

A Biblical Assessment of Halloween

Fellowship Meeting

By Rev. David Silversides

sermonaudio.com

Preached on: Sunday, October 29, 2000

Loughbrickland Reformed Presbyterian

22 Main Street

Loughbrickland, Co. Down

Northern Ireland

BT32 3NQ

UK

Website: www.loughbrickland.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/ldrpc

Assessment of Halloween, "A Biblical Assessment of Halloween." And we do want to stress at the outset that we're talking about a biblical assessment of Halloween, and we trust that you've come this evening with a desire to know what the Bible says on this subject and that as a result of God's gracious working in us, that we have a desire to submit to the verdict of the word of God. You see, if we come to this subject and we come to this meeting determined to believe that Halloween is just harmless fun for the children, it is highly likely that you will go away holding the same opinion as you did when you came, but with even greater determination than before. But our thoughts on all things must be molded by the word of God. There are no no-go areas as far as the application of the word of God is concerned.

So let us consider, first of all, the origins of Halloween. The origins of Halloween. Where did it come from? First of all, there are the pagan origins. The pagan origins. The origin of Halloween goes back to the time before Christ in the practices of the Druids of Europe, especially Gaul and the British Isles, among the ancient Celts. Their year was divided into two parts, November to April was winter, and May to October was summer. October the 31st was the end of the pagan year, and October the 31st to November the 1st, that is the night between October the 31st and the next morning, was the feast of Samhain, the Lord of Death. It was at this time they believed that the veil between the natural and the supernatural world was at its thinnest, and therefore it was at this time that the spirits of the dead were supposed to be able to return to haunt the living, and particularly that they could enter the bodies of animals; and the superstition that's quite common regarding black cats stems from that because it was believed that evil spirits entered black cats. But they believed generally that the spirits of the dead were re-emerged particularly at that time and often entered into the bodies of animals, and on this night, the Druids held a harvest festival at which animal sacrifices and also human sacrifices were offered to Samhain, the Lord of Death. The human sacrifices were often criminals or prisoners of war, and as the Druids watched the death agonies of the victims, they were supposed by divination to be able to foretell the future of the local village.

Now that's the pagan origin of Halloween. Then secondly, the customs. The customs. First of all, the turnip lantern or the jack-o'-lantern as it's known in some places. The Druids dressed in hooded robes and had slung over their shoulders on a cord a large hollowed out turnip with an oil lamp burning inside and with a demon-like face carved on the side. This was the representation of what they regarded as the demon inside, this face on the outside, and this was meant to be the Druid spirit guide or personal god. In America, pumpkins were used rather than turnips and the spirit guide was called Jock or Jack, hence the name jack-o'-lantern. So that's the origin of the turnip lantern.

Trick or treat. Trick or Treat also goes back to the Druids and to paganism. The spirits of the dead were said to return to their homes and localities on this night, and they were said to return with power to cast spells and do tricks which they would do if they were not appeased by a treat and the treat usually was in the form of food. People dressed up in hideous masks and costumes so as to disguise themselves among the evil spirit world, so that the idea was that they looked grotesque and that they wouldn't be, as it were, so obvious among this world of spirits. Some suggest also that the Druids dressed up and played trick or treat themselves, demanding particular food or else they would curse the inhabitants of that particular house. The Druids had a peculiar diet as part of their ritual and they would demand that particular food or else curse the inhabitants. So that's trick or treat.

Then thirdly, bobbing for apples. Bobbing for apples. Kneeling down at a tub of water with apples floating in it and seeking to remove the apple without the use of the hands was regarded as a means of gaining the favor of the spirits, and then the ability to peel the apple in one piece without breaking the peel was also seen as a means of gaining the favor of the spirits. So that's bobbing for apples.

Then fourthly, bonfires. Bonfires fulfill two purposes, to frighten off evil spirits and also to burn the remains of sacrifices. The word bonfire is derived from bone-fires and the bones of the sacrifices were burned and hence bone-fires became bonfires in process of time. Often someone would grab burning sticks from the bonfire and run around the boundaries of the village in order to discourage evil spirits.

So there we have the pagan origin and the customs, then thirdly under this heading of the origins of Halloween, we have the Romish assimilation. The Romish assimilation. As apostasy progressed, apostasy of the church progressed and developed more and more into full-blown Romanism, Roman Catholicism, the policy was to incorporate pagan festivals by supposedly Christianizing them, and so some of the leading events of the church calendar are a supposed attempt to Christianize formerly pagan festivals. And of course that's true of Christmas and Easter, but it's also true of Halloween on October the 31st. Halloween is derived as follows. It was known as the festival of all the hallowed, all hallowed. You know that hallow means to make holy. Hallowed be thy name. All hallowed, all the hallowed, all the holy ones. or All Saints Day. So October the 31st was All Saints Day or All Hallowed Day and the evening was known as Hallow-evening or All Hallows Evening, sorry, All Hallows Eve, which in process of time became Hallowein and then Halloween. So it's All Saints Day, All Hallowed Day, All Hallows

Day, All the Hallows, which is the same meaning, which eventually became All Hallows Eve, Hallowein, and then Halloween.

