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Monthly Newsletter

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In This Issue:

Origins of Halloween

P. 1

Horror Movies

P. 3

Should Christians Celebrate Halloween?

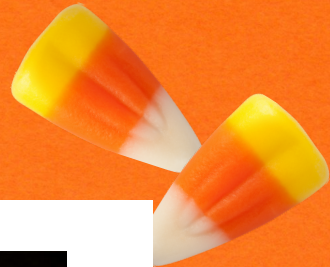
P. 5

Spiritual Warfare

P. 7

After Words:
The Spiritual Realm

P. 10





Holiday Trivia

Americans spend an estimated \$6 billion annually on Halloween, making it the second largest commercial holiday after Christmas.

As Christianity began to conquer paganism, in the 9th century, Pope Gregory declared November 1 to be All Saint's Day.

Jack O'Lanterns were originally carved from turnips, not pumpkins.

Origins of Halloween

According to History.com

The origins of Halloween are probably unknown to the average modern American. We view history through the lens of *tradition*. Things that were once regarded as truth are constantly being exchanged for *reasoning*. We celebrate whatever *feels* good.

October 31 is the annual observance of All Hallows Eve, Halloween in common speech. The tradition originated among Celtic people, marking the end of the harvest and the beginning of winter, "a time of year that was often associated with human death."

"Celtics believed that on the night before the new year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred. On the night of Oct. 31, they celebrated Samhain (SAH-win), when it was believed the ghosts of the dead returned to earth."

Samhain "[was] a pagan religious festival...[a night when] the barrier between the physical world and the spiritual world break down [allowing] more interaction between humans and the [inhabitants] of the Otherworld."

On Halloween, the Celtic priests (called Druids) made predictions about the future. "These prophesies were an important source of comfort during the long, dark winter. To commemorate the event, Druids built "sacred bonfires, where the people gathered to burn crops and animal sacrifices to Celtic deities. During the celebration, the Celts wore costumes, typically consisting of animal heads and skins."



Halloween reached the American Colonies in the 19th century. "The first celebrations included 'play parties,' which were public events held to celebrate the harvest. Neighbors would share stories of the dead, tell each other's fortunes, dance and sing."

In the late 19th century, Irish immigrants broadly popularized Halloween as it wasn't previously celebrated across the nation. Borrowing from European traditions, "trick or treat" was born from Americans who dressed up in costumes and went house to house to ask for food or money.

"In the late 1800s, America [molded] Halloween into a holiday more about community and neighborly get-togethers than ghosts, pranks and witchcraft. At the turn of the century, Halloween parties for both children and adults became the most common way to celebrate the day."

Source & quotes:

<https://www.history.com/topics/halloween/history-of-halloween>





HORROR MOVIES

For 90s kids, horror movies were a staple tradition. On any given weekend, the siblings and cousins could be found sprawled on the floor with blankets and bowls of popcorn, watching heads roll. Halloween night was license to indulge all the more. My aunt (the family babysitter) introduced me to slasher films at a young age and I continued to watch them well into adulthood.

I confess, I am a sucker for psychological thrillers, suspense, and crime scene investigations. Although I gave up grotesque screenplays many years ago, I only recently stopped watching Hallmark murder mysteries and Lifetime movies. My convictions caught up with me and I'm no longer interested in this kind of entertainment. All of it is humanity at its worst.

Obviously, horror movies are the creation of dark minds and unregenerate souls. Modern filmmakers like Wes Craven, John Carpenter, Tim Burton, and Stephen King come from a lineage of Hollywood eccentrics with unhinged imaginations. They all made their fortunes selling fear, anxiety, and sex at cheap rates.

In recent decades, I started noticing a dramatic shift from "boogiemans" productions to full blown demonic encounters. It's all categorically evil to be sure, but films such as Paranormal Activity (I refused to watch) and remakes of the Exorcist and Amityville are particularly nefarious. The "fun" in watching this stuff dies once you're spiritually enlightened and forced to battle the real thing.



If you can name the films above, your childhood was probably as messed up as mine! These represent the softer, more palatable, PG side of the horror industry. We know children are impressionable and trusting; they sometimes lack the ability to discern reality from fiction. Parents should use caution when allowing certain ages to watch "spooky" things.

Creators of Disney (Pixar) films should not be given a free pass. Even more so, it's the seemingly innocent characters and heroic plots that need vetting before little ones form attachments and sing along. The sin in culture and the propaganda of monsters is shameless and it knows no bounds. If we aren't careful, we will lose a generation to sinister influences of witchcraft and perversion.

I don't believe one can be possessed by watching horror movies (Poltergeist comes to mind). However, the more we view them, the more desensitized, welcoming, and approving we are toward demonic things. For some, horror flicks will be the gateway to playing with Ouija boards, reading tarot cards, and practicing magic.

Consider watching horror movies to be like driving a car. The more you do it, the more you increase your chances of dying in an accident. While most adults can scarcely avoid using motor vehicles in their day to day activities, horror films are not necessary in any phase of life.

