

# Halloween

Halloween has become a controversial topic in Christian circles and there is a great deal of debate regarding whether Christians should participate or allow their children to participate in it.

## ***Some background***

Halloween stems from an ancient Celtic festival called Samhain. The Celtic new year was celebrated on 1 November and therefore, the festival celebrated on 31 October marked the end of the year. It was also the end of Summer and the harvest. It symbolised the beginning of winter and darkness and came to be associated with death. The Celts believed that at Samhain, the boundary between the spiritual and physical worlds became thin and therefore, spirits of the dead returned to earth and wreaked havoc on this night. Large bonfires were built in which crops and animals were burned as sacrifices to deities and costumes, usually made of animal skins and heads, were worn as participants attempted to tell one another's fortunes. According to some sources, druid priests would also go from house to house asking for animals (or possibly even humans) to sacrifice and those who gave offerings would be promised prosperity while those who did not give were threatened with curses. Some believe that this is the origin of trick or treating.

Over time, as the Romans conquered Celtic territories, the festival of Samhain became incorporated and merged with the Roman pagan festivals of Feralia and Pomona. When the influence of Christianity spread to Celtic areas in the seventh century, Pope Boniface IV decreed 1 November as "All Saints Day", a day to honour saints and martyrs. It is believed this was done in an attempt to replace the Celtic and Roman festivals with a church holiday. Since then, Halloween has become very commercial and secular and is the second largest grossing holiday in the USA.

So while it is clear that Halloween has pagan origins, the question still remains: *What should Christians do about it today?*

## ***What does Scripture say?***

The Word is very clear about the fact that those who belong to God are not to associate themselves with any form of paganism or anything that could mislead them or compromise their ability or willingness to serve God. We are told to meditate on and fill our lives with things that are good, lovely and noble (Philippians 4 vs 8) and so we must ask ourselves whether celebrating Halloween is a compromise for those who follow Jesus.

### **- 1 Thessalonians 5 vs 21 – 22**

"Test all things; hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil."

### **- Deuteronomy 18 vs 9-14:**

"When you come into the land, which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his

daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God, for these nations which you will dispossess, listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you the Lord your God has not appointed such for you.”

- **Romans 13 vs 12:**

“Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the Armour of Light.”

- **Ephesians 5 vs 11:**

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather expose them.”

- **Philippians 4 vs 8:**

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things.”

- **3 John 11**

“Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.”

Taking these Scriptures into account, perhaps we should be encouraged to view Halloween as a time of opportunity to teach our children about holiness and what it means to be “set apart” for God, which does involve abstaining from worldly things and refusing to go with the flow. It could also be an opportunity to witness to others about why it is we choose not to get involved in Halloween activities. Ultimately it comes down to deciding whether anything we do or choose to be a part of adds to and benefits our relationship with God or detracts from it and whether, in everything we do, we attempt to give Him glory.