Our Halloween Treat



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"Nothing is more harmful to a new truth than an old error."

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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Truth Seekers

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My wife and I try to be "regular people" who live out our lives the best we know how, and without interfering with other people's affairs. Our upbringing was that of trusting the Bible to have the answers for the best way to accomplish not only our goal of how to daily live, but also of how to receive the gift of eternal life. We are grateful our parents raised us to trust the instructions in the Bible because we have found its teachings to be righteous and beneficial. Because we trust in the Giver of the words of Scripture as being our Creator, we believe His words are true, and we therefore strive to abide by them.

Sadly, our lifestyle sometimes clashes with the lifestyles of those with whom we come into daily contact. In a perfect world, there would be no clashes, no disagreements—only perfect harmony and total peace; but this isn't a perfect world, and there are going to be clashes and disagreements. For us, Halloween is one of those "clashes." Clashes normally occur because of misconceptions about people and their beliefs, along with a lack of resolve to correct those misunderstandings. When we determine to respectfully look into the reasoning behind a certain belief or practice, we simultaneously make the attempt to understand "why" that belief is practiced or not practiced. With this in mind, I ask you to examine my reasoning for choosing not to participate in any Halloween functions, such as costume parties or "trick-or-treating." This is not an attempt to ridicule beliefs that contrast with our own, but an attempt to seek understanding as to why we do not join in the celebration of this popular holiday. It is also important to know that I do not judge or condemn others for their differing views on this or other topics. My creed has long been that of pursuing scholarly inquiry with the respectful sharing of beliefs and ideas, and I leave all judging to Yeshua.[1]

For those of you who want me to "get to the point" in a hurry, I will here offer the cut and dried version of why we do not observe Halloween: *It's not sanctioned by Scripture*. My family and I only celebrate days that are sanctioned by the Word of our Heavenly Father, and quite frankly, neither Halloween nor any hint of Scriptural sanction of any of its customs is so much as even *mentioned* in the Bible. That means the early believers somehow got by without celebrating Halloween, and if they could get by without it, so can we! I realize you may not put any stock in the Bible. If that is so, then you certainly will not relate to anything else I have to say in this study, and I will certainly understand if you, at this point, decide to read no further. If, however, the Bible's teachings ***do*** matter to you, then I hope you understand our position. If Halloween were to have the approval of the Creator, then He would have inspired its customs and methods of observance to be mentioned in His Word. But Halloween is *never* mentioned in Scripture, nor are there approved examples of believers practicing any of its customs. It is well known among Bible historians that the early believers never observed it. The Apostle Paul certainly never observed it, and he was inspired to write the following in Philippians 3:17:

> 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example.

[1] Cf., John 5:22.

We simply cannot go wrong by doing what the Bible says to do, and by imitating the practices of those who were inspired by our Heavenly Father to live the lifestyles that they lived. I have found that many people profess to put a lot of stock in what Scripture says to do, but when it comes down to making a choice between Scripture and going along with friends and family, Scripture often loses out. In the long run, however, as I am about to point out, I am persuaded that the ones who ***really*** lose are those who minimize the plain teachings and examples of the Bible.

We simply cannot go wrong by doing what the Bible says to do *and* by imitating the practices of those who were inspired by our Heavenly Father to live the lifestyles that they lived.

No one I've ever met enjoys admitting that they are wrong about something. Neither do I. But time and time again, I've had to admit I had incorrect understandings and interpretations of various longstanding beliefs. Is the celebration of Halloween one of them? I want to live and raise my children in as righteous a household as I can. I do not understand why we should want to invite erroneous teachings into our home. Maybe, then, someone can show me my mistake in believing that Halloween was never practiced by the early believers. Maybe I can be shown that it is justifiable by the benchmark of *Scripture* for us to join in the celebration of a holiday whose origin lies in the old, pagan belief that witches, demons, and spirits of the dead roamed the earth on the eve of November 1st. If my family and I are indeed mistaken in our belief, then we implore you to "straighten us out."

All Scripture is Inspired

For those of us who choose to abide by the precepts of Scripture, we know the words it contains are true. We know its message of salvation cannot and will not be broken. Because the message of our hope of salvation is "serious business," we opt to adhere to its instructions. One of the first steps involved in obeying the words of Scripture is to acknowledge that those words were inspired to be placed there by an intelligent Creator who knows better than we do those things that we ought to be doing. The Apostle Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, made this point very clear:

> 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of Yahweh[2], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
> 17 That the man of Yahweh may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The Apostle Paul made it very clear in these two verses that Scripture is not only *inspired* by our Heavenly Father, but that it is *also* useful for instruction in the ways of righteousness. Therefore, if we sincerely seek instruction in the ways of righteousness, we will examine Scripture and base our understanding of what is right and what is wrong on its teachings. It is important to note that the part of the Bible that we call the New

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[2] I use the transliteration of the Creator's name (יהוה) because it is the name He gave to Himself (Exodus 3:15, Isaiah 42:8, etc.). Translators admit that the Name *Yahweh* was in the original text of Scripture, but they removed it, replacing it with the title "the LORD." For a more concise explanation, I invite you to read my study titled "Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones, But Names Will Never Hurt Me: A Look at the Name We Call our Heavenly Father" or "Pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton."

