

1 John 3:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Analysis

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. John presents sin's ultimate source and Christ's purpose. "He that committeth sin" (ho poiōn tēn hamartian)—again the present participle indicating habitual practice—"is of the devil" (ek tou diabolou estin). This doesn't mean created by Satan but belonging to his family, bearing his character, serving his purposes. Jesus made similar statements in John 8:44 about those who reject Him.

"For the devil sinneth from the beginning" (hoti ho diabolos ap' archēs hamartanei) reveals Satan as the originator of sin in the created order. He sinned before human sin (Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:12-17), and he continues to sin—present tense. Satan's rebellion against God introduced sin into the universe; human sin stems from Satanic temptation and corruption (Genesis 3).

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested" (eis touto ephanerōthē ho huios tou theou): Christ's incarnation aimed at destroying Satan's works. "Destroy" (lusē, λύση) means to loose, dissolve, or nullify. Through His death and resurrection, Christ destroyed death's power, defeated Satan (Hebrews 2:14), and liberated believers from sin's dominion (Romans 6:14). This destruction continues as the gospel advances and will culminate in Satan's final judgment (Revelation 20:10).

Historical Context

First-century Jewish apocalyptic literature portrayed cosmic conflict between God and Satan, light and darkness (seen in Dead Sea Scrolls). Early Christians understood their conversion as transferring from Satan's kingdom to God's kingdom (Colossians 1:13), from darkness to light (1 Peter 2:9). This wasn't dualism (equal opposing forces) but recognition that Satan temporarily exercises power in this fallen world until Christ's final victory.

The phrase "from the beginning" (ap' archēs) indicates Satan's sin predated human history. Jewish tradition held that Satan fell before creating humanity, explaining the serpent's presence in Eden. John confirms this: Satan sinned first; humans followed. Christ came to undo this catastrophic rebellion and its consequences.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that habitual sin aligns you with Satan's purposes (not merely breaks rules) intensify sin's seriousness?
2. In what specific ways has Christ destroyed the devil's works in your life, and what works remain to be destroyed?
3. How should awareness of spiritual warfare against Satan affect your daily battle against sin?

Interlinear Text

ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἔστιν.
G3588 He that committeth G3588 G266 G3588 G1228 G2076
G4160 sin of G1537 G1228 of the devil is
for from the beginning G3588 of the devil sinneth For this purpose
G3754 G575 G746 G1228 G264 G1519 G5124
ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ
was manifested G3588 the Son G3588 G2316 G2443 G3089 G3588
G5319 G5207 G2316 that he might destroy
the works G3588 of the devil G1228
G2041

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 2:14 (Evil): Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

John 8:44 (Evil): Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Colossians 2:15 (Parallel theme): And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Romans 16:20 (References God): And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

John 16:11 (Parallel theme): Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

John 12:31 (Parallel theme): Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

2 Peter 2:4 (Sin): For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Mark 1:24 (References God): Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

Ephesians 2:2 (Parallel theme): Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Isaiah 27:1 (Parallel theme): In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

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