

Which Is It?

by Lynn Andrew

To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8 ASV)

Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15 ASV)

Which is it? Did Christ come to destroy the works of the devil or to save sinners?

Both are true, of course. The plan to destroy the works of the devil is the big picture, an essential part of which is saving sinners. But there is more reason behind this than is generally acknowledged.

Moses, David, and other Old Testament prophets paint the big picture, but almost everywhere in Christian exposition you will hear only the salvation message without a reason being given for it other than the love of God compelling him to provide us a way of escaping hell and giving us the privilege of dwelling with him in paradise. If we wonder why Satan is still with us, we get illogical answers where the kernel inside the pat shell makes God either an indecisive monarch or a partner with evil—essentially unwilling to maintain his original good.

This narrow focus is a tradition. It goes back to the "church fathers," the conflicts they had with Jews, and their Greek leanings. The Old Testament records had to be made subservient to the church as they perceived it, meaning Israel had to be air-brushed out by reinterpretation.

Whenever an appeal is made to the wisdom of "the church fathers," I want to say, "Look at the chaos of the Dark Ages, the corrupt ecclesia, and the bloody Inquisition their doctrines fostered!"

So we have Christian tradition reinterpreting the Old Testament in light of the New, but that is absolutely wrong. In fact it is impossible with any level of true respect. The New Testament brings to light shadows in the Old, but it does not change its meanings. To redefine Israel's role and apply it to the church is showing major disrespect for the gifts of God. It comes by Jew hatred and aligns perfectly with the devil's dread of the Millennium. Most of Christendom does it, and consequently most Christians get no further than personal salvation. Sanctification, without an inspiring reason for it, is treated as an option.

God saw that what he created was good. Who can look around and say that today? We need a wider field of view to understand what God meant. No need to speculate: he has given it to us in the whole Bible.

The wages we get for the sin of ignoring the whole Word is to be left out of the reward of serving Christ in his kingdom: to be disqualified from being part of the army of sanctified and glorified servants whom God will use to justly convict Satan and rid the universe of evil.

If you think this is too complex and that God will arbitrarily eliminate the works of the devil by starting over and redoing creation, you have missed the Bible's message and constrained the Creator to share your limited view of Israel. The grand sweep of salvation may leave you huddled in a corner of personal safety, hoping that the short-sighted investment you made of your talent will count for something.

If you know about the history of the Bible, you know it is a miracle book, a gift to mankind from heaven. Read its pages in the order they were given. Do not try to outsmart God by reading it backwards!

(Many of the essays on this web page elaborate this essential corrective. "Why the Millennium is Necessary" offers a fair overview.)