Testament was not yet in existence when Paul penned these words to Timothy. Therefore, the "Scripture" that he counseled Timothy to seek instruction from is none other than what is known as the "Old Testament," the section of the Bible that, sadly, many people believe has no instructional relevance for us today. It certainly had meaning for the Apostle Paul and Timothy, and it does for my family as well.

In that "Old Testament" are some passages many use to support whether or not our Creator sanctions the observance of a celebration such as Halloween. As I mentioned earlier, the simplest rationale I can use to justify not observing Halloween is the fact that it is never mentioned in Scripture. *It is simply not there!* Does the fact that Halloween and the customs associated with it are not mentioned in the Bible necessarily mean it is wrong for us to observe it? No, of course not. My family and I solemnize (*not* celebrate) such remembrances as Memorial Day, Veterans Day and July 4th—days set aside to remember those who gave their lives for the freedoms we hold so precious, including the freedom to worship our Heavenly Father in different ways than many of our nation. These are not to be set aside as celebrations, but as memorials. But the underpinnings of Halloween celebrations should certainly arouse suspicions, not to mention a heartfelt desire to "check it out" to make certain nothing in its observance conflicts with the teachings of Scripture. *Does Halloween pass the test?*

In the Old Testament, our Creator outlined the days that He intended for us to observe. Certainly He knows, better than any man, which days should be observed and which days should ***not*** be observed. Without getting into the list of holy days prescribed by the Almighty, we can suffice it to say that Halloween did not make the list. Is it okay, though, to just come up with a celebration of sorts, then pick a date in the year on which to annually observe it?

Before I answer that question, maybe we should carefully ponder the significance of what our Heavenly Father has to say in Deuteronomy 5:32:

> 32 Ye shall observe to do therefore as Yahweh your Almighty hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

Just what does He mean, "ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left"? It's like this: Think of life as being a path. The path leads straight to the Kingdom of Heaven, but along the way, there are turns that you can take that will put you on a different course. If you go left, you exit onto a path of a certain kind of error, and if you go right, you exit onto *another* path of yet another type of error. Whenever we deviate from what our Creator's Word tells us to do, we have exited from the path that His Word has laid out for us. Could observing Halloween possibly be considered as "turning aside to the right hand or to the left"? Does the Bible give us any indications that can answer that question? Yes, it does.

"How did these nations serve their deities? Even so will I do likewise."

We are warned by Scripture against observing the customs of people who do not conform to the laws of our Creator. One of the most straightforward passages is Deuteronomy 12:29-32, displayed below:

> 29 When Yahweh thy Almighty shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land;
> 30 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their deities, saying, "How did these nations serve their deities? Even so will I do likewise."
> 31 Thou shalt not do so unto Yahweh thy Almighty: for every abomination to Yahweh, which He hateth, have they done unto their deities; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their deities.
> 32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Please don't think that just because we read about the extremes to which those nations went in their apostacy (sacrificing their own children) that the lesser violations did not matter.

But you might wonder, "What does the above passage have to do with Halloween?" Well, I have already pointed out that Halloween is not mentioned in all of Scripture. This pretty well demonstrates that it, at best, is an extra-Biblical celebration, which *should* be an automatic "red flag" for any serious Bible student. But is it possible that Halloween is *also* one of those ways that "these nations served their deities"? If it is, then this holiday falls into the "Thou shalt not do so" category! If this concern is true, then we have a problem!

Several years ago I read a series of rebuttals in the "letters to the editor" section of a local paper. The letters addressed the topic of whether or not "true Christians" should be observing Halloween. A lady wrote a letter insisting that Halloween is a "good Christian holiday." She authoritatively wrote of how it has been transferred to that status by virtue of an eighth century decree by the Catholic Church, in essence transferring the original means of observance from that of living in fear of dead spirits leaving their graves on the night of October 31st to that of paying homage to martyred saints. Hence, it is now called All Saints' Day in their honor. On the surface, her claim seems very noble—taking something very bad and transforming it into something very honorable. But is this how our Creator intended for us to worship Him? Did He intend for us to home in on pagan holidays and transform those observances into "righteous observances"? Is it okay to incorporate pagan customs into true worship? Could it be that in so doing we are *exiting the path* that our Creator laid out for us to follow?

