to encompass adults as well. It has become our bacchanal¹, a largely secular celebration in which the national id is allowed to run rampant."²

"Halloween is no longer just a children's holiday - far from it. The big spenders are not children or their parents, but 18- to 24-year-olds, who plan to shell out an average of \$68 each for Halloween fun, according to the retail federation. In the world of Hollywood, especially, Halloween costume parties have become huge draws. This year? The messages are mixed."³

I think these observations by the Los Angeles Times are, for the most part, correct. The celebration of Halloween is no longer a phenomenon involving just children but is becoming more and more an adult celebration. It's also becoming a major marketing event, with a great deal of money spent and made on what began as an essentially demonic or occultic celebration. Truly, "the love of money is the root of all evil," First Timothy 6.10.

To make sure we are all on the same page concerning this ridiculous celebration that no Christian has any business participating in, let me read to you some material I found on the Internet using a search engine to find "Halloween" web sites. This is what pro-Halloween web sites have to say about the history of Halloween, showing that nothing about Halloween's history is disputed any longer.

One web page was titled "The History and Customs of Halloween."⁴ Let me read it to you:

Halloween is an annual celebration, but just what is it a celebration of? And how did this peculiar custom originate? Is it, as some claim, a kind of demon worship? Or is it just a harmless vestige of some ancient pagan ritual?

The word itself, Halloween, actually has its origins in the Catholic Church. It comes from a con-

I pray God uses the message you have just read to be a blessing to you. Should you want to communicate with me for any reason, go to the web site address on the last page. You will be able to contact me on that web page.

Dr. John S. Waldrip

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tracted corruption of All Hallows Eve. November 1, “All Hollows Day” (or “All Saints Day”), is a Catholic day of observance in honor of saints. But, in the 5th century BC, in Celtic Ireland, summer officially ended on October 31. The holiday was called Samhain (sow-en), the Celtic New year.

One story says that, on that day, the disembodied spirits of all those who had died throughout the preceding year would come back in search of living bodies to possess for the next year. It was believed to be their only hope for the afterlife. The Celts believed all laws of space and time were suspended during this time, allowing the spirit world to intermingle with the living.

Naturally, the still-living did not want to be possessed. So on the night of October 31, villagers would extinguish the fires in their homes, to make them cold and undesirable. They would then dress up in all manner of ghoulish costumes and noisily paraded around the neighborhood, being as destructive as possible to frighten away spirits looking for bodies to possess.

Probably a better explanation of why the Celts extinguished their fires was not to discourage spirit possession, but so that all the Celtic tribes could relight their fires from a common source, the Druidic fire that was kept burning in the Middle of Ireland, at Usinach.

Some accounts tell of how the Celts would burn someone at the stake who was thought to have already been possessed, as sort of a lesson to the spirits. Other accounts of Celtic history debunk these stories as myth.

The Romans adopted the Celtic practices as their own. But in the first century AD, Samhain was assimilated into celebrations of some of the other Roman traditions that took place in October, such as their day to honor Pomona, the Roman goddess

of fruit and trees. The symbol of Pomona is the apple, which might explain the origin of our modern tradition of bobbing for apples on Halloween.

The thrust of the practices also changed over time to become more ritualized. As belief in spirit possession waned, the practice of dressing up like hobgoblins, ghosts, and witches took on a more ceremonial role.

The custom of Halloween was brought to America in the 1840s by Irish immigrants fleeing their country's potato famine. At that time, the favorite pranks in New England included tipping over out-houses and unhinging fence gates.

The custom of trick-or-treating is thought to have originated not with the Irish Celts, but with a ninth-century European custom called souling. On November 2, All Souls Day, early Christians would walk from village to village begging for "soul cakes," made out of square pieces of bread with currants. The more soul cakes the beggars would receive, the more prayers they would promise to say on behalf of the dead relatives of the donors. At the time, it was believed that the dead remained in limbo for a time after death, and that prayer, even by strangers, could expedite a soul's passage to heaven.

The Jack-o-lantern custom probably comes from Irish folklore. As the tale is told, a man named Jack, who was notorious as a drunkard and trickster, tricked Satan into climbing a tree. Jack then carved an image of a cross in the tree's trunk, trapping the devil up the tree. Jack made a deal with the devil that, if he would never tempt him again, he would promise to let him down the tree.

According to the folk tale, after Jack died, he was denied entrance to Heaven because of his evil ways, but he was also denied access to Hell because he had tricked the devil. Instead, the devil gave him a single ember to light his way through

¹Defn., an occasion of drunken revelry, *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1996), page 149.

