

Hymns: 1 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God 11 How Great Thou Art

Good morning.

Our text today is found in Ephesians chapter 6

[10] Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

[11] Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the **wiles** (schemes) **of the devil**.

[12] For we **wrestle** not against flesh and blood, but against **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers of the darkness of this world**, against **spiritual wickedness in high places**.

We'll stop there for now.

IBIS World Survey

In just three days, we'll celebrate another Halloween.

I still remember as a boy being told I need to:

1. put on a costume
2. go door to door
3. say "trick or treat"

and people will throw candy, or even better, money in my bag. Despite some ugly and scary costumes others wore, it seemed like a good deal to me.

Today, Halloween is big business.

According to an IBIS World survey done a couple of years ago, Halloween ranks seventh on the list of holidays, just behind Father's Day, with respect to consumer spending, netting in the range of \$6 billion annually.

Ever since the financial meltdown of 2008, we've heard the term *zombie* banks. It refers to virtually all of the big banks of the world that are technically insolvent unless they lie on their balance sheets. The way they get around this is to just change their accounting rules to value their capital assets using whatever basis they choose.

That got me thinking. Where did the concept of *zombies* come from? Could it be there are zombies in the Bible? And what about all of those **other** strange Halloween creatures and traditions? Today, we'll consider some of these questions and take a look at Halloween from a biblical perspective.

Origins

Where did Halloween come from?

Historians say it has both pagan and church (though not Biblical) roots.

The holiday, observed on October 31st, had its origins in the festival of the sun god Samhain (pronounced Sah-ween) lord of the dead, celebrated in ancient England, which commemorated the Celtic new year. The church observance named All Saints' Day was ordered in 837 A.D. by Pope Gregory IV to celebrate all saints. In England, it was called All Hallows. The night the before was called All Hallows Eve---hence the name Halloween.

Darkness

When we would go trick-or-treating we would always wait until dark. That's just part of the tradition. The Bible speaks of darkness, as in our text, as *representing* evil and as a means hiding evil acts. By contrast, it speaks of light *representing* righteousness and revealing truth.

I Thessalonians 5

[5] Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are **not of the night**, nor of **darkness**.

Jesus said:

John 3

[19] And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved **darkness** rather than light, because their **deeds were evil**.

[20] For every one that doeth evil **hateth the light**, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

Disguises

In addition to darkness, Halloween involves costumes.

We do find some instances of people using disguises in the Bible. Jesus repeatedly uses the Greek word *hü-po-krē-tā* hypocrite – actor to describe the religious phonies of his day. The word is derived from the use of masks by actors in ancient plays to assume multiple roles.

Jesus said in Matthew 15

[7] Ye **hypocrites**, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

[8] This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

Here are some familiar examples of disguises used in the Bible:

Genesis 27:16 Jacob and Rebecca **deceived** Isaac to steal Esau's blessing

Genesis 38:14-15 Judah's daughter-in-law Tamar posed as a **harlot** to him in order to have a child.

Joshua 9:3-6 Gibeonites **lied**, saying they were from a far country.

I Samuel 21:12-13 David **pretended** to be a madman before the King of Gath

I Samuel 28:8 Saul disguised himself to the **medium** (witch) of Endor

Notice in each case, the disguise is framed in a **negative context**. While we cannot say that playful costumes of Halloween or acting in a play, for that matter, are wrong, they certainly did not originate from the Bible and really are not consistent with the character qualities that the Bible emphasizes.

Of course, you cannot have Halloween without a:

Jack O' Lantern

This is strictly pagan. It refers to a turnip or later pumpkin carved and lit inside to ward off evil spirits. There's nothing in the Bible like this, but note the reference to *evil spirits*. We'll get to them shortly.

Of course there's also:

Trick-Or-Treating

This also is likely rooted in paganism. It refers to going door to door requesting a *treat* or being subject to some *trick*---implying mischief or vandalism.

Ghosts

What about ghosts? Do they exist? Technically, from a Biblical perspective, no. A ghost is normally considered to be the **spirit of a dead person** roaming or haunting somewhere on the earth. Of course, the Bible speaks of the Holy Ghost. The difference here is that *ghost* is referring to a spirit, not a dead person.

The Bible clearly teaches when people die they await resurrection of their bodies (Revelation 20:4-14). The Bible says:

Hebrews 9

[27] And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Raised from the Dead

Keep in mind, there were a number of instances in the Bible of people who have died and have been brought back to life. Lisa spoke a few weeks ago about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. The following Bible characters raised people from the dead:

Jesus

Peter

Paul

Elijah

Elisha

But what we have here are people brought back to life for a time and who eventually died. These were **not ghosts but physical people.**

Which brings us back to:

Zombies

Zombies are dead bodies made to move by some sinister force. The Bible does not talk in these terms. Even persons possessed with demons are living, breathing people and not corpses.