We have a set of encyclopedias titled *The New Book of Knowledge*, which offers an interesting article on Halloween. I'll quote the first part of that article:

HALLOWEEN

> The Halloween customs that we observe on October 31 had their beginnings long, long ago. They came from the beliefs of the druids—priests of ancient Gaul and Britain. The druids believed that witches, demons, and spirits of the dead roamed the earth on the eve of November 1. Bonfires were lit to drive the bad spirits away. To protect themselves further from the mean tricks of the bad spirits, the druids offered them good things to eat. They also disguised themselves so that the spirits would think the druids belonged to their own evil company. Surely the spirits would not harm members of their own group!

> Or so the druids thought. And thus we celebrate Halloween by playing trick or treat, dressing up in costumes, and wearing masks.
>
> The autumn leaves, cornstalks, apples, and nuts which are so much a part of the Halloween season are reminders of the druids' autumn festival in honor of the harvest.
>
> Much later the Roman Catholic Church set aside the first day of November to honor all the saints who had no special days of their own. This was known as All Saints', or All Hallows', Day. The night before was called All Hallows' Even. The two festivals gradually became one, and All Hallows' Even was shortened to Halloween."[3]

Let's face it: Halloween is a time when parents allow their children to dress up as hideous monsters, scary demons, wicked witches and dead people, and it's considered "all in fun." It all stems from that old druid belief that "witches, demons, and spirits of the dead roamed the earth on the eve of November 1."

Picture yourself as a parent who was raised in an atmosphere structured on obedience to the Bible. In those early days of your youth, you heard of the beliefs of a strange cult. They believed that spirits of the dead roamed the earth. These bizarre people even dressed up like monsters in the belief that if the monsters saw them, they would leave them alone, as they would surely not harm a member of their own group!

"How silly!" you thought when you heard of those beliefs. As you grew older, though, the religious organization to which your parents belonged hatched a plan to convert members of that cult to their way of believing. They decided to allow members of the cult to continue observing their pagan festival, but persuaded them to "water it down." Now, instead of observing it in honor of dead spirits roaming the earth, it was decided to observe it in honor of all dead saints, as a memorial to them. However, as a concession, it was permitted for them to continue dressing up as monsters, demons, and witches as aforetime, so long as it was "all in fun."

You protested this sudden change because you felt the religious organization had just compromised with the pagan sect, showing unscrupulous toleration for practices that are clearly forbidden by Scripture. *Or did you?* What would your reaction have been to a sudden acceptance of the imitation of pagan rituals?

"To protect themselves further from the mean tricks of the bad spirits, the druids offered them good things to eat. They also disguised themselves so that the spirits would think the druids belonged to their own evil company. Surely the spirits would not harm members of their own group!"

—Encyclopedia *The New Book of Knowledge,* vol. 8, 1982, Grolier, Incorporated, New York, p. 15.

[3] Cf., the encyclopedia *The New Book of Knowledge,* vol. 8, Grolier, Incorporated, New York, 1982, p. 15.

Our Creator made it abundantly clear what His feelings are concerning those who earnestly practice witchcraft, sorcery, and the like. Do you think He would actually sanction the *pretending*, the *imitation*, of such acts? In Deuteronomy 18:9-14, Yahweh drives home His explicit abhorrence of those who engage in such practices:

> 9 When thou art come into the land which Yahweh thy Almighty giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.
> 10 There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,
> 11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.
> 12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto Yahweh: and because of these abominations Yahweh thy Almighty doth drive them out from before thee.
> 13 Thou shalt be perfect with Yahweh thy Almighty.
> 14 For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, Yahweh thy Almighty hath not suffered thee so *to do*.

Our Heavenly Father solemnly enjoins us to be *perfect*, i.e., entirely obedient to Him. Does imitating the practices of an ancient, pagan culture reflect our attempt at attaining such perfection? Certainly, Yahweh's expressed animosity towards those who actually carry out divination, consulting familiar spirits, practicing witchcraft, etc., should clue us in to the unlikelihood that He would permit the "pretending in fun" of those same practices.

> "I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils."
> – 1 Corinthians 10:20

Not many professing believers would express an interest in fellowshipping with demons, yet these same believers have little or no problem with their children dressing up like them! Some believers, in deference to dressing their children up in grotesque garb, opt to have them dressed in more "viewer-friendly" attire instead, such as angels, or perhaps cowboys and Indians. Surely such costumes would be acceptable to our Creator, right? Well, wearing costumes depicting noble characters, such as firemen, doctors, nurses, construction workers, etc. is certainly better than those depicting witches, demons, monsters, etc. Nevertheless, I would still urge caution. I will address this particular aspect of Halloween celebrations later.

