



What's **Hallowed**
about
Halloween?

What's in a Name?

Halloween is a contraction of “All Hallows’ Evening,” meaning the day (or evening) before All Saints Day. Just as Christmas Eve precedes Christmas, Halloween precedes All Saints Day, where Christians honor the saints who have gone before and are presently with Jesus. To be hallowed means to be holy, or set apart for God.

All Hallows Even
(evening before All Saints Day)



Hallow-E'en
 (“Holy Eve”)



Halloween
(circa 1745)

A Mystery of History

The origins of today’s Halloween traditions are difficult to trace since several different traditions merged into what we know in America.

One of those traditions is the Celtic festival, Samhain, during which people believed the boundaries between our material world and the spiritual world were thinned, allowing spirits to enter the world. Rather than being a time for whimsical family fun, many ancient practices exhibited terror, for it was believed that dark, spiritual realities were present. Many feared ghosts and ghouls would visit them, potentially wreaking havoc on people and crops. Though historians debate how Samhain relates to current Halloween practices, it is apparent that Samhain rituals were originally about warding off or appeasing spirits in order to prevent destruction.

When Christian Meets Tradition

As Christianity spread, significant thought was given concerning what to do with Samhain. Several aspects of the celebration were good, but were part of the wrong story. Rather than discard the festival altogether, early Christians placed it within a better story that tells the Gospel and produces hope in place of terror.

Paul writes in Colossians 2:13-15, “*You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross*” (NLT).

This Good News of life in Christ tangibly resulted in the love and care for the poor in their midst. Christians began to redeem the traditions of the world, resulting in new traditions—such as blessing and feeding poor children begging door to door—based on several lines of conviction:

First, **the only spiritual power that needs to be appeased is the one, true God**, not the spirits of dead relatives. He is holy and hates the evil, injustice, and deeds of darkness in which humanity has participated.

Through the death of Jesus, forgiveness is available and a pathway to reconciliation established for all who place their trust in him. Jesus lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died in order to “cancel the record of charges against us.”

Second, although there is indeed a spiritual world that is hostile to humanity, **these spiritual powers have been conquered through**

the person and work of Jesus, who “disarmed the spiritual rulers.” The Christian lives daily in freedom from both the guilt and the power of sin, sharing Jesus’ victory in the present!

Third, **death and the grave are not something to be feared**. Jesus Christ has conquered both and Christians proclaim a tremendous confidence in the life to come. Rather than dressing up as ghouls to confuse the spirits, Christians look to the saints as inspiration for what it means to live by faith in the power of Jesus who makes us “alive with him.”

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The Hallowedness of Halloween

For many centuries, All Saints Day has been a time to celebrate life, not death. Since Jesus Christ died and was raised to life again, we believe that the dead in Christ will also rise again. Their faithful lives on earth will result in victorious life in heaven.

Halloween becomes holy when it directs us to remember and emulate those saints who have gone before us, living in freedom from the powers of sin with assurance that as children of God we will live eternally with Him.

Our hope and prayer is that this Halloween will be hallowed for you, as you and your family participate by faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Colossians 1:11-14



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