²*Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 2001, page A-1.

³Ibid.

⁴<http://wilstar.com/holidays/hallown.htm> 10/20/2002

⁵<http://www.holidays.net/halloween/muertos.htm> 10/20/2002

⁶See my *Suffer The Children (The tragic legacies of Finney & Bushnell)* at www.ClassicalBaptist.Press

⁷*Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1996), page 99.

⁸Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary* (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, Inc., 2002), bible@mail.com

⁹Dr. John Nevius, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes* (Revell, 1894), pages 321-322.

¹⁰Ibid., page 323.

¹¹Joshua 24.15

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,”

First John 1.5-7. In other words, you can't have it both ways.

You've never met a more spiritually obtuse person than I once was when it comes to Halloween. Ignorance and foolishness were my chief characteristics, even after entering the Gospel ministry. But I see the issues much more clearly now, and I am fully persuaded that the rise of Halloween in our culture is part of the slide of our culture into the black abyss of end-times apostasy. Therefore, I urge you to stand on God's side and oppose Halloween with your children, in this Church, and everywhere else.

“But pastor, I don't know how to stand against Halloween.” Simple. When someone asks you to participate in a Halloween activity or observance, say “No thanks. I don't think there's anything amusing or funny about death. The Lord I serve is Life.”

Make plans to participate in our *Christian Alternative To Halloween* on October 31st @ 7:00 PM.

the frigid darkness. The ember was placed inside a hollowed-out turnip to keep it glowing longer.

The Irish used turnips as their “Jack's lanterns” originally. But when the immigrants came to America, they found that pumpkins were far more plentiful than turnips. So the Jack-o-Lantern in America was a hollowed-out pumpkin, lit with an ember.

So, although some pagan groups, cults, and Satanists may have adopted Halloween as their favorite “holiday,” the day itself did not grow out of evil practices. It grew out of the rituals of Celts celebrating a new year, and out of Medieval prayer rituals of Europeans. And today, even many churches have Halloween parties or pumpkin carving events for the kids. After all, the day itself is only as evil as one cares to make it.

The spiritual state of our country has so deteriorated there is no longer any attempt to conceal the pagan origins of Halloween. Halloween is now justified by claiming that cults and Satanists merely adopted Halloween as their favorite holiday, and by noting that many churches observe Halloween in some way. But such reasoning doesn't justify Halloween at all. Rather, it shows how completely “Christianity” has abandoned the moral arena in which right and wrong practices are determined in our culture.

But what about the Mexican holiday called “The Days of the Dead”?⁵ I read from a web site on the world wide web titled *Los Dias De Los Muertos* (sic):

Every autumn Monarch Butterflies, which have summered up north in the United States and Canada, return to Mexico for the winter protection of the *oyamel* fir trees. The locale inhabitants welcome back the returning butterflies, which they believe bear the spirits of their departed. The spirits to be honored during Los Dias de los Muertos.

Los Dias de los Muertos, the Days of the Dead, is a traditional Mexico holiday honoring the dead. It is celebrated every year at the same time as Hal-

loween and the Christian holy days of All Saints Day and All Souls Day (November 1st and 2nd). Los Dias de los Muertos is not a sad time, but instead a time of remembering and rejoicing.

The townspeople dress up as ghouls, ghosts, mummies and skeletons and parade through the town carrying an open coffin. The “corpse” with-in smiles as it is carried through the narrow streets of town. The local vendors toss oranges inside as the procession makes its way past their markets. Lucky “corpses” can also catch flowers, fruits, and candies.

In the homes families arrange *ofrenda*’s or “altars” with flowers, bread, fruit and candy. Pictures of the deceased family members are added. In the late afternoon special all night burning candles are lit - it is time to remember the departed - the old ones, their parents and grandparents.

The next day the families travel to the cemetery. They arrive with hoes, picks and shovels. They also carry flowers, candles, blankets, and picnic baskets. They have come to clean the graves of their loved ones. The grave sites are weeded and the dirt raked smooth. The Crypts are scrubbed and swept. Colorful flowers, bread, fruit and candles are placed on the graves. Some bring guitars and radios to listen to. The families will spend the entire night in the cemeteries.

Skeletons and skulls are found everywhere. Chocolate skulls, marzipan coffins, and white chocolate skeletons. Special loaves of bread are baked, called *pan de muertos*, and decorated with “bones.

Handmade skeleton figurines, called *calacas*, are especially popular. *Calacas* usually show an active and joyful afterlife. Figures of musicians, generals on horseback, even skeletal brides, in their white bridal gowns marching down the aisles with their boney grooms.

to stand by God’s grace. It’s a sign of apostasy that parents don’t prepare their kids to stand against wickedness and error. So, let’s do right.

