



October 2024

Hello Friends & Family,

Every year, at the end of October, a perplexing and controversial question is raised for followers of Jesus Christ: ***"Do we, or should we, as Christians, participate in Halloween celebrations?"***

There appear to be many misunderstandings about the roots of the celebration of *All Hallow's Eve* (the night before *All Saints Day*). Dramatic stories about the holidays' origins connected with Druids and satanic rituals abound. I have not, however, found significant substantiation for those anecdotal tales. What are the historic roots of celebrating *All Hallow's Eve*, especially among Christian communities?

According to James Jordan, in an issue of *Open Book*, **Halloween was historically viewed as the symbolic observance of Christ's victory over Satan.** The holiday acknowledges that sin and death were utterly defeated by the work of our Lord upon the cross. Therefore, Christians in years past felt free to mock the Devil, his minions, and death by portraying them in a variety of costumes (a practice which I do not wholly endorse). The practice of children dressing up as devilish characters then was not to promote evil but rather to make fun of Satan's failure and defeat at Calvary.

Recognizing the defeat of Satan was undoubtedly Martin Luther's understanding of the celebration of Halloween as well. Due to the day's association with the defeat of sin and Satan, he chose October 31st to post his *Ninety-five Theses*, which launched the *Reformation* of the church.

We celebrate *All Saints' Day* because of what Christ has done for us. **We celebrate His victory over sin and death.** That is what followers of Jesus Christ can celebrate on *All Hallow's Eve* or Halloween.

Rather than recognize how earlier Christians intentionally took captive a local cultural practice and turned the focus to Christ and something to celebrate, many well-meaning Christians argue that because there may be pagan associations with the dates on which such holidays as Halloween and Christmas are celebrated, those holidays are now out-of-bounds for believers. However, that train of logic is not applied to other Christian traditions.

For example, preaching sermons in a church service is another "pagan" tradition. The practice was introduced into the church by the early sophists who came to faith in Jesus and brought their rhetoric with them. Using an order of worship (including taking a cash offering) is a pagan tradition born in the Roman Temples. This practice was commonplace to those who had come to the Christian faith from a background of worshipping Roman gods.

Many of the beloved classic hymns of the Western Church are set to the tunes of famous tavern (bar) songs of their day. **Earlier Christians believed we should take every opportunity and cultural practice and turn its focus to Christ.**

Some Christians attribute the practice of carving a pumpkin, hollowing out the contents, and placing a candle inside as some type of demonic symbol. Nothing could be further from the truth. Where in Scripture do you find an example of Satan demonizing a pumpkin head? The custom of making jack-o'-lanterns can be found in numerous countries worldwide without connection to something evil. They are simply decorations, and these carved pumpkins can sometimes be considered an art form.

We can take advantage of holidays such as Halloween, Christmas, and Easter to draw even greater focus upon the marvelous work of Jesus Christ. Utilize those opportunities to ask folks, *"Do you know how earlier generations of Christians viewed this celebration or holiday?"* **What an opportunity to share the Gospel!**

Keep your heart, mind, and focus upon Christ (Colossians 3:1-2), and take every thought (e.g. holiday, tradition, song, etc.) captive (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Celebrating the power of Jesus Christ,

~ Dr. Toby A. Travis
(for Tannia, Emma, Iris, and Buttercup too!)





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