

Three Questions About Halloween

This year, North American consumers will spend billions and billions of dollars on costumes, candy, and decorations for Halloween. Homes will be decorated with skulls, skeletons, mummies, monsters, and tombstones.

Never underestimate the power of Halloween, the Toronto Star says, as it cited a survey by thrift store chain Value Village that found shoppers here and south of the border will spend an average of \$300 apiece on costumes, candy, and other festive decorations.

But as the Star notes, though Halloween may be good times for the kiddies it can quickly turn into a fiscal nightmare for parents. And if you think Value Village's estimate is high, guess again.

"Statistics Canada said we spent C\$1.15 billion for fright night in 2006. Halloween now ranks as the third most important seasonal category behind Christmas and summer backyard living for Canadian Tire."

Last year, Canadians spent \$322 million in the month of October for candy, confectionery and snack food sales, an increase of \$64 million over average monthly sales, the Star adds.

Although company sales are skyrocketing, there is a very dark side to Halloween. Thousands flock to haunted houses and scary movies to get thrilled or frightened. The world is fascinated with the occult, demons, and spells.

Even 8 year olds read the 600 page Harry Potter novels. The internet has many sites devoted to tarot cards, spells, and demonology.

Segments of mainstream religions are also heavily involved concerning the mysteries regarding demonic work. The Catholic priests have their rites, holy water, and crucifixes. Charismatics claim to cast demons out of possessed men and women.

We read in I Timothy 4:1, “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.”

In this letter to Timothy Paul denounces many forms of error which have been the plague of the Christian church in all ages. Those who deal with spirits, or profess to do so, those who multiply forms and ceremonies, those who make religion to lie in meats and drinks, and these who attach importance to legends and traditions, are all heavily censured, as they deserve.

Leading on to the worship of angels, fear of demons, and attempts at commerce with the dead. In every age some deceivers and deceived ones have wandered in this direction. Far from us be such darkness.

Where did Halloween come from? What does Halloween celebrate? What should the response of Christians be to Halloween?

The title of my message is, “*Three Questions About Halloween*. The purpose of this message is to answer these three questions and to burden our souls for the lost and perishing in the world.

1. Where does Halloween come from?

It is a practice steeped in false religion.

An assistant history professor at a major university writes, "The earliest trace (of Halloween) is the Celtic festival, Samhain (sow-in), which was the Celtic New Year. It was the day of the dead, and they believed the souls of the deceased would be available.”

The Celts lived predominantly in Ireland, and they celebrated their new year on Nov. 1, which marked the end of summer and the beginning of the dark, cold winter. The Celts believed that on the night of Oct. 31, just before their new year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred and the ghosts of the dead returned to earth.

Samhain (sow-in) means "summer's end" by the Celts. "This day marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter, a time of year that was often associated with human death."

It is most likely this reason that the Druids (Celtic pagans) believed that the spirits of those who died the preceding year roamed the earth the night of Samhain (sow-in).

The Druids celebrated this holiday "with a great fire festival to encourage the dimming Sun not to vanish" and people "danced round bonfires to keep evil sprits away, but left their doors open in hopes that the kind spirits of loved ones might join them around their hearths".

On this night, "divination was thought to be more effective than any other time of the year, so methods were derived to ascertain who might marry, what great person might be born, who might rise to prominence, or who might die."

Also during the celebration, the Celts "wore costumes, typically consisting of animal heads and skins, and attempted to tell each other's fortunes.

Crops were burned and animals were sacrificed. The spirits were believed to be either "entertained by the living", or to "find a body to possess for the incoming year". This all gives reasons as to why dressing up like witches, ghosts and goblins, villagers could avoid being possessed.”

During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church at that time, decided to make the change-over from pagan religion to Christianity a bit easier, and therefore allowed the new converts to maintain some of their pagan feasts.

It was agreed, however, that from now on they would be celebrated as "Christian" feasts. So instead of praying to their heathen gods, they would now pray to, and remember the deaths of saints.

For this reason the church decided to call November 1 the "Day of All Saints," and the mass to be celebrated on that day "Alhallowmass." In consequence of this, the evening prior to this day was named, "All Hallowed Evening" which subsequently was abbreviated as "Halloween."

