

Halloween and Witchcraft

Most people think of Halloween as a holiday, ushering in the fall and providing children with a legitimate reason for collecting large caches of candy or playing a trick on someone.

However, Halloween is a serious event in the lives of those who practice witchcraft. When asked about the origin of Halloween, many in the church would say something about All Saints' Day, but they could not offer an explanation for the traditions associated with the October 31st date.

Halloween has long been known as "The Festival of the Dead" among the adherents of witchcraft. October 31st had a great deal of significance among the ancient Celts and their priests, the Druids. This festival marked the change from life to death - a changing of the guard from the warmth of the sun in the spring and summer to the cold of the moon in the fall and winter.

Arnold and Patricia Crowther, modern day witches, state in their book, *The Secrets of Ancient Witchcraft*, "Halloween was the end of the year, the time when the Goddess returned to the underworld; when Mother Nature took her winter sleep beneath her blanket of snow. There she rested until the vegetation began to grow again. On this night the Horned God began his reign."

The Druids celebrated several holy days, but the "Feast of Samhain" was of particular importance. This was the observance of Samana, the Lord of Death, a dark Aryan god who was known as the Grim Reaper.

Morwyn, another witch, tells us in his book, *Secrets of a Witch's Coven*, that "Samhain is a solemn rite for the dead; the reaffirmation of life at the end of the ceremony is a most important aspect of this ritual."

The "reaffirmation of life" can be an actual act or it can be symbolic. To affirm life, some covens ritually eat an apple; in others, the act of sexual intercourse consummates the ceremony. The Crowthers add that, "After the craft had become a mixed cult, this feast would have been the time when any sexual intercourse took place. . ."

It was believed that at this time the veil between life and death was thin and that one could learn secrets of life and wisdom beyond death by lying on a grave and listening for messages from the departed. It was also believed that these spirits or ghosts left the grave at this time and sought the warmth of a familiar place – usually the home in which they resided while they were yet among the living.

The villagers were greatly concerned that these spirits not remain in their immediate area, so they would dress in an appropriate costume to scare the spirits on their way. It was

likewise believed that if these spirits were not appeased by the offering of food and treats then they might bring destruction upon the village by destroying crops, homes, or animals.

Hallowmas or Halloween, this most unholy night, became a time for gaining knowledge through divination. In addition to lying on a grave seeking a message from beyond, men employed Ouija boards, crystal ball gazing and a host of other practices to divine information. Within witchcraft, Halloween is an established time for communing with the dead. Halloween has become the great day of abomination.

The "Lord of the Dead" is known by a number of names. Witches acknowledge that their "Horned God" is the "Lord of the Dead." The true identity of this "Lord of Death" is the devil himself according to Hebrews 2:14:

". . . that through death He (Jesus) might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. . ."

The horned god Pan, with cloven hoofs, was often represented by a goat. The personification of Pan was the head of a goat or a bull. From Matthew 25:33, 41 we glean the significance of the symbolism of the goat.

"And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." v. 33

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels . . .'" vs. 41

Festivals and Sabbats

Practitioners of Witchcraft celebrate four ceremonies to honor the "Green Goddess," who brings life, and the "Horned God," who brings death. In witchcraft the spiritual year begins with Halloween on October 31st as described previously.

On February 2nd, Candlemas is celebrated to honor the "God of Death" and to give thanks to him for keeping the people from harm and sickness and wish him well on his journey back to the underworld.

May Eve, April 30, brings Beltane. This celebration welcomes new life and the ritual of fertility is the main emphasis.

Lammas is the time for giving thanks to the Great Mother for causing the crops to grow and is dedicated to grain and the harvest. The celebration is observed on August 1 and, according to Morwyn (Secrets of a Witch's Coven), it is a time to feast and "emphasize the fertility aspect of the union of the god and goddess."

The two solstices and equinoxes are also celebrated in witchcraft and represent lesser festivals. My intention is to acquaint the reader with the festivals of greater importance.

Halloween and Human Sacrifice

When the world was Pagan, "great bonfires were lighted to signify summer's end and to symbolize the death of god." Morwyn, in *Secrets of a Witch's Coven*, goes on to say,

"All frustrations and failures of the year were burned symbolically so that life could begin anew on the Winter Solstice. It was not unknown to incinerate a man alive in the blaze as a symbol of the death of the god."

Modern day witches declare that they no longer offer animal or human sacrifices, and in fact find sacrifices distasteful. However, Satanism is a different matter altogether.

Satanists see the "Festival of the Dead" as honoring the "horned god" - the "sabbatical goat." Whereas the witch may symbolically sacrifice a human, the Satanist looks at the sacrifice in the literal sense.

It should be noted that Satanists vary greatly regarding this issue. Those Satanists who follow mainline traditions would abhor human sacrifice.

However, it is important to note that self-styled Satanists like Richard Ramirez, among others, would employ such activity. Self-styled Satanists tend to do their own thing without compliance to any moral standard. Their allegiance is to themselves, not to any one world view – whether it be Satanic or another.

It is necessary for Christians to realize that Halloween is not the innocent holiday that many, even Christians, believe it to be . . . This author's admonition is that we, as Christians, must properly discern the spirit of Halloween and respond in a way that would honor our God - the God of the Bible.

Satan's goal is to blind our minds, that we cannot adequately recognize his strategy, and to deceive us, that we might worship him (Satan) rather than our creator. (Matthew 4:9, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Revelations 12:9)