Halloween – What’s it all about?

Halloween originated as the Celtic festival ‘Samhain’ in Britain & Ireland before Christ was born. Samhain marked the eve of their New Year which began when the crops were finished and the power of the sun was fading for winter.

Eventually the evening of October 31 became the date and time when it was held – when they believed the “veil” separating the living and the dead was thinnest, allowing spirits and dead souls to enter the living world and influence another year. The Celtic priests (Druids) were given the task of appeasing those spirits so no harm could come to the people or animals.

It is believed that, like many pagan cultures around the world, the Celts left out food for the spirits, hoping that a “treat” would prevent an evil “trick”. Dressing up and roaming from house to house, demanding food in exchange for the “spirits” leaving the home unharmed, evolved as the historical outward form of this festival.

As Christianity spread, the Church in the 700’s AD decided to combat Halloween by celebrating and remembering the Lord of Life (Jesus) and in particular those saints who had died. So November 1st came to be called ‘All Saints Day’ – also called All Hallows Evening, and from that we get the modern name, Halloween.

Halloween customs came to America in the mid 1800’s and have, to most people, lost the original significance. It is now the second most popular party night of the year after New Year’s Eve. To most, the opportunity to dress up, party, have fun etc. is all that is cared about, yet there is a darker side.

Halloween continues a ritual for the dead and evil spirits, it is unashamedly driven by the commercialism of American retailers wanting to ‘cash in’. Not to mention the safety of the children who roam the streets or problems associated with parties of unidentifiable people.

From a Christian perspective, we need to examine some issues with Halloween.

- What may not hurt you may hurt others. If people look to Christians for guidance and role modeling – anything causing them to stumble in their walk with God is not good. (Matthew 18:5-9) Children can also become scared, exposed to images of evil spirits and the occult, and also think that they can do what they like if not ‘appeased’ with a treat, eg. throw stones at houses, acts of vandalism and annoyance to people.
- Celebrate the Lord of Life. Jesus victory over sin, death and the power of the devil and evil spirits should be our focus and delight. There is no need to focus on these others – even for one night. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.” Hebrews 12:2

God bless     Pastor Steve Liersch