We have already seen the *Scriptural* perspective: is that not sufficient? By even sharing a day acknowledged by all to have originally been the day that dead spirits and demons roamed the earth, whether it be in innocent-looking costumes or even by attending a Halloween party, we are expressing our consent and/or approval that such festivities are even held in the first place. We exhibit our tolerance for the observance of the day, a day not only unrecognized by our Creator, but a day *ordained by man*, sprinkled with a sugar-coating of imitation righteousness to make it appear that we somehow honor our Creator when we honor dead saints.

But a man cannot make a day holy; only the Creator can do such a thing, and Halloween is a festival declared holy by *man*, not by our Heavenly Father. It would be tantamount to our taking the Hindu festival called Holi, which is held each spring in honor of the deity Krishna, and declaring that henceforth all believers should celebrate Holi, only that we transfer the observance in honor of the Messiah instead of Krishna. Would this transformation have the blessing of our Creator? When we participate in functions that tolerate the role played by demons, witches, and spirits of dead people walking the earth, we simultaneously elect to have a type of fellowship with the roles of those demons and witches. Please consider the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:19-21, as displayed below:

> 19 What say I then? That the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?
> 20 But *I say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to Yahweh: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.
> 21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Master, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Master's table, and of the table of devils.
> 22 Do we provoke the Master to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

The complete context in which the Apostle Paul composed the above counsel involves participation in pagan sacrificial meals. This same underlying principle applies to Halloween celebrations. By participating in functions that tolerate and welcome the pagan practices of dressing up as demons, witches, ghosts, etc., we demonstrate open acceptance of such practices, and at best *minimize* our own claims to abide by the teachings of Scripture. The widespread acceptance of Halloween may contribute to a cultural environment in which practices such as tarot card reading, palm reading, and psychic consultations are increasingly regarded as harmless entertainment. I question whether this is consistent with the biblical warnings against such practices. I further question whether such would have been the case if professing believers had set their foot down and said, "NO!" when Halloween activities first began to creep in. Instead of forbidding their children to dress up like demons, witches, and other creatures, the likes of which are spoken of as being evil in Scripture, modern-day parents *encourage* these activities because it's "all in fun." It's like saying, "We know the Bible speaks against witches, demons, and the like, but we don't think there's anything wrong with dressing up like them!"

If we truly claim the Bible as our guide to living, *and* if we profess to walk the path laid out for us by our Heavenly Father, then we will strive to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). When we recognize an observance that has no Scriptural origin, and can even be proven to have a *pagan origin*, i.e. originating from those who worshipped other deities, then our spiritual alarms should blare, even *scream* at us to "Stay away!" Many people choose to ignore the alarm, or perhaps even choose to disable it. If truth could be decided by majority vote, our family would gladly participate in Halloween celebrations, for the majority of those around us certainly observe it.

However, truth is *not* decided by majority vote; in fact, the Messiah gave us a warning concerning the path that Yahweh has given us to travel. He told us there is a broad section of that path leading to *destruction*, and that there are many (a majority of people) who take that path. He added that the path leading to eternal life is *narrow*, and that only a few will take it. Let's examine this passage, as found in Matthew 7:13-14:

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and *many there be which go in thereat:*
14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

It follows that if we are earnestly striving to walk the path given to us by our Creator, we will choose to avoid any semblance of assimilation with practices established by opposing religions. It is not appropriate, therefore, for professing believers to go along with any type of celebration that is even *remotely* connected to the practices established and rooted in paganism, especially if it can be shown that such practices go against the grain of Scripture. That is how my family and I believe, and unless anyone can demonstrate to us that we are mistaken in our belief, this also explains why we will not be participating in any "trick or treat" rituals, nor any type of Halloween parties.

Should Righteous Believers Disguise Themselves as Witches, Demons, Etc.?

Some have argued that otherwise benevolent men and women dressing up like witches or demons shouldn't be confused with practicing witchcraft or idolatry. Let's see if we can defend such an understanding with the light of Scripture. First, we can all hopefully agree that practicing witchcraft and idol worship are condemned by Yahweh in His Word. In fact, Exodus 22:18 states, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." This reflects the seriousness with which Torah treats the practice. Deuteronomy 18:9-14 condemns divination, sorcery, witchcraft, casting spells, consulting mediums, and attempting to communicate with the dead. The passage describes these practices as detestable to Yahweh. In the New Testament, Acts 19:18-19 describes people who had been practicing magical arts publicly confessing their misdeeds and burning their books of magic. Galatians 5:19-21 includes witchcraft (*pharmakeia* in Greek) among the works of the flesh. So if the question is, "Does the Bible portray witchcraft and idolatry as being evil?", the answer is yes, the Bible regards witchcraft as evil, and it instructs Yahweh's people to utterly *reject* it rather than participate in it. Careful Bible study validates understanding that witchcraft and idolatry are explicitly condemned as evil.