The background features a dark orange and black color scheme. In the center, a large, full moon is partially obscured by the silhouette of a multi-towered castle with glowing windows. Numerous black bat silhouettes are scattered across the scene, some flying in the sky and others near the castle. In the lower foreground, there are silhouettes of a graveyard with several crosses and tombstones. The overall atmosphere is spooky and Halloween-themed.

Should Christians Celebrate Halloween?

My personal opinion is Christians should avoid celebrating Halloween in its original form. That is, we should not "host the undead" or invite any spirit, other than the Holy Spirit, to commune with us. Mediums, psychics, fortunetelling, and all other forms of witchcraft are forbidden in Scripture.

I have observed enjoyment in both kids and adults who dress up to attend costume parties and participate in events like *Trunk or Treat*. This is mostly innocent and I don't discern any immediate harm in these festivities.

Nevertheless, Oct. 31 originally marked a one-night reign of terror on earth. Once we grasp the knowledge of good and evil, it's conceivable that formal Halloween celebrations would come to an end.

Halloween 2019, I'll never forget watching a live production called *Freak Show* put on by a church in my hometown. This was a youth event but parents and elders were encouraged to attend. The play was intense, well choreographed, and the

technical snafus added entertainment value. Major scenes were in the "underworld", the circus headquarters for evil spirits that cause mayhem in the lives of humans. With threats of violence and fear, Satan ordered spirits of suicide, addiction, rage, and self-mutilation to lure vulnerable souls to the "dark side."

Appropriately, the freak show included a mini-sermon and ended with an altar call. Streams of teenagers, and some adults, went forward for prayer to *get rid of their demons* and give their life to Christ.

This approach to spirituality proved attractive to younger audiences. The presentation made for easy evangelism and the messaging was effective. I recommend every skeptic and unbeliever see something like it at least once.

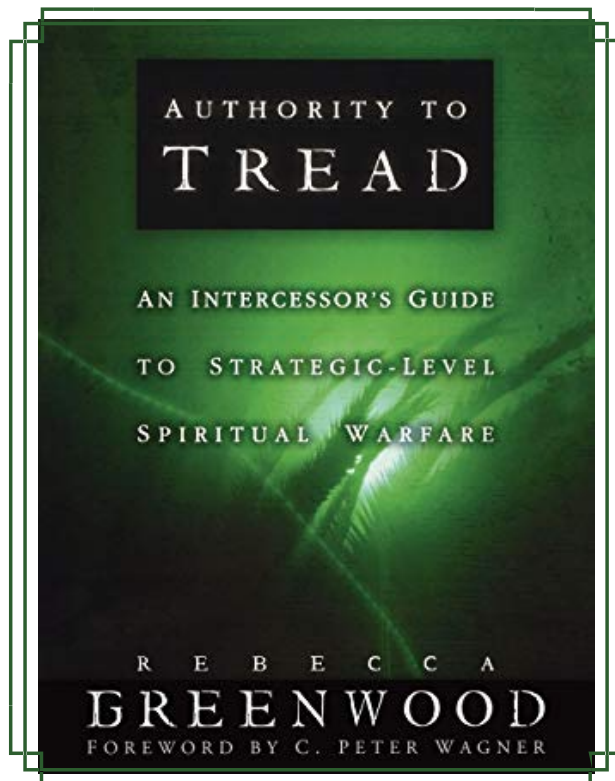
I'd give the play two thumbs up, but I wouldn't personally make an annual tradition of attending the event. (In two years, and since becoming a member of the church, the *Freak Show* hasn't returned.)

Halloween can be found on a long list of useless westernized traditions. Americans love to get together and "toast" to things that neither profit the individual soul nor advance humankind as a whole. Free society has made us carnally indulgent and spiritually lazy.

Yet, I don't condemn anyone - Christian or not - who chooses to celebrate Halloween. Although it is founded on paganism and witchcraft, I understand modern reasoning leaves the day open to personal interpretation and conviction.

Do I think Jesus would have celebrated Halloween if it existed in biblical times? No. Then again, I don't think He would have celebrated Valentine's Day, Christmas, or any other holiday that's not marked on the Orthodox Jewish calendar.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE



I highly recommend the book pictured above. Rebecca Greenwood is an experienced regional prayer warrior who makes a strong case for the preparation, consecration and maturity that must precede intercessory prayer.

True Christians have full access to the power that's in the name of Jesus. Moving into spiritual warfare demands a sinless life, sharp discernment, and total dependency on the Holy Spirit. We should never set out to "put the devil in his place" until we have a good understanding of what this warfare requires. An example of what happens when one steps into an unauthorized position of spiritual warfare can be found in the story of the Seven Sons of Sceva (see Acts 19:13-16).

THREE LEVELS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

- 1 - *Ground-level warfare*
 - 2 - *Occult-level warfare*
 - 3 - *Strategic-level warfare*
-

Spiritual warfare refers to an invisible battle in the spiritual realm involving a power confrontation between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. -P. 21

Ground-Level Spiritual Warfare

"This is the practice of deliverance ministry, which involves breaking demonic influence in an individual."