Third, THERE IS NO OPPOSITION TO SPIRITUAL CHAOS AND CONFUSION DURING HALLOWEEN

Have you noticed, as I have, that Halloween is a time of heightened confusion and chaos? Have you also noticed that Halloween is becoming more and more like Mardi Gras, which is complete confusion and chaos?

Many people have been fooled into thinking that kids need unstructured time every once and a while, to help them unwind from the pressures of school and life. But that’s just nuts. You show me a person who favors unstructured time, and I will show you a person who sins during that unstructured time. Another word for unstructured is chaos, confusion. And one of the chief characteristics of Halloween is its chaos and confusion.

You ought not allow your children to think that confusion is permissible to think that chaos is in any way beneficial. Why not? I answer that question by asking another question. Who is not the author of confusion? First Corinthians 14.33 reads,

“God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace.”

Who then, by implication, *is* the author of confusion? The Devil, right?

By confusion and chaos, I do not mean that Halloween celebrations should be well planned and operate on a strict timetable and that that will please God. Not at all. I am not referring to scheduling confusion or timetable chaos. I’m referring to *spiritual* confusion and chaos.

You and I ought to stand opposed to any blurring of the distinctions separating right and wrong, truth from error, good from evil, God from the Devil. And participation in and celebration of Halloween is profoundly confusing and chaotic because Halloween obliterates the lines of distinction between light and darkness, between life and death, good and evil.

But I did prepare her for Christmas, and you might think about preparing your youngster in the same type of way for Halloween. I taught her when she was barely a year old to respond whenever she saw a Santa Claus or heard anyone say “Santa Claus.” “Sarah, Santa Claus.” And she would stick out her tongue and give the Bronx cheer. I wanted my daughter to know from the very beginning where her daddy stood on the issue, and where I wanted her to stand on the issue. And you should do the same thing with your kid.

Proverbs 22.6 informs us that we should

“Train up a child in the way he should go.”

And Deuteronomy 6.7 shows the way you should teach your children what’s right and what’s wrong:

“... talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

In other words, you moms and dads should engage in a running commentary on life with your kids, expressing your recommendations and your warnings, the things you approve of, and the things you disapprove of. And you are doing right as a mom and dad if you are opinionated about such things.

It’s a mark of apostasy in culture and in a congregation when children are not told exactly where the lines are drawn between right and wrong, what is obviously of God and what is not of God, what should be engaged in, and what should be shunned. How can you be like Joshua, who said

“choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”?¹⁰

Dad? Mom? You should be like Joshua in this respect.

“We don’t do stuff like that in my house. I’m a Christian. We take dying and demons seriously in our house. The Devil is the enemy of my Savior, so why should I dress up and dance and play games in honor of him?” This makes sense, parents. Therefore, I challenge you to fill the spiritual leadership vacuum that exists in your child’s life and tell them what’s right and what’s wrong, and where you’re going

The celebration of Los Dias de los Muertos, like the customs of Halloween, evolved with the influences of the Celts, the Romans, and the Christian holy days of All Saints Day and All Souls Day. But with added influences from the Aztec people of Mexico.

The Aztecs believed in an afterlife where the spirits of their dead would return as hummingbirds and butterflies. Even images carved in the ancient Aztec monuments show this belief - the linking the spirits of the dead and the Monarch butterfly.

The web site admits that Los Dias de los Muertos is essentially a Halloween celebration, with its European pagan influences, plus an Aztec ingredient. And these are the Aztecs who offered human sacrifices to their gods, who cannibalized their enemies, and who subjugated and enslaved the entire region?

Pilgrims and then Puritans originally settled the United States of America, devout Christian separatists who landed in what we now call New England. Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas were settled by Cavaliers, who were nominal Christians affiliated with the Church of England, later known in this country as the Episcopalian Church after the Revolutionary War. Following those two groups were the Quakers, who moved into Delaware and Pennsylvania and the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who settled the Appalachian region.

It wasn’t until the waves of Roman Catholics from Ireland began arriving in the 1840s that Halloween was widely observed here. My, what a coincidence. The pagan practices associated with demons and the devil were effectively introduced to our country by Roman Catholics and began to spread in influence as the effects of Charles G. Finney’s anti-Christian doctrines and practices were articulated and spread. Why does none of this surprise me? The influences of Roman Catholicism and what has developed into contemporary evangelicalism are destroying this country, spiritually.