In spite of this effort to make October 31 a "holy evening," all the old customs continued to be practiced, and made this evening anything BUT a holy evening!

The following extracts from the catechism of Dr. James Butler, approved and recommended by Dr. Kenrick, "bishop of Philadelphia," expresses the general views of Roman Catholics on the homage of saints.

"Q. How do Catholics distinguish between the honour they give to God, and the honour they give to the saints, when they pray to God and the saints? A. Of God alone they beg grace and mercy; and of the saints they only ask the assistance of their prayers.

Q. Is it lawful to recommend ourselves to the saints, and ask their prayers? A. Yes; as it is lawful and a very pious practice to ask the prayers of our fellow creatures on earth, and to pray for them."

In the "Prayer to be said before mass," the following language occurs, "In union with the holy church and its minister, and invoking the blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and all the angels and saints; we now offer the adorable sacrifice of the mass," etc.

In the "General Confession" it is said, "I confess to Almighty God, to the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly."

So, also, the Council of Trent declared, Sess. 25, Concerning the Invocation of the Saints, "that it is good and useful to supplicate them, and to fly to their prayers, power, and aid; but that they who deny that the saints are to be invoked, or who assert that they do not pray for men, or that their invocation of them is idolatry, hold an impious opinion."

Where does Halloween come from? It is a practice steeped in false religion.

2. What does Halloween celebrate?

It celebrates death. It makes light of the curse. Death is not a joke. It is not a laughing matter.

What is death? Death is man's greatest enemy. Death is not annihilation but separation. Death will either conquer you or you will conquer death.

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:26, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

There are three kinds of death.

1. *Physical death* is separation between the body and the soul.

We read in Hebrews 9:27, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”

2. *Spiritual death* is separation between the soul and God.

Adam and Eve died when they ate the forbidden fruit.

We read in I Timothy 5:6, “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.”

3. *Eternal death* is separation of body and soul from God.

It is also referred to in the Bible as the second death.

Revelation 2:11

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the **second death**.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the **second death** hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 20:14

And **death** and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**.

Revelation 21:8

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the **second death**.

Why is their death?

The Bible declares, “The wages of sin is death.”

God invented death so that sin might be punished.

Are you ready for death?

At Prayer Meeting last Wednesday night, we prayed for the Costello family. Mr. Costello, husband, father, and pastor was walking his dog and a car hit him and he died.

3. What should the response of a Christian be to Halloween?

As Christians, why are we here in this world? Are we here to live in a safe and protected environment, guarded against the evils in the world, or are we called to reach out into a world filled with dangers and be the light of Christ?

Halloween brings people of the world to our door step. Halloween brings our neighbors out into the streets. I can think of various creative ways to seize this opportunity for developing new relationships and sharing my faith.

Christians should respond to Halloween with gospel compassion. The unbelieving, Christ-rejecting world lives in perpetual fear of death. It isn't just the experience of death, but rather what the Bible calls "a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume [God's] adversaries" (Hebrews 10:27). Witches, ghosts, and evil spirits are not terrifying; God's wrath unleashed on the impenitent sinner--now that is *truly* terrifying. Sinners in the Hands of Angry God!!!

Christians should use Halloween and all that it brings to the imagination--death imagery, superstition, expressions of debauched revelry--as an opportunity to engage the unbelieving world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God has given everyone a conscience that responds to His truth (Romans 2:14-16), and the conscience is the Christian's ally in the evangelistic enterprise.

Today Halloween is almost exclusively an secular holiday, but many who celebrate have no concept of its religious origins or pagan heritage.

Children dress up in entertaining costumes, wander the neighborhood in search of candy, and tell each other scary ghost stories; but adults often engage in shameful acts of drunkenness and debauchery.

We must honor God by keeping ourselves separate from the world and by showing mercy to those who are perishing. Halloween provides the Christian with the opportunity to accomplish both of those things in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's a message that is holy, set apart from the world; it's a message that is the very mercy of a forgiving God. What better time of the year is there to share such a message than Halloween?

In closing, Halloween is steeped in false religion. It celebrates death and the curse. It provides an opportunity to talk about the gospel. May we be bold to tell sinners about the person and work of Jesus Christ! Let us pray.