In spite of what the Bible has to say about *practicing* witchcraft and idolatry, an opposing reader might ask, "Does Scripture equate imitating an activity for entertainment with actually practicing that activity? For instance: Does dressing as a witch necessarily constitute *practicing* witchcraft? Does dressing as a ghost necessarily constitute consulting the dead? Does pretending to be a supernatural creature necessarily constitute worshipping or honoring that creature? The biblical passages we've reviewed *explicitly* prohibit the actual practices, but they do not specifically discuss dressing up in costumes as an *imitation* of such practices.

Nevertheless, if we can agree that, Scripturally-speaking, practicing witchcraft and adoring idols is evil, this brings to mind a related principle found in Romans 12:9: "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." This verse raises a worthwhile question: *How do we reconcile professing abhorrence of evil while turning the representation of evil into a source of amusement?*

So we have seen that Deuteronomy 18:9-14 condemns practices such as divination, sorcery, witchcraft, and consulting the dead, but it says nothing about prohibiting believers from wearing costume depicting witches or demons. I'm not about to pretend that it does. Nevertheless, a believer may reasonably conclude that deliberately portraying or making entertainment out of something Scripture condemns is inconsistent with the principles of Romans 12:9 and Ephesians 5:11:

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

The Greek expression translated "have no fellowship with" conveys the idea of not sharing in or participating in something. Paul is therefore instructing believers not to become participants in the works of darkness. This raises an important question: Does avoiding participation mean merely refraining from committing the actual sin, or should believers *also* avoid activities that associate them with, normalize, or make entertainment out of those practices?

Moreover, to not have fellowship with someone or something and/or not participating in unrighteous deeds can also be understood as meaning having *nothing* to do with that individual or concept. In fact, that's how the translators of the New International Version translated Ephesians 5:11:

11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

A reasonable and relevant question is, "Does 'have no fellowship with' mean more than refraining from the actual sin?" I'm persuaded it does. Consider the distinction: A person can refrain from practicing witchcraft. That same person can nevertheless choose to portray a witch as entertainment. Or consider the example of dressing up like the ruthless German dictator, Adolf Hitler. A person can reject Hitler's ideology, yet that same person can choose to portray Hitler as a Halloween prank. In neither case does the costume necessarily prove that the wearer believes in or practices the evil being portrayed. But that is not the only question Paul encourages us to consider. The question is whether our conduct associates us with, gives favorable attention to, or helps *normalize* something that should instead be *rejected*. Just how far should we go with "having no fellowship with" something?

For clarification purposes, I do not claim that every depiction of evil constitutes participation or association with the evil itself. An actor portraying Hitler in an historical documentary, for example, is not thereby endorsing Hitler. *Context and purpose matter*.

But wearing a Halloween costume depicting an evil being for amusement is a different situation. The person is deliberately making the representation part of a celebration or entertainment. It is reasonable to ask whether that choice is consistent with the Apostle Paul's instruction. What exactly does Paul mean when he tells us to *reprove or expose the works of darkness*? Notice that he does not stop after telling believers to avoid participating. He adds: "But rather reprove them." The Greek word translated "reprove" is *elenchō* (ἐλέγχω), which can convey exposing, bringing something to light, or demonstrating its wrongdoing. This understanding creates an important contrast:

- Do not participate in the works of darkness.
- *Instead*, expose and disapprove of them.

In view of the instruction to "expose and disapprove" instead of "participating," it becomes necessary to ask if a believer dresses as a demon, witch, or notorious evil person for amusement, is that person acting consistently with the instruction to expose and reprove evil? I think anyone who worships the Creator and author of Scripture has a legitimate reason to question that consistency.

Should Righteous Believers Disguise Themselves as Angels, Cowboys, Etc.?

June and I used to be members of a church that recognized the moral dilemma of dressing up like evil characters for Halloween. They didn't want the children to miss out on the fun that other children have at Halloween, so they began hosting a special "harvest festival" on October 31st. There was no "trick or treating" allowed, but there was plenty of candy for all, and the children could dress up like cowboys, astronauts, superheroes, angels and princesses. On the surface, this "custom adjustment" seems appropriate. There is no dressing up like demons or witches, no imitations of evil characters, and everyone gets to enjoy the company of like-minded believers. But let's dig deeper.

