

The Demonic Festival Plaguing Christians Prepares to Rear Its Ugly Head Worldwide

“Haiti is 30 percent Christian, but 100 percent vodou (Haitian voodoo).”

This is a statement I’ve heard several times through my years of working in Haiti. I’ve come to realize just how close to true this actually is. Because Christians in Haiti might not practice vodou, but they are certainly wary of the negative effects it can have on their communities. An example that comes to mind is a memory of my husband disposing of a snake as three (Christian) Haitian women screamed that he had killed a demon.

The negative effects of vodou are particularly visible as we near the Haitian celebration for Mardi Gras, called *Kanaval*. In Haiti, *Kanaval* goes for weeks preceding Lent. And while many Haitian Catholics and Protestants do use this time to prepare for the Lenten season, vodou practitioners openly worship spirits during the Carnival parade, known as *defile*. They use it as a time to assert the dominance of vodou priests and priestesses, known as *houngans* and *mambos*, on the communities. Many vodou worshippers dress up as the spirits they are worshipping. Some dress as zombies, devils or the dead. The most dedicated vodou worshippers use this time to thank the spirits that they believe helped them gain their independence from France in 1803.

In this atmosphere one might see fights break out, curses cast, even lives lost. In 2015, *Kanaval* was cancelled after a performer in a parade was shocked by a high-voltage wire, leading to a stampede. Eighteen were killed and 78 more injured in the resulting chaos.

While Carnival or Mardi Gras events in other parts of the world seem like nothing but big, if hedonistic, parties, the darkness evident during Haiti's celebration of Kanaval is so contrary to the light God gave the world through Jesus. Jesus brought life, not death and destruction. Going into this season of remembering his sacrifice should not be a time to fear, but a time to rejoice and celebrate Jesus' resurrection. And yet Christians across Haiti live in fear of what could happen to them or their families during this turbulent time of the year.

The non-profit I work for in Haiti is called LiveBeyond. We are based in Thomazeau, the self-proclaimed "vodou capital of Haiti." There are vodou training centers and vodou temples called *peristil yo* in many of the villages around us. But we know that while Satan came to steal, kill, and destroy, Jesus came to give abundant life (John 10:10). We evangelize in our community daily, preaching about the healing of Jesus and the joy that he brings. We celebrated over 100 baptisms last year, as well as countless weddings and baby dedications. We offer discipleship training to new believers and build up strong spiritual leaders in our area through teleconferencing. Each week we facilitate a call between Haitian pastors and ministers from the United States so that they can share counsel and pray together.

I ask you to join us and the other Christian non-profits across Haiti like But God Ministries and Hope for Haiti's Children in praying for our Christian brothers and sisters who will face persecution during this turbulent season. With your support we can continue to assist our brothers and sisters in confronting the oppression and darkness of Haitian vodou with the consuming power of the kingdom of light.

Devin Vanderpool is the director of communications for LiveBeyond, a non-profit humanitarian organization founded by David & Laurie Vanderpool in 2005 dedicated to providing clean water, medical care and adequate nutrition to the

poorest of the poor. To learn more about how LiveBeyond is transforming lives in Thomazeau, Haiti, see