

Lesson Four — Halloween (Cont.)

HISTORY

Halloween, holiday observed on the evening of October 31st in most areas of North America and in some areas of Western Europe. The holiday is symbolically associated with death and the supernatural. Halloween falls on the eve of All Saints' Day, also known as Allhallows or Hallowmas, a holy day in Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. Originally a pagan festival of the dead, **All Saints' Day was established by the Catholic Church in the 9th century to honor so called Christian saints¹**. All Souls' Day, a holy day established by the Catholic church in the 10th century, is also closely linked to Halloween. **All Souls' Day, on November 2nd, is observed to help purify the spirits of the dead²**.

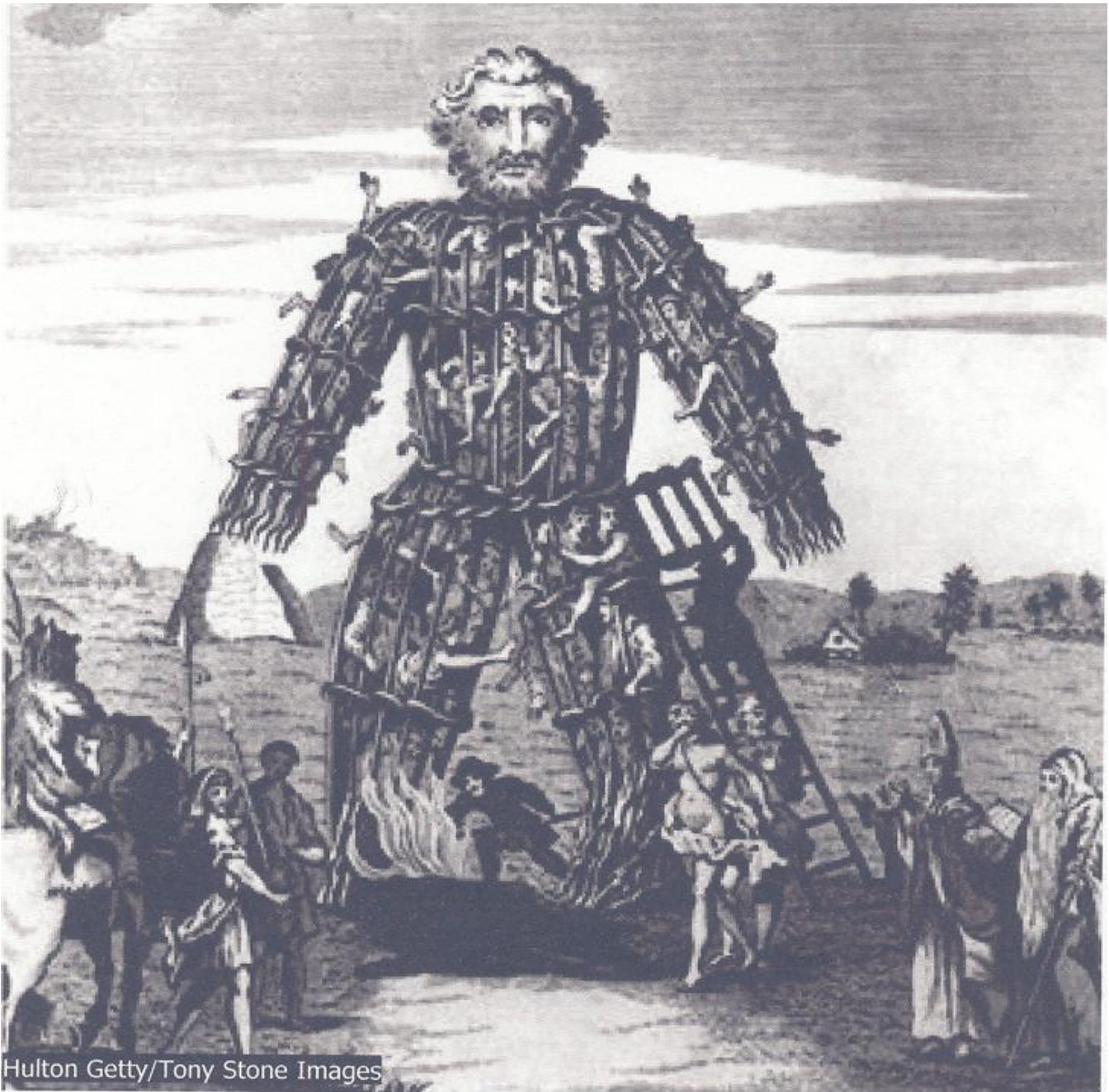
- ¹Scripturally, there are no “non-Christian Saints”.
- ²This undoubtedly speaks to the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Again, according to the Scriptures, if you die with an unclean spirit, nothing can purify you. The blood of Christ only works this side of the grave. <**John 5:28-29 NIV**> *Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out-- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*