Certainly, banning the "trick or treat" mentality is a step in the right direction. "Trick or treat" is a throwback to the old custom of playing unkind "tricks" on people unless they gave you a special treat. That custom is clearly in deference to Scripture, including the well-known verse stating that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves.[4] It also flies in the face of "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.[5]

Dressing up like angels, cowboys and astronauts is *another* step in the right direction. Nothing evil about those characters!

Nevertheless, there is a concern that I'm persuaded every Bible-believing parent should consider. Should believers participate in *any* form of Halloween celebration, even changing its name to "Harvest Festival," banning trick-or-treating, dressing up in innocent costumes, etc., given the fact that they have merely stifled most of the pagan undertones? Is it okay to borrow certain pagan customs and incorporate them into how we worship Yahweh? Or should we abstain from such practices? From my perspective, this is a call for discernment in this and many other areas. Participating in a festival whose roots are clearly traced to paganism may create an impression of passive approval, if only that the day itself is worthy of celebration at all. Deciding to celebrate on October 31st, a day whose celebration is widely recognized as stemming from pagan roots should only be made after prayer, and diligent research, including Bible study. One very pertinent Bible verse to consider is 1 Thessalonians 5:22:

> 22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Translations vary in how they render this verse. The Berean Literal Bible translates it, "Abstain from every form of evil." The Greek word *eidos* can mean *form*, *kind*, or *appearance*. This <u>one</u> verse, in and of itself, should be concerning to any parent whose children participate in Halloween activities. We've already seen that we are to have <u>no</u> fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather we're supposed to reprove and expose them. We have already seen that we are to *abhor* that which is evil and cleave to that which is good. But when we also read that we are even to abstain from or avoid <u>all</u> appearance of evil, this Scriptural combination builds a powerful case *against* participating in traditional Halloween celebrations.

Some may conclude that they honor the instruction found in 1 Thessalonians 5:22 by having celebrations on October 31st, just without the trick-or-treating and dressing up like evil characters. Others, like me, say, "Why not just stick with the holy days commanded in the Bible?" By

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[4] Cf., Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:37-39.
[5] Cf., Romans 13:10.

utterly shunning celebrations on October 31st (or *any* date not commanded in the Bible), we are staying true to the command found in Deuteronomy 5:32:

> 32 Ye shall observe to do therefore as Yahweh your Almighty hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

I mentioned the above verse earlier, but it's a significant enough verse that it merits reinforcement here. The first clause is plain enough—just do whatever Yahweh tells us to do! But the second clause strengthens the first clause. "Turning aside to the right hand or to the left" is a powerful way of saying, "*Do not deviate from what Yahweh thy Almighty tells you to do!*"

This all being said, there is certainly nothing inherently evil about dressing in costumes representing commonplace professions, such as cowboys, doctors, princesses/princes, etc., and eating candy on October 31st, or on any day of the year. Again, this should be left to each individual's discretion and conscience, hopefully founded on diligent research and prayer.

Confirming the Pagan Roots of Halloween

Halloween celebrations developed through the blending and evolution of old European folk traditions, including customs associated with the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, and has no basis in Scripture. Although its name derives from well-meaning Christian intentions, the customs associated with modern Halloween have connections to pagan traditions that predate Christianity. Any observance with such dubious, unscriptural roots is, in my opinion, contrary to the will of our Heavenly Father—not to mention a violation of the command found in Deuteronomy 5:32. Shown below is yet *another* source acknowledging Halloween's true roots:

> HALLOWEEN, IN spite of the fact that it takes its name from a Christian festival (All Hallows or All Saints' Day), comes from pagan times and has never taken on a Christian significance.
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> There were two different festivals in the early world at this time of year, and they are both represented in our own Halloween activities. When you duck for apples, or throw an apple paring over your shoulder to see what initial it makes on the floor, you are doing as the Romans did—honoring Pomona, the Roman goddess of orchards and especially of apple orchards. And when you light a candle inside the jeering pumpkin face, you are in a small way imitating the Celtic Druids of northern Britain (described in the chapter on Saint Patrick's Day), who lit a fire to scare away winter and the evil spirits who were waiting to come rushing in when summer was over.
>
> On that night between October and November, the Druids kindled great fires on the hills as a barrier against the evil to come. (These Halloween fires still burn every year in many places, but especially in Scotland and Wales.) By waving burning wisps of plaited straw aloft on pitchforks, people tried to frighten off demons and witches, but just in case this didn't work, they also put on grotesque and terrifying costumes. For if you dressed in a horrible enough fashion and went trooping around with the spirits all night,

> they would think you were one of them, and do you no harm. This is where the persistent Halloween custom of "dressing up" and wearing masks originated; and among the children who come to the door on Halloween, calling "trick or treat," the most alarming costumes are still considered the best."[6]

