

From The Pastor's Study Evil Is A Fact

October is Pastor Appreciation month, a month in which pastors are shown increased appreciation for their service. I have noticed those pastors who deliver the shortest sermons get the greatest appreciation. Personally, I am honored and maybe a little embarrassed because I don't feel I really do that much, but I still enjoy the appreciation.

I made a comment to my wife about the month chosen for Pastor Appreciation. I wonder about the wisdom of choosing the month of October for that celebration. The month that ends with Halloween. Here, and evening of costumes and candy.

Halloween's origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in). The Celts, who lived 2,000 years ago, mostly in the area that is now Ireland, the United Kingdom and northern France, celebrated their new year on November 1.

This day marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter, a time of year that was often associated with human death. Celts 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 October 31 they celebrated Samhain, when it was believed that the ghosts of the dead returned to earth.

There is a complete history on this celebration and how it became the last day of October followed by the first day of November, All Saints day. One day there is a celebration of evil followed by all the saints who have passed.

So, what about all this evil history and the fact that we have taken this collection of evil and turned it into a holiday. Now, not only do we dress in costumes, some funny, some scary, but we do the same to our children and costume sales for pets has gone off the charts. Churches even have "Trunk or Treat" and mall stores even pass out candy.

So, as Christians, what are we to do with all of this? Do we demand our children, and pets, to cease this celebration? Do we completely depart from society and isolate ourselves from everything that has evil in it's history?

Christmas is one of the most important and popular festivals celebrated by Christians across the world. Christmas occurs on 25 December every year to

commemorate the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ, who is the central figure of Christianity. Although, the main Christmas festival is observed on December 25 but the spirit of festivities begin right from December 24 (Christmas Eve) up till January 1 (New Year's Day).

Now you have the Christian view of Christmas, what about the date, was Christ born on December 25th? Not only is that date doubtful it is highly unlikely. There are many historical references that indicate Jesus' birth was actually in the Spring. Does that make a difference, does that invalidate Christmas? I don't believe so, we "celebrate" the birth of Jesus in December but that is simply the celebration, not a statement of His birth date. So how was it decided to use 12/25 as the date to celebrate the birth of our Savior?

The date was originally the Druid celebration of Yule which was also called the Winter Solstice. Of course these celebrations had nothing to do with the birth of Christ, in fact they date back some 4000 years. But the celebration was adopted as the celebration of Winter Solstice was a popular Roman holiday, in the 9th century the celebrations merged.

What do we do with all of this. Some will say that celebrating Halloween is celebrating evil, works of the devil and Christians should have nothing to do with it. Others ask, "What's the harm?" it is just a bunch of fun.

What about Christmas, dated on a 4000 year old celebration that has nothing to do with the date Jesus was born? If that isn't His birthday should we blow out a tradition that goes back to the 9th century because December 25th isn't even close to the date Jesus was born?

The answer is simple. We're free to celebrate what we want. If you find Halloween too offensive, then close your door, turn out your light and save what you would spend on candy. Does the date of celebration of the birth of Christ bother you, does it shake your faith or is it really important to you? Then do what you feel is right. These are decisions we have to make for ourselves.

For me, I'm not going to tell you what to think but I will celebrate the birth of Christ as we have for almost two thousand years. I have a friend who was born close to Christmas, he celebrates his birthday in June so he didn't give up his birthday celebration. I won't be holding a Halloween service this year or any other, but I will have candy for the kids.