MORE HISTORY:

Many of the ancient peoples of Europe marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter by celebrating a holiday in late autumn. The most important of these holidays to influence later Halloween customs was **Samhain**, a holiday observed by the ancient Celts, a tribal people who inhabited most of western and central Europe in the first millennium BC.

Samhain began at sundown on October 31st and extended into the following day. According to the Celtic pagan religion, known as **Druidism**, the spirits of those who had died in the preceding year roamed the earth on Samhain evening. The Celts sought to ward off these spirits with offerings of

food and drink. The Celts also built bonfires at sacred hilltop sites and performed rituals, often involving human and animal sacrifices, to honor Druid deities.



During the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, from which Halloween was derived, Druids burned huge sacrificial wooden effigies known as wicker men atop sacred hilltop sights. The wicker men were sometimes filled with animals, prisoners of war, criminals, and other sacrifices to Druid deities.

By the end of the 1st century AD, the so called “Holy” Roman Empire had conquered most of the Celtic lands. In the process of incorporating the Celts into their empire, the Romans adapted and absorbed some Celtic traditions as part of their own pagan and Catholic religious observances. In Britain, Romans blended local Samhain customs with their own pagan harvest festival honoring Pomona, goddess of fruit trees. Some scholars have suggested that the game of bobbing for apples derives from this Roman association of the holiday with fruit.

The Roman Catholic Church often incorporated modified versions of older religious traditions in order to win converts. For example, Pope Gregory IV sought to replace Samhain with All Saints' Day in 835. All Souls' Day, closer in spirit to Samhain and modern Halloween, was first instituted at a French monastery in 998 and quickly spread throughout Europe. Folk observances linked to these “Christian” holidays, including Halloween, thus preserved many of the ancient Celtic customs associated with Samhain.

Halloween traditions thought to be incompatible with Christianity often became linked with Christian folk beliefs about evil spirits³. Although such superstitions varied a great deal from place to place, many of the supernatural beings now associated with Halloween became fixed in the popular imagination during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance (14th to 17th century). In British folklore, small magical beings known as fairies became associated with Halloween mischief. The jack-o'-lantern, originally carved from a large turnip rather than a pumpkin, originated in medieval Scotland. Between the 15th and 17th centuries, Europe was seized by a hysterical fear of witches, leading to the persecution of thousands of innocent women. Witches were thought to ride flying brooms and to assume the form of black cats. These images of witches soon joined other European superstitions as symbols of Halloween.

IN THE UNITED STATES:

Attitudes toward Halloween varied widely among the various European groups that settled in North America. New England was initially settled by English Puritans, members of a strict Protestant sect that rejected Halloween as a Catholic and pagan holiday. However, other British colonists successfully transplanted Halloween traditions in southern colonies such as Virginia and Maryland. Irish immigrants helped popularize Halloween traditions throughout the United States in the mid-19th century. As belief in many of the old superstitions waned during the late 19th century, Halloween was increasingly regarded as a children's holiday.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, young people often observed Halloween by perpetrating minor acts of vandalism, such as overturning sheds or breaking windows. Beginning in the 1930s, Halloween mischief gradually transformed into the modern ritual of trick-or-treating. Eventually, Halloween treats were plentiful while tricks became rare. Nonetheless, the tradition of Halloween pranks still survives.

- ³<**1 Timothy 1:4**>
 1. **GW**> *and occupying themselves with myths and endless genealogies. These myths and genealogies raise a lot of questions rather than promoting God's plan, which centers in faith.*
- <**2 Timothy 4:4**>
 1. <GW> *People will refuse to listen to the truth and turn to myths.*
- <**Titus 1:14**>
 1. <GW> *They shouldn't pay attention to Jewish myths or commands given by people who are always rejecting the truth.*