Pope Boniface IV reconsecrated the Roman pantheon, previously used for the worship of Sibelius, to the Virgin Mary in 609 and it was used for prayers for the dead. In 834, Pope Gregory IV extended the feast for all the church, as it was then regarded, and it became known as All Saints Day at that time and the purpose of it was to pray for the dead. And November is the month when Rome especially prays for the dead, supposedly in purgatory. So Rome took this pagan festival, made it All Saints Day, and it marks the beginning of the period where the dead are particularly prayed for, all the saints, and nevertheless, in much of Europe, the Druid practices continued alongside the Romanist practices. So despite the Romanist imposition of All Saints Day, the practices of the Druid religion continued along with that and of course, that has usually been the case. Rome's attempts to supposedly Christianize pagan festivals have always ended up with the pagan customs carrying on alongside the Roman Catholic pseudo-Christian pagan customs.

So then, secondly, so that's the origin, the origin. Secondly, the current observance. The current observance. I'm sure most of us realize that Halloween is observed at two levels. We may call them the serious and the jovial. The two levels of observance. First of all, the serious. Occultists and Satanists, witches and wizards today all observe Halloween as their most sacred festival so not only is Halloween a popish festival, All Saints Day, but it is also still a festival of witchcraft, real witchcraft. Witches' covens meet at Halloween. Animals are sacrificed, and occasionally human sacrifice does still take place. It is not unknown for a man and a woman in a coven to produce a baby for sacrifice. You see, if there are medical people, if there are doctors and nurses in the coven, that can be done without the existence of the child being registered in any way, and statistics indicate that more animals and even more children are abducted at that time of year than at other times. Now, the children are no doubt rare cases, but they are not unknown, and cats are frequently used in sacrifice to Satan. What we're talking about here is explicit Satanism.

There is another form of witchcraft called Wicca, which is different, although still utterly evil. Wicca is a different form of witchcraft. Wicca witchcraft denies the existence of Satan and blames the Christian church, that the idea of Satan, they say, is an invention of Christianity and in Wicca they worship nature. It's pantheistic, more or less, that everything is to be worshiped, everything is God. And Wicca has obtained considerable respectability but both wicker and outright open Satanism celebrate Halloween as their most special annual event.

So the paganism of Halloween is still with us. It did not die out centuries ago. It is still practiced. What I've told you is the serious observance of Halloween, and it does go on. Then we can look at what we might call the jovial. Many celebrate Halloween totally unaware of the significance of the traditions and the practices that go along with it, but those who observe Halloween are preoccupied with death, skeletons, tombstones and so on, and although it is made to be fun, the reason that Halloween celebrations center on death and on tombstones and skeletons and this sort of thing, as well as grotesque masks,

it is all to do with the real pagan background of Halloween. That brings us, thirdly, to the biblical teaching. The biblical teaching. After all this, isn't it good to remember that God is still sovereign, he is almighty, he is holy, and he governs all things, and he has spoken to us in his infallible word.

First of all, witchcraft and occultism. Deuteronomy chapter 18 and verse 10 to 12. Deuteronomy 18 verse 10.

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, [a necromancer is someone who seeks to communicate with the dead]. 12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

Here it is made quite clear that all the practices of witchcraft, spiritism, wizardry and so on are detested by God. God detests them.

2 Chronicles 33 and verse 6. This is speaking of Manasseh.

6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. 7 And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God,

And so on. There Manasseh provoked the Lord to anger by witchcraft, by wizards, by a familiar spirit, by enchantments and so on.

Galatians chapter 5 and verse 19 to 21.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

And so on. Witchcraft is evil in the sight of the Lord. Perhaps it's unnecessary to labor the point, but God detests witchcraft and spiritism. They are an abomination in the sight of the Lord and Christians should have absolutely nothing to do with such things, and even the more commonplace things, the Ouija board and so on, seances, these things are to be detested.

But what about the fun observance, the so-called fun observance of Halloween? 1 Corinthians chapter 10. 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 19 and 20.

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 God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Now here the apostle is saying that those who engage in idolatrous feasts, whatever they intended, the false gods didn't exist, but they were nonetheless involved in sacrificing to devils. Whatever their intention, the reality was that it was devil worship. To honor a special day in the calendar of Satanists is wrong.

Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 11. Ephesians 5 and verse 11 to 13.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. 13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

It is not harmless fun to observe a day on the Satanist calendar to engage in at least the mimicry of the practices of witchcraft and to allow our children to do so. That is not fun. We should be different. We should care about the dishonor of God's name involved in witchcraft and it is not a matter of fun. How can we parody that which is detestable to God and a direct attack upon the honor of God?