We consider First Timothy 4.1-2:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in

hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”

I will point out but two undeniable truths in this passage for you to consider:

First, I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THE LATTER TIMES APOSTASY

Please take a close look at verse 1, especially the word “depart.” It translates the Greek word ἀποστήσονται, from which we get the word “apostasy,” which means “a total desertion of or a departure from one’s religion, party, cause, etc.”⁶ So you see, the Apostle Paul did predict in the latter times an apostasy. These are the latter times, and we are now in the middle of the apostasy.

Notice what Adam Clarke comments on this verse: “*They will apostatize from the faith*, i.e., from Christianity; renouncing the whole system in effect, by bringing in doctrines which render its essential truths null and void, or denying and renouncing such doctrines as are essential to Christianity as a system of salvation. A man may hold all the truths of Christianity and yet render them of none effect by holding other doctrines which counteract their influence; or he may apostatize by denying some essential doctrine, though he bring in nothing heterodox.”⁷

A person is never spiritually static but is always moving in one direction or the other, either more firmly embracing the faith or moving away from the faith. As we see in verse 1, Paul predicted that some will in the latter days do more than move away from the faith for a time before being chastened and hastened by the correcting hand of a loving heavenly Father. Not being truly converted, some in our day will truly abandon the faith.

What Adam Clarke understood to be true (and I agree with him at this point while differing with him on other points) is that apostasy does not always mean that a formal and public break with the Christian faith occurs. Sometimes the apostasy occurs, which is to say that sometimes Christianity is more subtly renounced by bringing in doctrines that nullify essential Christian doctrine. Bible truths can be neu-

“Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

How can we obey God’s Word without speaking up and without speaking out? How can we demonstrate our allegiance to Jesus Christ while keeping our mouths always shut? At what point can the child of God justify not verbally opposing a blatantly antichristian and ungodly holiday that is openly and freely practiced in society and public schools, all the while our expressions of devotion toward God are stifled and ruled illegal in courts of law?

It’s a part of the apostasy that so-called Christians don’t speak up. It’s a part of the apostasy that so-called Christians don’t voice their opposition against that which is damnable and wrong. Sure, people will oppose you speaking against Halloween. Sure, they will tell you to be quiet. So what? Did Stephen quiet down when his audiences wanted him to shut up? Did Peter’s quiet down when his audiences want him to shut up? Did Paul? No? Then neither should you or I shut up. Halloween is wrong. It’s demonic. It’s Satanic. It’s anti-God and anti-Christ, and we should let people know it.

Second, THERE IS NO PREPARATION OF CHILDREN FOR HALLOWEEN

I don’t mean getting ready to participate in celebrating Halloween. There’s too much of that already. What I’m referring to is preparing kids to oppose Halloween. What do you do to enable your kids to stand up and oppose Halloween, to stand up for what’s right, to make a difference?

I remember when my daughter was a little girl. I didn’t have to prepare her to oppose Halloween, because during one of our *Christian Alternative To Halloween* services a teenager completely ignored my instructions to wear no costumes of any kind to this Church on October 31st. And when he walked through that door, and Sarah saw him, she let out a howl that could be heard a block away. What’s wrong with most kids that frightening costumes and frightening wigs and masks don’t frighten them? They are being desensitized, that’s what’s wrong.

Dr. Nevius continued by saying, "The Bible teaches us that to have intercourse with a 'familiar' spirit is a voluntary act of disloyalty to and rebellion against God. It is forsaking God, and holding intercourse with, and becoming the agent of his avowed enemy, the devil."⁹

Someone might say, "Pastor, I don't think there is any more connection between Halloween and the Devil than there is between a Nazi flag and Adolph Hitler." You're entitled to your opinion, but how many Americans do you think wore swastika armbands during World War 2? And we are currently involved in a spiritual conflict of incomprehensible dimensions, are we not?

I think you need to take a look at yourself to make sure you're not wearing a swastika armband or something comparable to it. Further, I think that our Church ought to be decidedly different than what we see in other congregations, don't you?

In other congregations, there are obvious signs of a wholesale departure from the faith. I think we ought to do better than other congregations, not because we are better, but because loyalty to Christ demands it. Do you hear me now?

Three observations that are evidence of a culture, evidence of a congregation, evidence of an individual departing from the faith:

→

First, THERE IS NO ASSERTION OF CHRISTIAN VALUES OPPOSING HALLOWEEN

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Ephesians 6.13 challenges us:

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

First Corinthians 15.58 demands,

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

And First Peter 5.9 commands with regard to the Devil himself,

trialized and rendered of none effect by holding other doctrines which counteract their influence.

