

Christ: Redeemer & King

Today is the last Sunday of the year ... according to our Christian calendar. For thousands of years, whether they used a solar calendar or a lunar calendar, Christians marked their year by the events of Christ's life. The year begins with a time of preparation before Christ's birth – a season we call Advent – and concludes with the recognition of the resurrected Christ's place as King of all creation, Redeemer of the creation that had fallen into the darkness of sin.

A Fallen World

Though they may not call it “sin,” even unbelievers are well aware of the pain, suffering, corruption, and evil that abounds in the world. They can conceive of a better world yet have not the means to make it better. Philosophers, public figures, artists, writers, and many people of various beliefs, have through the centuries employed great efforts to extoll the beauty of virtue and describe the deformity of vice. In doing so they have emphasized the happiness that attends to virtuous living, and the misery that accompanies vice. It must be acknowledged that there is merit in their efforts which have stirred up desires to follow after virtue and discouraged vice.¹ But the change in men and women by these means is seldom deep or universal. We must guard against the political “isms” of our day that claim they can make people virtuous through their governmental scheming.²

There is a need for better arms if ever we are to conquer vice and steadily persevere in the practice of virtue. The honest among us will identify with St. Paul saying: *For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing, Romans 7:19.*

The remedy for sin, the inability to stop vice and continue virtue, is not to be found in any human agency. God, who is holy, is the only solution to our problem of unholiness, and He provided the way in Christ. Scripture tells us the very reason for the coming of the Christ: *We know that He was manifested to take away our sins, 1 John 3:5.* And further: *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work... 1 John 3:8.* I want to take a closer look at that statement.

Works of the Devil

What are the works of the devil? Simply put they are the continual efforts to pull us away from our Creator and draw us down into the darkness of sin. The devil's work is to keep us bound in sin (which always leads to death) and its rotten fruit as St. Paul described: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like, Galatians 5:19-21. Christ came to free us from the chains of these unholy and unwanted desires, ambitions, and lifestyles, so that we might live with joy as God has intended.

Now... ***The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning, 1 John 3:8.*** The evil one was at work even before the first man and first woman were created by God. Many of you know the story as described in Genesis. The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, representing **all humanity** were **created in the image of God**, and given:

1. **understanding** yet still capable of mistakes and of being deceived, though not destined to it.
2. **a will** making them capable of love, desire, and delight in all that is good.
3. **Liberty** making them free to choose. Without liberty humans cannot be free agents and therefore really no agent at all. Do you have a gun in your hand? Then does someone stronger than you seize your hand, and force you to wound a third person? In this example you are no agent, any more than the gun. So that he that is not an agent is but a patient. It should be noted that liberty overruled or smothered is no liberty at all. That is a contradiction in terms; how can there be “unfree freedom?”

Understanding, will, and liberty are inseparably united in every intelligent nature. At the same time **God created humans in His moral image**, so that human understanding was perfect in all its affections. As free agents Adam and Eve freely and steadily chose whatever was good, and they were content and happy in doing so, dwelling in perfect harmony with God. In their freedom they could choose to do wrong, even evil, and this they did when they fell for the syrupy words of Lucifer, the first sinner and author of sin. He was the one who first gave way to pride and self-will, saying “I will be like the Most High.”³

Satan deceived by mingling truth with falsehood causing them to disbelieve God’s warning not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. [They gave in to the desire of the flesh – the tree was “good for food;” the desire of the eyes – the fruit was pleasant to the eye; the pride of life – for the fruit was desired to make one as wise as God.]

Unbelief begot pride, deeming themselves wiser than God and knowing a better way to find happiness. The moment they ate of that forbidden fruit the life of God was extinguished in their souls and the moral image of God disappeared. Guilt, tormenting fears, and unhappiness replaced their contentment. Separated from God, they looked upon Him as an angry judge and were afraid and sought to hide themselves from Him. The day humanity’s soul died to God so did the body with the introduction of weakness, sickness, and pain. All this, the work of the devil.