It seems rather difficult to deny the unscriptural development of Halloween; it is also difficult to deny what Scripture says regarding imitating pagan practices. As I alluded to earlier, the early believers, in an attempt to gain new converts, did so with the understanding that the new converts could retain many of their old rituals, only with new meanings added. The Reader's Digest book *Strange Stories, Amazing Facts,* by The Reader's Digest Association, documents this historical fact:

> Although Christianity has swept the world in a relatively short time, as the histories of great religions go, the early missionaries faced an uphill task. The pagans were reluctant to give up their false gods and ancient practices.
>
> So the missionaries, unable to convert them easily to an entirely new code of worship, did the next best thing. They took the pagan festivals as they were and gradually grafted the observances of the new faith onto these festivals and the rites and customs surrounding them.[7]

Some may question the accuracy of the sources I've cited in this study. Some may even express concern that I'm not citing more modern scholarship, as though modern scholars may know more about the history of Halloween than those who lived closer to its roots. Modern sources such as history.com affirm the findings of the older sources. Here's an excerpt from its article "Samhain":

> In the eighth century, Pope Gregory III moved the Roman observance of All Saints' Day to November 1, and Pope Gregory IV later extended it throughout the Church. All Souls' Day on November 2 developed separately and was formalized later.
>
> Neither of the two newer Christian holidays, however, did away with the pagan aspects of the celebration. October 31 became known as All Hallows Eve, or Halloween, and contained much of the traditional pagan practices before being adopted in 19th-century America by Irish immigrants.[8]

Acclaimed media outlet BBC also carried a relevant article titled "Samhain to Soulmass: The Pagan origins of Familiar Halloween Rituals," and offers balanced historical context of the pagan roots of Halloween:

> At Samhain, Celtic Pagans in Ireland would put out their home fires and light one giant bonfire in the village, which they would dance around and act out stories of death, regeneration and survival. As the whole village joined in to dance, animals and crops were burned as sacrifices to Celtic deities, to thank them for the previous year's harvest and encourage their goodwill for the next.
>
> It was believed that at this time the veil between this world and the spirit world was at its thinnest – allowing the spirits of the dead to pass through and mingle with the living. The sacred energy of the rituals, it was believed, allowed the living and the dead to communicate, and gave Druid priests and Celtic shamans heightened perception.

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[6] Cf., *The Book of Holidays,* by J. Walker McSpadden, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1958, pp. 149-150.
[7] Cf., *Strange Stories, Amazing Facts,* The Reader's Digest Association, Pleasantville, NY, 1976, p. 283.
[8] Cf., history.com, "Samhain," History.com Editors, Last Updated: October 23, 2026.

> And this is where the dress-up factor came in – costumes and ugly masks were worn to scare away malevolent spirits believed to have been set free from the realm of the dead. This was also known as "mumming" or "guising".
>
> Those early Samhain dressing-up rituals began to change when Pope Gregory I (590-604) arrived in Britain from Rome to convert Pagan Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. The Gregorian mission decreed that Samhain festivities must incorporate Christian saints "to ward off the sprites and evil creatures of the night", says Baylis. All Souls Day, 2 November, was created by the Church, "so people could still call on their dead to aid them"; All Saints Day, 1 November, was also known as All Hallows, so 31 October later became All Hallows' Eve, later known as Halloween.[9]

Much of the information regarding the pagan practices and beliefs of ancient Druids is difficult to confirm because the Druids did not keep written records.[10] We are left to rely on oral traditions of legends that have been passed down. Ronald Hutton, in his book *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, traces Halloween celebrations to the worship of Samhain. I will spare you all the details of his research, but in a chapter he dedicates to Samhain, he writes the following regarding the worship of Samhain in Wales:

> The Winter's Eve blazes survived with diminishing frequency across their full range for most of the nineteenth century, and lasted in Merionethshire until the 1930's. There is an exact parallel to the Scottish and Welsh customs on the Isle of Man, where in 1845 it was recorded that fires called 'Sauin' had been kindled each 31 October 'till a late period' to fend off fairies and witches.[11]

"Sauin" was an alternate spelling of "Samhain." Hutton concludes his chapter with the following summary of his research:

> Thus, there seems to be no doubt that the opening of November was the time of a major pagan festival which was celebrated, at the very least, in all those parts of the British Isles which had a pastoral economy. At most, it may have been general among the 'Celtic' peoples. There is no evidence that it was connected with the dead, and no proof that it opened the year, but it was certainly a time when supernatural forces were especially guarded against or propitiated; activities which took different forms in different regions.[12]

Although we may not have a crystal clear vision of exactly how ancient Druids practiced and believed, there is enough oral tradition to allow us to piece together a culture of very superstitious people who did not worship Yahweh, the Creator to whom the Bible is attributed. They most likely had no knowledge of the Bible and its teachings. Their worship of idols, including Samhain, makes clear the fact that they did *not* worship Yahweh, the one true *Elohim* (Almighty). Why should we want to incorporate *any* of their customs or rituals into our worship of Yahweh?

