

**TALISMANS AND CONTEMPORARY CUSTOMS:**

Most Halloween festivities are based on folk beliefs concerning supernatural forces and spirits of the dead. Halloween decorations typically feature imagery associated with supernatural beings such as witches, werewolves, vampires, and ghosts. Imagery thought to symbolize bad omens such as black cats, bats, and spiders, are also commonly featured in Halloween decorations.

**Witches**<sup>1</sup> of many persuasions own living talismans (animals indwelt by evil spirits, through which they derive their power). Common talismans are dogs, owls, snakes, and swine; but among the most common are cats. The witches invoke the familiar spirits to enter the bodies of their talismans for the exercising of dark powers.

**The black cat, in particular, has come to symbolize these familiar spirits, because black represents evil, death, and darkness — Areas with which evil spirits are obsessed<sup>2</sup>.**

• **<sup>1</sup>About witches — God’s attitude:**

1. <**Exodus 22:18 KJV**> *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*
2. <**Deuteronomy 18:10-12**> *There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, [11] Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. [12] For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD:*
3. Saul and the witch of Endor. <**1 Samuel 28:6ff**>

• **<sup>2</sup>Concerning the works of darkness:**

1. <**Ephesians 5:11**> *and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them;*
2. <**Ephesians 5:8-11**> *For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light [9] (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), [10] proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord; [11] and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them;*

## Trick or Treat

The modern custom of going from door to door begging candy, nuts, apples, and pennies while masked, and dressed in grotesque costumes, goes back to the pagan New Years feasts. The spirits that were thought to throng about the houses of the living were greeted with banquet-laden tables. At the end of the feast, masked and costumed villagers, representing the souls of the dead, paraded to the outskirts of town, leading the spirits away. This was done to avoid any calamities the dead might bring upon them, should they not be provided for. Should the living fail in their provisions, they might find their lives disrupted by such things as having their livestock die, their milk turn sour, their food spoil, or whatever other mischief the spirits of the dead might devise.

The appeasement of the spirits was celebrated in various ways, according to local custom, with minor differences. One way to appease the dead was to set out bowls of fruit and other treats so they could partake of them, and once satisfied, they would leave in peace. **Your child, when he goes door to door in the ritual of "trick or treat" is re-enacting that ancient superstition.**

## JACK—O'—LANTERNS

The most celebrated Halloween decoration is the *jack-o'-lantern*, (also known as will-o-the-wisp, fox fire, friar's lantern, among other things), traditionally a hollowed out pumpkin, carved to resemble a grotesque face and illuminated by a candle placed inside. The jack-o'-lantern derives its name from a character in British folktales. According to these tales, the soul of a deceased person named Jack O'Lantern was barred from both heaven and hell because of a particular evil deed committed in his lifetime, and was condemned to wander the earth with his lantern. Some believed it to be a malignant imp. The Finns believed that it was the soul of a child buried in the forest.