

Halloween

For this talk, we'll have a look at an incident from the Old Testament and see that while many people have fun on Halloween, there is an under-current that is something beyond simply having fun.

Christians aren't out to kill people's fun or rain on their parade. Instead, what Christians try to do is show people what lies underneath some of the things that happen on Halloween, and under a lot of things that happen around us. You see, we are in a war zone. Planet earth is a war zone and there are 2 armies: the forces of good and the forces of evil. The forces of evil use all kinds of deception, dressing things up to look good and fun, when in fact under the surface these things are evil. Halloween is one of these things... So is taking drugs, stealing, having wild parties, sleeping around, getting wasted... (see 1 Corinthians 6.9-10). What seems sweet and enjoyable on the surface is nothing like that ultimately as it's a temptation put in front of us to turn us away from God. And we know that the evil one comes to destroy and kill.

(Note links all checked in May 2019).

1 Samuel 28

This Bible chapter is often entitled Saul and the Witch of Endor. In this instance, Saul has sinned and disobeyed God. Because what he's done is so serious, God has rejected him as King. Saul was also used to asking the advice of the prophet Samuel. But by this time, Samuel has died (verse 3). Because Saul is unable to hear from God (deliberate disobedience to God puts up a barrier between us and God) see verse 7, he was desperate. The Philistine army was preparing and Saul was terrified and felt alone. So he made another mistake.

We know that Saul had got rid of the mediums and spiritists from the land previously. This was absolutely right because God absolutely opposes anything like witchcraft, ouija boards, seances, tarot cards, fortune tellers and mediums. While there are people (like Houdini) who trick people, there is an evil force that is real – and yet has nothing of the power that God has. In 1 Samuel 15.22-23, we find that God has rejected Saul and Samuel speaks God's words to Saul:

But Samuel replied:

"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD ?

To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has rejected you as king."

So we know that rebellion, arrogance, idolatry and divination are all evil and in opposition to God. One Bible commentator writes that the Hebrew words ('owb' for medium and 'yiddehonee' for spiritist) are better translated as a necromancer – one who evokes the dead (and not 'witch'). One scholar believes that the Hebrew word 'owb' represents a channel between the world of the living and the dead. There is a sense that this woman is allowed by God to see things that people cannot normally see (verse 12 it says she saw a spirit, or spirits, or gods). This has been strictly not allowed by God...

"Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:31).

"I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people." (Leviticus 20:6).

"A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads." (Leviticus 20:27).

But Saul knowingly and deliberately consulted a woman who was a medium. He got this woman to bring up Samuel from the dead and he communicated with an annoyed Samuel (verse 15, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?"). Samuel told him that God had rejected him and then gave him specific words. There is some debate whether the medium actually called up Samuel (maybe it was evil spirits mimicking Samuel) as God had prohibited this. However, it seems clear that this was actually Samuel – the medium screamed when she saw Samuel and Samuel then made specific and completely accurate prophecies which would not have been known to evil spirits. A strange and incredible encounter!

This is the context of Saul going to visit the 'witch' of Endor – he was so desperate that he did what was evil in the eyes of God and consulted a medium. We need to learn from this and have nothing to do with evil.

Point

So what's this got to do with Halloween?

Well a basic overview of the history of Halloween is this ([adapted from about.com](https://www.about.com)): Halloween was seen by the ancient Celts as a time when the veil between the world of the living and the world of the dead was thinner so people could 'see' the dead. "A time when the spiritual and material worlds touched for a moment." This was called Samhain or 'summer's end'. This was a turning point of the year and was a celebration of the dead. They believed the normal laws of time and space changed at this time so those in the spirit world could interact with the world of the living. "While the Church could not support a general feast for all the dead, it created a festival for the blessed dead, all those hallowed so All Hallows was transformed into All Saints and All Souls day."

So it's a pagan festival but developed by the (then Catholic) church to become a day celebrating great saints. Doesn't sound too bad does it? But let's think...