Son of God Revealed

How was the Son of God manifested in order to destroy the works of the devil? **Christ was manifested as the only begotten Son of God, equal to the Father, to the inhabitants of heaven before the foundation of the world. *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him, Col. 1:15-16.***

The Son of God, we know, became a man in Jesus of Nazareth. His was the power of God shown in many miracles. His was the moral image of God in doing not His own will but the will of His Father who sent Him. He was recognized and His purpose announced by John the Baptist who declared, ***Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, John 1:29.***

Christ Jesus severed the root of the devil's work by suffering on the Cross all the consequences of sin – that is total separation from God the Source of life. ***... it was for this very reason I came to this hour, John 12:27,*** He said. Christ defeated death, rose from the tomb, ascended into heaven to return to the glory that was His from the beginning. ***The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again, John 10:17.***

His campaign against sin and evil continues to this day through the Holy Spirit, His gift to all who believe in Him. **When you take Christ into your heart as your Savior, He effectually destroys the works of the devil.**

Works of the Savior

By what steps does Christ actually destroy the works of the devil? As first Satan began his work in Eve by tainting her with unbelief, so the Son of God began His work in humanity by enabling us to believe in Him. Out of the darkness He commands light to shine (as at creation), lifting the veil which the evil one has spread over our hearts. **It is not by reasoning, but by revelation that we see ... that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them, 2 Cor. 5:19.**

Being justified by our faith in Christ's atonement on the Cross we can have peace with God, a peace that enables us to find contentment in life and release from fear, particularly the fear of death. Christ strikes at that work of the devil called pride by causing the believer to humble him/herself before the Lord. He strikes at the root of self-will by enabling the humbled sinner to say in all things, "Not my will, but Your will be done." **As Satan turned the heart of humans from the Creator to the creature, so the Son of God turns their heart back to their Creator.** He destroys the works of the devil by restoring the guilty outcast from God back to the favor and pardon of God, making them children of the Most High, no longer sons and daughters of darkness.⁴

Christ Jesus was and is our teacher and model for the new life to on the road of sanctification. Yet we must always beware of seeing our Lord as a Teacher or model first. If Jesus Christ is a great teacher only, then all He can do is tantalize me and then frustrate me with an ideal that no one can possibly attain on their own. If I can never be pure in heart what good does it do to tell me to be pure in heart?

We must first know Jesus as Savior, who came not to teach only, but also to defeat the devil and all his dark works, by making you and me what He teaches we should be. He is our Redeemer who can drive out of any man, woman, or child the tainted nature brought by the evil one's temptation and put into each of us the disposition that ruled Christ's own life.⁵

Do not suppose that practicing honesty, justice, or morality through outward duties can be deemed faith. They are simply the outcome of true faith in Christ the King who takes away the sin of the world. The world still needs our witness to faith for it is not yet fully redeemed. Christ is King and will one day return to restore His kingdom to God's original goodness, where there will be no more pain, and deceit, and death.

We look forward to that day when Christ shall return to earth to restore us and all creation to the holiness of God's plan.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, Phil 2:9-11.

Sermon Take Away

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work... 1 John 3:8.

God, who is holy, is the only solution to our problem of unholiness.

Jesus is teacher and model, but *first* He is Savior.

When you take Christ into your heart as your Savior He effectually destroys the works of the devil.

It is not by reasoning, but by revelation that we see ... *that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them, 2 Cor. 5:19.*

¹ John Wesley, "The End of Christ's Coming," (1781) *John Wesley's Sermons, An Anthology*, Outler & Heitzenrater, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 442-443.

² In our modern era the political "isms" that destroyed millions of lives in the 20th century seem to be making a comeback among some people and politicians in our country. These utopian promises always result in a dystopia because their economics are flawed and don't work and their leaders really care about their own power rather than the general good of the people for whom they claim to speak.

³ John Wesley "The End of Christ's Coming," 444.

⁴ Ibid, 448.

⁵ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*, July 21.