

## **What About Halloween?**

Is it sinful for children to dress up in costumes and trick-or-treat on Halloween? Is it wrong in the sight of God to carve jack-o-lanterns and hang up Halloween decorations like witches, black cats, goblins, and ghosts?

Some sincere brethren and other religious folk think Halloween and all other of those practices are Satanic and ungodly. But are they? What does the Bible say? There is no question that Halloween is a holiday rooted in the occult practices and superstitions of ancient pagans, most likely those who lived in Northern Europe, Scandinavia, and England. There are many people who feel that this alone means that Christians should have nothing to do with Halloween.

This reasoning is flawed, however, because Halloween no longer has anything to do with the worship of false gods in our culture.

Dave Miller has well said, "Christians are not responsible for connotations associated with long forgotten origins of a given practice. Rather what God holds us accountable for are the current connotations.... What does Halloween mean in our culture? Halloween to the average American is a time when children wear costumes, go to haunted houses, drink apple cider, and carve pumpkins. Halloween is the one time of the year when a child can knock on the door of a total stranger and expect to receive candy! The meaning attached in our culture to any given observance becomes the key for ascertaining whether the practice is authorized by the principles of scripture." 1

A Biblical example of this is the eating of meat in the New Testament. In I Corinthians 10: 14-23, Paul condemned it if it associated the Christian with idolatry and false religion. But in verses 24-33 of the same chapter, he allowed it if it did not cause a child of God to fellowship error or violate his conscience. Today, the whole issue of eating meats in our culture is irrelevant because it is no longer associated with idolatry. The same is true with trick-or-treating in costume on Halloween.

Like the eating of meat, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with it, but rather it depends on the cultural context in which it is placed.

Suppose, though, some brother began to argue that we should all be vegetarians today because the eating of meats was associated with idolatry in the first century and cited I Corinthians 10:14-22 to prove it? Would anybody be impressed with such a line of reasoning? I hope not! Neither should we be impressed with the same argument applied to Halloween.

What about the association of Halloween with witchcraft or Satanism? Such a link exists only with a small group of occultists today.

In the Bible, sorcery and other occult practices are almost always associated with idolatry and worship of false gods. It had nothing to do directly with worship of Satan.

In the middle ages, witchcraft became associated with Satanism. The association of Satanism with Halloween is not tenable historically, and those Satanists who worship the devil on October 31 do so to mock Christianity more than anything else. But many modern witches, like their ancient counterparts, are pagans and do not even believe in devils.

Modern witches do celebrate Halloween as a pagan holiday like their ancient brethren did, but this should no more cause Christians to quit enjoying hamburgers because modern Hindus worship cows!

If a Christian began worshipping a tree or casting a spell on October 31 simply because it is Halloween, then we have a problem. Of course, if celebrating Halloween even as a secular holiday causes one to violate his conscience, then he should by no means participate in it.

Article by Travis Quartermous (Talledega Church of Christ Newsletter, Oct. 24, 2004)