

Halloween

by David Posey

I've never been one to get all worked up about a Christian's involvement in holidays. I've observed that Jesus attended a feast which we know as Hanukkah (John 10:22-23) without comment. Whether he "celebrated" it is another question; but he didn't criticize it.

I have no issue with Xmas trees and lights and decorations, as long as they don't leave the impression that we are celebrating Christ's birth on December 25th (the Bible is silent about the date of his birth).

Celebrating a day as a religious holiday - complete with worship is not authorized by God. But the observance of any day in a secular manner is totally up to the individual and his conscience. That includes "Christmas," with its gift-giving, its carols and its festivities, and "Easter," with its egg hunts, chocolate bunnies and baskets.

There are some who disagree that we should acknowledge those two days at all and that's their right; it's totally a matter of conscience. But Halloween (October 31st) is probably, the most controversial of all the holidays. In fact, it's not even an officially recognized holiday — you do not get the day off from work or school; it's just another day that happens to end with some costumes and candy for kids.

It had its origin 2000 years ago in Celtic lore and came to America early on. But was rejected as too pagan by many of the colonies where Puritan religion was prominent. This is a synopsis of its development:

In the late 1800s, there was a move in America to mold Halloween into a holiday more about community and neighborly get togethers than about ghosts, pranks and witchcraft. At the turn of the century, Halloween parties for both children and adults became the most common way to celebrate the day. Parties focused on games, foods of the season and festive costumes. Parents were encouraged by newspapers and community leaders to take anything "frightening" or "grotesque" out of Halloween celebrations. Because of these efforts, Halloween lost most of its superstitious and religious overtones by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Since then, it seems that Halloween has gotten creepier by the year. When I was a kid, the boys dressed up as pirates or policemen or very friendly ghosts ("Casper") while the girls were generally dressed up as fairies or angels or princesses.

Now, there are genuinely scary and grotesque costumes. There are zombies — lots of zombies — skeletons, really ugly monsters and even criminals and politicians (those may be the scariest of all). It doesn't seem the aim is "fun" anymore, just how creepy and scary we can be.

I've always had a problem with putting a devil's costume on kids — that minimizes the evil being that he is. Satan is nothing to joke about. In my later years, I've also questioned the wisdom of putting our kids into the costumes of witches and goblins and other "evil spirits."

Manasseh, who succeeded the good king Hezekiah in Judah, got into all kinds of trouble with God. Why? He made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Benhinnom; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger. II Chron. 33:6

The fact that he sacrificed his children is horrifying; but the text puts witchcraft, divination, sorcery, mediums and spiritists in the same league. That's disturbing to say the least. And if my children were still tiny trick or treaters, I would definitely steer clear of any costume or make up that makes light of any of those ungodly activities.

Let's think about what we are promoting when we choose costumes for our children. I would hope that we opt for fun and harmless over creepy and criminal.