In an opening chapter, Greenwood shared details of a woman delivered from wounds and hurts that nearly destroyed her marriage.

To contend against our own flesh, against past pains and present sins are legitimate examples of spiritual warfare. Consider the struggles apostle Paul wrote about in Romans 7:14-25.

He said, "I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it" (Rom. 7:15-17).

When we're born again of the Holy Spirit, we are enlisted in a heavenly army with the ability to wage war against our sin nature and against hosts of wickedness. The grace of God is the power of God to resist temptation and the devil. To experience deliverance, we must contend privately and corporately with accountability. We must repent, pray the Scriptures, and praise until we see breakthrough in every area.

A majority of Christians will spend their lives on this level of warfare. Some will even fail to advance into more of what God has for them. Nevertheless, we must contend to enter the Kingdom (see Acts 14:22), and pray to gain valuable wisdom along with way (also see 1 Cor. 10:3-6).

Occult-Level Spiritual Warfare

This "involves opposition to a more structured level of demonic authority. Warfare prayer at this level focuses on witchcraft, satanism, Freemasonry, New Age beliefs, Eastern religions and many other forms of spiritual practices that glorify Satan and his dark angels."

Greenwood warns believers to avoid engaging on this level until we get breakthrough on the ground-level. To be effective in warfare, we need to develop spiritual insight (see Eph. 1:16-18), and we must walk in high dimensions of consecration. Occult-level warfare is not for the carnal or *casual* Christians who refuse to obey the Holy Spirit's convictions.

If, after serving God for years, we remain in bondage to the same things as when we were first born again, then we are still at ground-level.

I sought the Lord and asked for my intercessory assignment and marching orders in this situation. He told me to form a team and to pray on-site. -P. 24

Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare

"This is focused prayer dealing with high-ranking principalities and powers assigned to geographical territories and social networks. These demonic forces are usually referred to as territorial spirits." Notably, these forces work through lawmakers and prominent people in societies (i.e. celebrities, media, CEOs).

Sin and the shedding of innocent blood (abortion) lodges a stake in a nation. A massive portal has been opened over America and territorial spirits have legally gained access at the highest level of ruler-ship. We now see demonic strongholds in mainstream culture and in the lives of those who are not submitted to God.

Strategic-level warfare necessitates intense planning, precision, and effective execution by a team of intercessors. Removing territorial spirits requires corresponding political and social reform. Revival is imperative.



After Words

The Spiritual Realm

"Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:1, 3; NKJV).

Faith itself is proof that spiritual things exist. Our ability to believe in something (whether it's God or the skills of a mechanic), shows humans possess an intangible *substance* by which they can access the spiritual realm.

Since the fall of mankind (see Gen. 3), generations have been in a cosmic battle (see. Eph. 6:12). In Scripture, we read about angels (God's messengers; ministering spirits) issuing warnings and assisting humans in battles. The Bible is clear that we - not the Lord - must resist sin and command ruling principalities to bow to the name of Jesus.

Orthodox Christian theology holds to the view of God being omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipotent (all-powerful). So, we must grapple with His sovereignty in allowing the devil - Lucifer, Satan, the prince of the power of the air, the father of lies - to wreak havoc on creation for a measure of time. This happened in Job's day and it's happening now.



I am not, nor do I aspire to be, an expert in demonology. My currently knowledge is based solely on Ephesians 6, which divides demons, or fallen angels, into ranks of ruler-ship in the unseen world. Principalities, powers, rulers, and hosts of wickedness are continually advancing in unrestricted, merciless warfare. They have no other agenda or purpose.

We should not live in fear (2 Tim. 1:7), but we should be aware of what lurks in spiritual darkness. Whether we want to admit it or not, the invisible world and spiritual warfare are real. Christians who cower or ignore this reality (those believers who are so loving they never rebuke anything) will fall prey to all kinds of oppression and mayhem.

On the other hand, hyper-spiritual Christians (those who blame the devil for everything that goes wrong) are giving the enemy more attention than he deserves. His power and authority are limited and he is subject to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Sometimes, life sucks, cancer happens, cars break down, bankruptcy is inevitable, people die. We do well to maintain a balanced view and learn to discern the differences in life's trials, God's testing, and spiritual warfare.

The devil knows better than the average believer how much authority we have in Christ. The enemy watched from an eternally banished place as we were formed from dust and given the capacity to carry God's Spirit and speak His commands into time. Every born again believer has power within them to push back darkness in the earth and in their own lives.

Thank You!

Thank you for reading the October newsletter!

However you choose to celebrate Halloween, be sure to do so in a physically and spiritually safe way. If this is the year to break tradition, be encouraged that as you honor God, you will continually reap the benefits of His goodness and abiding presence!

"Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father (Col. 3:16-17).

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*So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot
be seen
For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever..*

2 Corinthians 4:18

Next Issue: November 2021

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