

# THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY

## CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

**DATE:** October 18, 2015

**SUBJECT:** The Truth about Halloween

**SCRIPTURE:** Deuteronomy 18:9-14; Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 7:26; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 11:14

**AIM:** To share with the children and parents the source and evil background of Halloween, and that we should avoid participating in it.

**MEMORY VERSES TO CHOOSE FROM:** 1 Thessalonians 5:5 (“For you are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.”); Psalm: 97:10a (“O you who love Jehovah, hate evil!”); Leviticus 20:7 (“Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am Jehovah your God.”)

**SUGGESTED SONGS:** 174 (“When Ugly Satan Knocks On My Heart’s Door”); 52 (“God is Light”); 9305 (BSS Daniel CD – “There Once Was A Boy Named Daniel”); 9306 (BSS Daniel CD – “Daniel and His Three Companions”); 9307 (BSS Daniel CD – “Oh Yes I Can - I Can Choose”); 9313 (BSS Daniel CD – “Our God is Living”); 9314 (BSS Daniel CD – “We will Not, Not, Not”); 52 (“God is Always Near Me”); 33 (“When Your Fears Grow Mountain High”)

**APPROACH:** Ask the children what they know about “Halloween.” (**Note to serving ones:** The children’s response will help us gauge their situation so that we do not unnecessarily stir their imaginations, particularly the younger children. Knowing their thoughts ahead of time will also help address questions they have, as they may know someone in their family or among their friends who celebrate Halloween. We do not need to give all the details in this lesson.)

**CONTENT:** Many people around us may celebrate Halloween. In stores, we see advertisements relating to Halloween, such as decorations and costumes, and in schools, there may be parties and activities. But Halloween is full of evil things, and the source of that holiday is from people who did not believe in God and were far apart from God. Aside from Halloween, many things of Satan have become geared toward children, including books, toys, video games and television shows that involve fortune-telling, magic, death, etc. We are children of God and should not participate in such evil.

### I. THE SOURCE OF HALLOWEEN

A group of people from a long time ago, the ancient Celts (residing in England, Ireland, and Scotland) began their calendar year on November 1. In addition to being the start of the new year, the date also marked the beginning of winter for them. It was also the time of harvest – crops were reaped and stored, and animals brought in from pasture to be settled down for winter. They believed that on this day only were the souls of those who had died during the year “admitted” into the otherworld (a place for the dead). Demons, witches, and fairies joined the wandering souls. The Celts did not believe in the Lord Jesus and therefore believed in a lot of things from evil imaginations and superstitions. The date was celebrated with a feast – the biggest and most important holiday of the year. It was called Samhain (pronounced Sah-ween).

Some of the festivities of the holiday included animal sacrifices, offering fruits and vegetables to dead people, and lighting bonfires. The Celts practiced such things because they were afraid of evil spirits.

Druids, who were the priests of the Celts, would disguise themselves by wearing costumes made of animal heads and skins so that the spirits would think the Druids belonged to their own company and thus would not harm them. The Druids were generally recognized by authors of the time (including Julius Caesar of the conquering Romans) to be very cruel and addicted to magical practices and divination. They were enormously powerful and exercised great influence over the Celtic people. They no doubt led the people to practice many evil things.

**For younger children:** *We can alternatively mention that the Celts believed that dead people would enter into another world only on this day, but omit mentioning wandering souls, witches, etc., as this may stir their imaginations and scare them. As mentioned in the applications below, we should also emphasize that we do not need to be afraid of superstitious things like the Celts, because we have God with us all the time.*

### II. TRANSITION: SAMHAIN "CHRISTIANIZED"

In AD 300-400, missionaries supported by the Roman Catholic Church converted the land to Christianity. The Catholic missionaries tried to change the godless practices of the Celtic people and to blot out holidays such as Samhain. In AD 601, Pope Gregory I enacted an official policy: Don't try to stop the people's practices, instead put them to use, e.g., if a tree were worshipped as an idol, it would no longer be cut down; it would be consecrated to Christ and its worship allowed to continue. Catholic missionaries practiced this very successful principle of "Christianization" as new lands were conquered; holy days were purposely moved or set to coincide with native pagan holidays. (Pagan is the worship of false gods.) For example, the birth of Christ was designated as December 25 to correspond with pagan celebrations around that time of year.