Who would deny that such nullification occurs when the Bible teaches that when the lost die, they go to Hell, but Halloween playfully pretends that such does not occur? The Bible treats death as every man's enemy, but Halloween playfully pretends that death is no enemy at all. Halloween celebrants would pretend that ancient heathen and pagan practices that derived from demon-inspired idolatry are harmless, while the Bible warns that such practices are to be avoided at all costs.

Thus, you see, Biblical Christianity and the celebration of Halloween are incompatible. Cling ever closer to the faith and learn from God's Word, and you will not celebrate Halloween. But if you insist on celebrating Halloween you necessarily subvert or minimize the importance of several vital Christian doctrines and warnings.

As Well, NOTICE THE CONDITION OF THE HEART, A SEARED CONSCIENCE

It's not a tender conscience that's unaffected by Christian doctrine. It's not a tender conscience that's unconcerned about the co-mingling and confusing of truth with error. It's not a tender conscience that has no fear of God but treats lightly what God treats seriously, treats foolishly what God wants to be treated seriously, but a seared conscience. It takes a seared conscience to do wrong once you've been shown that it's wrong.

I will grant you that those who are merely ignorant can often do that which those with a seared conscience do. Many an ignorant Christian will celebrate Halloween without thinking through the implications, without consideration of Bible truth. But once a person is exposed to the truth, once a believer knows how such practices dishonor the Lord and denigrate Bible truth, he will abandon the celebration of Halloween. Why? He fears God. He desires to do right. And he seeks to avoid doing anything that results in an unbeliever thinking lightly about that which God wants them thinking seriously about.

If you think there is nothing wrong with celebrating Halloween, then you think lightly of what God takes seriously. You treat playfully what the Bible clearly shows not to be funny or fun at all.

I've not focused on the Satanic aspects of Halloween, that it's the celebration of the Devil's birthday or the demonic side of it all. I've not dealt directly with God's stated opposition to any contact with or familiarity with demons or the dead, or with the plastic and candy silliness that paves the way for such involvement and which lowers people's barriers and fears about such forbidden things.

What I've focused on is what kind of person will continue to celebrate Halloween once he's been informed, once he's been educated, once he's been indoctrinated. And what kind of person celebrates Halloween once he knows the truth about Halloween?

In addition to the pagan, you mean, the apostate? Are you an apostate? It won't be your objections that will show us whether you are apostate or not, but your practice.

Why not take just a moment to decide whose side of this issue you're on, God's side or the Devil's? Don't go out on Halloween with the pagans and the apostates. Instead, come to Church. We'll do you good.

I have presented facts and information that most of you folks are already, for the most part, familiar with. Christians have good reasons not to participate in Halloween celebrations. I reminded you of where we already are, as well as drawing a line in the dirt, so those who are unfamiliar with our ministry know clearly what we believe and where we stand on this issue. But I want to provide additional benefits. I want to challenge you to encourage you. What can I do for the people I shepherd to prepare you to make a difference in this evil day?

In Second Corinthians 2.11, we are warned not to be ignorant of Satan's devices. Dr. John Nevius, a missionary to China in the late 1800s who had many encounters with demons, which led to the writing of his classic on the subject, ***Demon Possession and Allied Themes***, gives the following list of demonic phenomena.⁸

1. The use of a medium for the purpose of holding communication with spirits.

2. Necromancy, or professed communication with the dead by the intervention of a medium.
3. The invoking or summoning of spirits by means of hymns or prayer.
4. Receiving communications from spirits by writing, through methods more or less direct and immediate.
5. Gradual "development" or training by which the medium or subject, and the spirits, are brought [in contact], so that the medium becomes ready and responsive in performing his new functions.
6. Obtaining prescriptions and healing diseases by spirits, through the intervention of a medium.
7. Carrying on communications with spirits through a medium by the use of spoken language, or by raps, or other arrangements or devices.
8. The mysterious appearance and disappearance of lights and flames.
9. Levitation, suspension in the air, and transference from one place to the other of crockery, household utensils, and other objects, including also men...
10. Haunted houses, mysterious opening and shutting of doors, and other similar phenomena.
11. The moving of furniture and other objects
→ without physical contact.
12. Rappings, clattering of dishes, and unusual
→ noises and disturbances, without any physical cause which can be found.
13. Impressions by unseen hands, sometimes gentle, sometimes violent, producing physical pain and injuries.
→
14. The nervous and muscular symptoms peculiar to a demoniac, and often to the medium during possession, or its initial stage.