

Origins of Halloween

Halloween's origins go back to the festival of Samhain, celebrated by the Celts in ancient Britain and Ireland on the evening before All Saints Day. They believed the souls of the dead returned to visit their earthly homes on November 1.

The Celts built bonfires to offer sacrifices, relight hearth fires, and scare away evil spirits. The people sometimes wore masks to keep from being recognized by ghosts.

The Romans conquered the Celts in A.D. 43 and combined Samhain with their two autumn festivals. Although the church later made November 1 a holy day, people retained some old pagan customs. Early American colonists were mostly forbidden to celebrate Halloween, but large numbers of immigrants from Ireland and Scotland brought Halloween customs with them, and it became a popular holiday by the mid-19th Century.

When it comes to evil spirits, we can make one of two serious mistakes. Some people dismiss the existence of supernatural beings as legends left over from a time of ignorance and superstition. Then there are people who go to the other extreme and see evidence of demons in things better attributed to nature, psychology or consequences of their own actions.

The Bible shows many examples of evil spirits at work in the world and in people. In Ephesians 2:2, Paul identifies Satan as "the commander of the powers in the unseen world." The Gospels demonstrate that Jesus had control over Satan and his demons, or fallen angels. Paul explains that we need the armor provided by God because we are fighting against "evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world" and "evil spirits in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Halloween may be considered a children's holiday, but evil spirits are real and we need the armor of God every day. Then we can have confidence in our protection.

--Beecher Hunter