Samhain itself was "Christianized" when an existing Catholic holy day, a festival of the saints, was moved to November 1. It was declared All Saints' Day to honor dead saints. The pagan practices, however, continued and eventually it was realized that this holy day wasn't an appropriate substitute for Samhain. Consequently, November 2 was "made" All Souls' Day. On this day the souls of the dead, especially those who had died during that year, were honored and prayed for. This much more closely matched the intent of Samhain. Nonetheless, the pagan practices remained. The celebrating began on the sundown prior to November 1. October 31 was called "All Hallows Eve" or, "eve of all the holy ones' day." Hence the name Halloween. People still believed that on this night the souls of the dead wandered, along with the demons, witches, and fairies. Gifts of food were set out to appease them. As time went on people began to wear costumes, depicting themselves as these creatures. They performed tricks or pranks in exchange for the food and drink offerings.

### III. CURRENT PRACTICES

The following activities remain as the most popular part of the Halloween celebration, but they are all from an evil source.

1. **Trick-or-Treating:** This practice has its direct roots in Samhain when people played tricks to earn food meant for wandering souls. The concept has developed over the centuries. In the late 19th century there was an Irish belief that fairies played pranks on Halloween. The fairies supposedly influenced youths to carry out practical jokes on that night, e.g., putting a buggy on a roof, overturning small buildings, and breaking windows. In the 20th century, this developed into the practice of "trick-or-treat." In the present day, groups of youths roam our streets damaging property and sometimes menacing people. Also, in recent years many children have been "tricked" into partaking of deadly poisons and other harmful things that were placed in candies and treats distributed by wicked people.
2. **Costumes:** This custom is also directly related to the ancient holiday of Samhain and to the practices of the evil Druids. To this day, costumes of witches, ghosts, and skeletons are still very popular. We must, however, realize that the donning of even the most innocent costume is still directly associated with Samhain.
3. **Jack-o-Lanterns:** According to an Irish legend, the jack-o-lantern was named for a man called Jack who could not enter heaven because he was a miser. He could not enter hell because he had played jokes on the devil. As a result, Jack had to walk the earth with his lantern – lit with a coal from hell given to him by the devil – until Judgment Day. In America, pumpkins replaced turnips (used in ancient Ireland) as lanterns.

### SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM:

- **As people of God, we should not participate in Halloween activities and bring Halloween objects into our homes.** While Halloween has many things that seem "fun" and "innocent" for children, such as getting candy and dressing up in cute costumes, we need to realize that this holiday is evil and very much related to things of Satan, God's enemy. If we package a rotten apple with beautiful wrapping, it is still a rotten apple inside.
- **We can be together with our Christian friends.** We should refrain from participating in Halloween parties and partaking of the goodies – just like Daniel and his friends. We should not go trick-or-treating, wear costumes, give out candy, put up decorations, etc. Daniel and his friends did not feel "left out" of activities. Rather, they took a stand for God and were not wishy-washy. Instead of participating in Halloween activities, we can get together with other children in the church and do something fun together.
- **Help the children to respond to questions from friends and family.** What if our friends or relatives ask us about Halloween? What can we answer? Help the children role play by asking them such things as, "What are you going to be dressed as for Halloween?" "Are you going to the Halloween party?" Children can give a simple answer, such as saying that we do not participate in Halloween because it is from an evil source, and has a lot of dark and evil things.
- **How parents can help.** Parents can ask teachers for alternative projects (maybe a fall scene or fall leaves, etc.), and request that their children be excused from all Halloween activities.
- **We do not need to be afraid because we have God with us.** We should stay away from Halloween and other evil things, but we also should not be afraid if we see something scary unintentionally. The Celts and Druids were afraid of many things. But we believe in the true God, the creator of the universe, and He is always with us. Since we have God, and are people of God, we do not need to be afraid.

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