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[9] Cf., BBC.com, "Samhain to Soulmass: The Pagan origins of Familiar Halloween Rituals," by Beverley D'Silva, 31 October 2024, Copyright 2026 BBC. All rights reserved. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is a British public service broadcaster based in London, UK.
[10] Cf., for example, "How Metal is the Past?" by Margaret Killjoy, 10/29/2025.
[11] Cf., *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* by Ronald Hutton, chapter 35, "Samhain," Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, p. 368.
[12] Ibid, pp. 369-70.

"I don't get no respect!"

As difficult as it may be to imagine, when missionaries attempted to convert pagans to worship the Creator as represented by Scripture, the pagans' basic response was, "Well, if we go along with *that* religion, we'll have to do it on *our* terms!" And the missionaries, anxious to bring in more converts, ignored the fact of the matter—that we do not come to our Heavenly Father on ***our*** terms, but on ***His*** terms![13] Their concern was not about respecting Yahweh and His Word, but rather scoring converts. To put this in layman's terms, you may recall the old commercial about E. F. Hutton®. Two men are sitting at a table in a crowded room fraught with garbled conversations. As the camera focuses on the two men, one of them says, "Well, my broker is E. F. Hutton®, and he says…."

The room abruptly turns silent. The man turns to see everyone's ear turns toward his friend in a fervent attempt to hear exactly what it is E. F. Hutton® has to say. The commercial draws to a close with a stately voice advising us, "When E. F. Hutton® talks, people listen." In an ideal world, our Creator would be treated like E. F. Hutton®. He names the terms, we carry them out. No questions asked because we trust that He has our best interests in mind, and in fact knows ***precisely*** what is best for us. *That is how we should honor and respect our Creator!*

But this is not an ideal world, and our Creator is ***not*** treated like the E. F. Hutton® client in the commercial. Instead, He is treated like *another* television character, the late comedian named Rodney Dangerfield, who was forever proclaiming, "I don't get no respect!" When we start naming the terms on which we choose to worship our Heavenly Father, we simultaneously attempt to remove Him from His position of omnipotent authority. I say we *attempt* to remove Him because ultimately our "attempt" will fail. In naming such terms as, "I'll worship Him, but I'm not going to stop dressing up like demons on the eve of November 1st!", we will one day discover we only fooled ourselves.

I hope this evidence serves to demonstrate my family's reasons for believing and practicing as we do, including the reasoning behind our unique lifestyle. I'm persuaded that an intelligent Creator created us and the world on which we dwell, and that He gave us instructions for how He wants us to live our lives. Those instructions are found in the Bible.

I closed my initial study on this topic with one last verse of Scripture, which I feel serves to seal the logic I use for my belief on this matter. It is found in Philippians 4:8:

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[13] One well-known example is the absorption of the pagan Saturnalia customs into a then-newly-contrived holiday whose date closely parallels that of Saturnalia. That newly-contrived holiday is known as Christmas, a holiday that was unknown until the fourth century. Although it falls on a single date, its celebration extends to many days, i.e., "the twelve days of Christmas." Cf., for example, history.com, "Saturnalia," History.com Editors, Published: December 05, 2017, Last Updated: May 28, 2025, where we read its closing remarks: "Pagans and Christians co-existed (though not always happily) during this period [4th century CE), and this likely represented an effort to convince the remaining pagan Romans to accept Christianity as Rome's official religion. Before the end of the fourth century, many of the traditions of Saturnalia—including giving gifts, singing, lighting candles, feasting and merrymaking—had become absorbed by the traditions of Christmas as many of us know them today." Like Christmas, Halloween is the cultural rebranding of a mixture of pagan customs.

> 8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on such things!

Does Halloween pass this test? Is it true? *No*. Is it pure? *No*. Is there any virtue in its celebration? *No.* And of course, Is it Scriptural observance? *No*. There are simply too many negatives for my wife and me. Halloween fails on all counts. So with malice towards none, I can only hope that this explanation of our beliefs serves to help you to at least understand why we believe as we do. Again, if you can show me that my wife and I are mistaken in our belief, we invite your comments. We will do our best to treat you like E. F. Hutton®!

BRIEF REVIEW

"...Thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations."	+	**"Halloween, in spite of the fact that it takes its name from a Christian festival (All Saints' Day), comes from pagan times and has never taken on a Christian significance."**	=	☹

