



Pastor's Page

Lighten our darkness

As I chatted with the check out girl in the Co-op she suddenly said "I can't believe it's nearly Halloween again!" I was unsure as to how I should respond. I wanted to acknowledge this fact (that it was nearly Halloween) but not appear in any way to be endorsing the festival. So I said, "yes and before you know it, it will be Christmas!" Well maybe that was a cop-out but at least it moved us into more Christian territory. As I left the store I noticed all the Halloween based merchandise (pumpkins, broom sticks, long black capes etc..) and wondered again as to what our response should be as Christians to this very dark night.

An Historical View Since the eighth century the Catholic church has celebrated "All saints day" on the 1st November. The night before the celebration is known as "All Hallows Eve" ("hallows" meanings saints) So, Halloween literally means the evening before "All saints day". However, the origin of Halloween probably lies in the 5th century BC when the Irish Celts celebrated a holiday on 31st October to mark the end of summer. The pagan Celts believed on that day the disembodied spirits of all those who had died throughout the preceding year would come back in search of living bodied to possess for the next year. It was believed to be their only hope for the afterlife. Naturally, the still living did not want to be possessed so on the night of October 31 villagers would dress up in ghoulish costumes and noisily parade around the neighbourhood being as disruptive as possible in order to frighten way the spirits looking for bodies to possess. The Romans adopted the Celtic practices as their own, but as belief in spirit possession waned, the practice of dressing up like hobgoblins, ghosts, and witches took on a more ceremonial role.

A Biblical View. Since the bible says that God detests divination, sorcery, interpreting omens, engaging in witchcraft, casting spells, being a medium, a spiritualist or consulting with the dead (Deut 18:12) it seems reasonable to conclude that He doesn't much approve of Halloween! However, it is most unlikely that bobbing for apples, making pumpkin lanterns or even engaging in childhood pranks is what God detests. Yet, Satan is a real enemy and it's vital that we take seriously the spiritual warfare in which we're involved. And it may just be that the devil uses all the paraphernalia that surrounds Halloween to desensitise us to his evil intent. The bible says; **"be self-controlled your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him standing firm in the faith."** (1 Peter 5:8-9) We can resist the devil because he is a defeated foe. Jesus won the battle against Satan and sin when he died on the cross then three days later rose from the dead. As a result death has lost its sting it has been swallowed up in victory. And even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we need not be afraid because God is with us, death has been defeated and scary as shadows may be, can do us absolutely no harm! (Psalm 23:4)

So perhaps we should seize our opportunity this week as the world focuses on the darker side of life to witness to Jesus - the light of the world.

26th October 2008