So what about our children? For a minority of children, as they grow up, the fun of Halloween becomes the door to serious occultism; that should not be disregarded or discounted. Halloween, in its less serious observance, is a doorway into real occultism and that does happen. I don't say it happens to the majority, but it does happen. Children, young people growing up, they're inquisitive. They have a sense of adventure and of mystery. The possibility of extraordinary powers is alluring and intriguing.

More generally, do we seriously want our children to celebrate a festival that God detests? What sort of parents tell their children or encourage their children to celebrate what is a Satanist festival? Have we become so afraid to step out of line in this province that we will conform to such a disgusting practice in case people think we're odd? Do we want our children to believe that the devil and evil spirits and contact with the dead are just a joke? Because that is what Halloween at the most mundane level is teaching. It's telling children that witchcraft, evil spirits, the devil, contact with the dead, it's not serious and it's just a laughing matter. It's just a bit of fun. Is that really what Christians should be teaching their children? If we believe the Bible then we know that these things are not just a bit of fun, that they're not unreal, that they do exist.

In 1 Chronicles 10 and verse 13, we read of Saul, King Saul. 1 Chronicles 10 verse 13.

13 So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; 14 And

enquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

Saul inquired of a woman that had a familiar spirit and God detested that, God hated that, and what do you think God thinks of Christian parents allowing their children to play at such things?

The account of that is in 1 Samuel 28, 1 Samuel 28. You remember that Saul asked, look at verse 10,

10 And Saul sware to her by the LORD,

This is the irony of it. Saul is still talking about the Lord. He's gone through a witch and he's still talking about the Lord. He

sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. 11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. 12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. 13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. 14 And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. 15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

Why did the woman scream? Why did she cry out? And then there has been discussion over whether this was actually Samuel or not. Well, the text indicates that it was. It says Samuel, so we have to take that at face value, and I do believe that that's why the woman cried out. You see, mediums don't really have the ability to contact the dead. They don't. But they do have the ability, it would seem, to apparently contact the dead. The voice of the departed can be reproduced by supernatural evil power, but it isn't the dead. But in this case it was Samuel. The woman knew something was different and so she cried out, and the difference was that it really was Samuel. I don't mean that the medium always knows that it's not the dead but she evidently knew that something was different this time, and that difference must truly be that it was actually Samuel, that God in providence sent Samuel to speak to Saul.

But these are not things for children to laugh at and to play with, and then there is another question, do we want our children to laugh at the contradiction of the biblical view of death? Halloween is a direct, whether serious or jovial, a direct contradiction of the

biblical doctrine of death. The whole background is that death when death takes place there is still the possibility of coming back, of ghosts, of spirits coming back and so forth, and of course Satan does delude people with the idea that the departed can be brought back. But the biblical view of death is completely different.

It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.

Or Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 7,

7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

When men die, their soul either goes to heaven with Christ, or to hell. So in Luke 16:22 and 23, the rich man, he died, his body was buried, and he was in hell being in torments. Lazarus' soul went to be in Abraham's bosom. Philippians 1:21 and 23, the Apostle Paul was looking forward, and he was in a strait between two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. The dying thief was told, "Verily I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me in Paradise." In 2 Corinthians 4, the apostle speaks of being absent from the body, present with the Lord.

So the Christian view of death, is that when death takes place, the soul goes to heaven or hell; those who are saved by Christ, the soul goes to heaven to be with Christ, those who die without Christ, the soul goes to hell to suffer the wrath of God. And at the resurrection day, the last day, the bodies of the righteous and the wicked are raised and body and soul of the wicked is cast into hell, whereas for the people of God it is a resurrection to glory. Halloween contradicts all of that. To teach our children to laugh at that which is a direct attack upon the truth of God over the matter of death is utterly wrong. We are to teach our children truth. The children need truth, truth and nothing but truth. Even in assessing the lie, it must be from the standpoint of truth. What we should be telling our children about Halloween is showing them how wicked it is in the light of the word of God. We can't pretend it doesn't exist, but we expose it for them in the light of the truth of God, not indulging them in the observance of it and in making light, making trivial that which God hates and that which contradicts the biblical teaching that we should be giving them concerning death and what follows.

So then, for those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and who have tasted that the Lord is good, how can we have pleasure in either the reality or the mimicry of that which is an abomination to the Lord? So what are we going to do if children come to the door with trick or treat? What are you going to do? Are you just going to say, "Well, I don't believe it, but I'll just get rid of them"? Is that what you're going to do? Or are you going to behave like a Christian? Are you going to tell them you're a Christian and that Christians are against Halloween? Are you going to have something to hand to give them to tell them why it's wrong and to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ? Or are you just going to give in and follow the pagan practices, give them the money because you want to get back to the fire? It's time Christians stood their ground. It doesn't matter if

everybody does it. It's what God approves that matters and nothing else. We must walk in the light as he is in the light. Amen.