What's interesting though, is that the people who were dead and buried, like Lazarus may have *appeared* like walking dead because they were wrapped from head to toe in cloths. Recall in Lazarus' case, Jesus said to "loose him and let him go" (John 11:44)

Consider too this rather bizarre event recorded in the Bible when Jesus died on the cross:

Matthew 27

[52] And the **graves were opened**; and many **bodies of the saints which slept** arose,

[53] And **came out of the graves** after his resurrection, and **went into the holy city**, and **appeared unto many.**

We're not told specifically what happened to these people. My take is that, like the others raised from the dead, they revived with physical bodies and eventually died. Notice the graves were opened and then they arose. There was no floating through the dirt and into the air.

Here are some passages to support that view:

1 Corinthians 15:20, 23

{[20] But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

[23] But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; **then, when he comes, those who belong to him.**}

John 3:13

{And **no man hath ascended up to heaven**, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.}

Acts 2:34

{[29] Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of **the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried**, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

[34] For **David is not ascended into the heavens: ...}**

Witches

It's hard to imagine Halloween without witches. Witches cast spells on people, places, or things using the powers of the underworld. The Bible condemns this practice and says witches should be put to death (Exodus 22:18).

You may recall that Pharaoh's magicians and sorcerers duplicated some of the miracles that Moses performed using enchantments.

Demons

Witches derive their power, knowingly or unknowingly, from demons or unclean spirits. The Bible has much to say about these spirit beings and the Bible is clear that **they are real**.

I Corinthians 10

[20a] But I say, that **the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils** (demons), and not to God:

Mark 5:1-15 cf Luke 8:26-35

(**summarize**) {

[1] And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

[2] And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an **unclean spirit**,

[8] For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou **unclean spirit**.

[12] And **all the devils besought him**, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

[13] And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the **unclean spirits** went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

[14] And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

[15] And they come to Jesus, and see him that was **possessed with the devil**, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

}

Where did these unclean spirits / demons come from?

Revelation 12

[3] And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold **a great red dragon**, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

[4] And his **tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth**: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for **to devour her child as soon as it was born**.

[7] And **there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,**

[8] And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

[9] And the **great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him**.

The point here is that unclean spirits, devils and demons are terms for the same things. They are all fallen angels that were cast out of heaven that fell with Satan.

{What will be the fate of these demons?

Matt 25

[41b] ... Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**

}

This brings us to the ringmaster,

Satan (adversary) Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28

He, like the demons/unclean spirits is a fallen angel, of the most powerful sort.

Administration of the earth was given first to man by God at creation (Genesis 1:26; 2:15). When man fell he forfeited his role giving his dominion over to his new master. It is now Satan who is really running things down here. We know this because he offered the whole world to Jesus if He would only bow down and worship him (Luke 4:5-7)

Rules this world:

John 12

[31] Now is the judgment of this world: now shall **the prince of this world** be cast out.

Ephesians 2

[2] Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to **the prince of**

the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

II Corinthians 4:4

[4] In whom **the god of this world** hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Job 1

Location:

[7] And the LORD said unto **Satan**, Whence comest thou? Then **Satan** answered the LORD, and said, From **going to and fro in the earth**, and from **walking up and down in it**.

Accuser:

[9] Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, **Doth Job fear God for nought?**

God Limits Satan's Power:

[12] And the **LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand**. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Empowers Armies:

[15] And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, **they have slain the servants** with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Fire from heaven:

[16] While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The **fire of God is fallen from heaven**, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Powerful Wind:

[19] And, behold, there came **a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house**, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

[20] Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

Job 2

Sickness:

[7] So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and **smote Job with sore boils** from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

I Peter 5

Destruction:

[8] Be sober, be vigilant; because your **adversary the devil**, as a roaring lion, walketh about, **seeking whom he may devour**:

John 8

Jesus said to the religious leaders that he is a

Murderer and Liar:

[44] Ye are of your father **the devil**, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a **murderer** from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is **no truth in him**. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for **he is a liar, and the father of it**.

Where does that leave us? Halloween, although fun for kids, also is used by the forces of **darkness** as a **pathway into the occult**. The Bible warns against this and condemns any involvement with unclean spirits.

James 4

[7] Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

[8a] Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

Ephesians 6

[13] Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

[14] Stand therefore, having your **loins girt about with truth** (John 14:6), and having on the **breastplate of righteousness** (Romans 3:25);

[15] And your **feet shod with the preparation of the gospel** (I Corinthians 15:3-4) of peace;

[16] Above all, taking the **shield of faith** (not blind faith but logical, reasoned faith), wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the **fiery darts of the wicked**.

[17] And take the **helmet of salvation** (Romans 10:9-10), and the **sword of the Spirit** (Matthew 4:4,7,10 "it is written"), which is the word of God:

While Halloween reminds us that the forces of darkness surround us, we need not fear. These verses assure us that we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Romans 8

[37] Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

[38] For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

[39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Benediction

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (I Timothy 1:17)