

Can Believers Redeem the Theme of Halloween?

I'm re-releasing this from 2012, with a few changes and additions. There is always an attempt to de-emphasize the true, spiritual significance of some holidays and place emphasis on the secular aspects, such as Santa, toys, bunnies, baskets, and candy. That is a sincere cause for concern. This article assumes that is understood. This article is also not a hill to die on for me. I respect those who may disagree and understand they may have valid concerns.

Can We Redeem Halloween?

The celebration of Halloween creates a lot of division among Christians. Some believe we should completely boycott Halloween whereas others view it as an outreach opportunity, whereas others want to dress up and hit the streets. This begs the question, "Can we, in good faith, redeem Halloween?" "Redeem" means to recover the ownership of something. Redemption and celebration are not unfamiliar to Christians. God "redeems" man from a state of darkness and we "celebrate" this transformation of the heart. Simply stated, it's about why, who, and how we celebrate.

For example, Halloween, a mixture of Celtic pagan superstition and early traditions is associated with witchcraft and satanic activity. This is not something to be celebrated, nor can it be redeemed as it stands with themes such as horror, death, and fear. We must be careful, especially when it comes to costumes that represent evil and participating in ungodly things. The Bible says, "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them" (Ephesians 5:11).

We have children and we can't always avoid the gory and grotesque decorations, so we change the theme in order to

redeem. We use the opportunity to redefine Halloween to “good overcame evil day.” We don’t celebrate Halloween as such; we remember Jesus’ victory on the cross and how He overcame evil and enjoy roasted pumpkin seeds. Many churches offer Fall Festivals and celebrations for this very reason—to redeem the theme of Halloween.

What About Other Holidays?

Shifting gears: What about Christmas and Easter, with their roots saturated with paganism, superstition, and the occult? Rooted in pagan practices, these holidays are abused and commercialized, but can they be redeemed? Christmas, unlike Halloween’s message of horror and death, celebrates eternal life through the birth of Christ. We don’t falsely worship the tree and the decorations referred to in Jeremiah 10:1-10; we worship the Creator of heaven and earth.

Conversely, rich in symbolism, the Christmas tree can point to the cross: once a dead and barren tree, supporting a lifeless Savior, it now stands evergreen as the symbol of eternal life that darkness cannot overcome (cf. 1 John 1:5).

Gift-giving can also represent peace and goodwill among men (cf. Matthew 2): “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). It can, however, lead to extravagant spending and debt; this should be avoided.

What about Easter, with roots in neo-paganism and ancient Celtic and pagan rituals? Can it be redeemed? Many Christians who celebrate Easter are not swayed or influenced by pagan roots, Celtic rituals, or cult-like experiences. They are not worshipping the false goddess Eastre.

Get your FREE CHARISMA NEWSLETTERS today! Stay up-to-date with current issues, Holy Spirit news, Christian teachings, Charisma videos & more!

Like Christmas, the historical roots and secularization do not

undermine the message in a person who has a sincere heart. Easter celebrates the reality of an empty tomb and the power of the cross to cleanse and release us from sin and death. It offers hope and peace to a dying world. This is cause for great celebration. Holidays, in many ways, are redeemed when the focus is on Christ.

An Issue of the Heart

These issues are heart issues. God does not desire superficial sacrifice and religiosity; He desires a broken and contrite heart. Pleasing God is the most important issue of the heart. We can avoid celebrating holidays, yet still be rigid, arrogant, and judgmental. The “heart” is the real issue.

For example, during the 2011 Christmas season, I received the following email from an online viewer: “I’m sorry, but every time I tried to watch the sermon, the decorated Christmas trees in the background were disturbing to my spirit. I turned it off. I am discouraged and disappointed because of the trees.” What this person failed to realize was that I did not place the trees on the stage. The building was not ours. She neglected to err on the side of grace.

Liberty Has Limits

Considering that liberty has its limits, if all that we do honors God, He is pleased. Again, the key is to avoid arrogance and judgmentalism and to avoid worshipping the wrong things. Strive to follow Paul’s advice and not “dispute over doubtful things,” and “live peaceably with all men” (cf. Romans 14:1 & 12:18).

For example, if a family allows their kids to dress up as Mary and Joseph, eat candy, and decorate their house with Fall decor, we should allow them that freedom (cf. Romans 14). But fixating on ghosts, witches, and death does not honor God and should be avoided. Darkness should not entertain us, nor should we trivialize it.

The Real Question to Ask

Whatever your position, the question to ask is, "Is my stance leading to love, joy, peace, contentment, gentleness, and kindness? Or, is it leading to rigidity, arrogance, legalism, divisiveness, criticism, and anger over non-essentials? Or, am I compromising my walk by entertaining darkness?"

There are those who deride Christmas and its commercialism, but they purchase a \$2500 Plasma on credit, book expensive vacations each summer, and never serve the community or help those in need. Or, they spend time posting videos exposing the roots of Halloween, but still allow their family to watch ungodly entertainment. Others ridicule the secularization of Easter, but they spend no time truly seeking God in prayer.

This Halloween, don't celebrate darkness; instead, celebrate the power of the cross. "There is no peace until we see the finished work of Jesus Christ—until we can look back and see the cross of Christ between our sins" (D.L. Moody). This offers peace and hope to a dying world. Truly a cause for celebration! {eoa}

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!

Shane Idleman is the founder and lead pastor of Westside Christian Fellowship in Southern California. More can be found at [www.shaneidleman.com](#), and free downloads of his books are available at [www.shaneidleman.com](#). Visit him on Facebook and subscribe to his podcast.