Galatians 5.19-21 says, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

When we look at the word translated as 'witchcraft' ('pharmakeia') we find it means the following ([taken from preceptaustin.org](http://preceptaustin.org)): "Sorcery per se describes an occult practice in which the adherents claim to have supernatural powers and knowledge, including the ability to foretell the future and to summon evil spirits through charms and magical spells... The term, from its association with idolatry, denotes incantation—superstitious dealings with the spirit-world... In Isaiah 47:9, it is a synonym of the word 'epaiode' which means enchantment."

Isaiah 47.9 and Revelation 18.23 both use this same word to describe deception by which nations will be deceived. In the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Bible), the word 'pharmakeia' is used 6 times, including in the episode by which Moses battled with the sorcerers of Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:11 – Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers (pharmakos – those who prepare and use drugs for magical purposes or ritual witchcraft), and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts (Lxx = their sorceries = pharmakeia).

Exodus 8:7 – And the magicians did the same with their secret arts (Lxx = their sorceries = pharmakeia), making frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

Interestingly, this is also associated with drug-taking which is a route by which the mind is altered and demonic connection is potentially made more possible – as found out by studying various tribes and cultures around the world. As we know from Ephesians 5.18, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." So being drunk is opposite to being filled with the Spirit – the same with drug misuse.

So we find that there is a serious side to anything associated with the occult. As Robin Morgan is quoted as saying on the preceptaustin.org site, "The teaching of the Bible, from the first books of Moses through to the final book of Revelation is clear. Sorcery and witchcraft are manifestations of Satan's power and influence in this world. They are evil and wrong, they are destined for eternal judgment, but in the meantime they have the potential of causing harm. How can we protect ourselves? What do we need to do?"

1. Have nothing to do with any kind of superstition like Friday 13th, black cats or any other nonsense.
2. Stay away from anything like psychics or psychic hotlines, witchcraft, ouija boards, seances, tarot cards, fortune tellers and mediums.
3. Study the Bible and be led by the Holy Spirit. Why spend time doing things that do not glorify God, don't help you learn about God but instead point in a completely opposite

way. If you're a Christian, you need the Word of God inside you to stay strong so learn it and let it transform you.

Isaiah 8.19-20 says, "When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn."

4. Don't watch TV programmes that are increasingly popular and anything to do with horror, sickening violence, demons, vampires or anything vaguely similar. There are a number of series like this and they will do you harm. Equally, any internet sites, computer games or music that focus on this need to be chucked away and smashed up!

5. Prayer – praying the blood of Jesus over your life and family. Stay accountable to others. Confess the Bible over your life, learn the Bible and get it right inside your heart and mind. Then keep saying it and stay in worship every day. Spend time with God and you won't need a lot of the other stuff!

6. This Halloween, think of doing something positive. Don't go out dressed up as a witch, a demon or something evil. Think of what you can do – get out and pray for people, give out free stuff, look out for older people, have a party, have a night of prayer for an area, encourage the police in your area. Do good!

Even if we think Halloween is a bit of fun, the question is why do people dress up like demons and witches? Yep, it's a bit of fun and an excuse for a party, but there isn't a day celebrating angels and even Christmas has had its true meaning misused and abused. Halloween is a time where older people are intimidated and where disorder can increase (near where I live an estate gets shut off to buses and traffic on Halloween as there is so much trouble). Just ask yourself whether what you do on Halloween (and generally!) glorifies God and gives him all the fame. If it doesn't, you may want to check your motivation.

By the way, don't be a spoil sport – myfishbites definitely isn't either!! If you're just up for chilling, and having a good night and laugh with good people, God loves that too! Just keep focused on God and don't do stuff that God wouldn't like!

7. Finally, a lesson from Exodus 7.10-12

"So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs."

Get this – the sorcerers of Egypt may have been able to impersonate some of the things that Moses was able to do, but not everything. And guess what, not only did Moses go on to do miracles way beyond the power of these sorcerers, Aaron's staff when it became a

snake went and swallowed the staffs of the magicians! Later when they could not do what God used Moses to do, they even confessed it was the work of God, Yahweh.

See Exodus 8.18-19: "But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals. The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God.")

The lesson is that God's power is so much greater and so much more powerful than evil! Don't under-estimate anything, but know that God will one day swallow up and destroy all evil. Until that point, pray and use the power that is inside of you by the Holy Spirit to defeat evil. And that includes much of Halloween!