

Did Jesus Come to Condemn and Destroy, or to Seek and Save the Lost?

The Book of Mormon portrays a very different Jesus from that of the Bible

You may not know this, but more people attend church on Easter than any other time of year, including Christmas. In fact, church planters will often time the official launch of their new church to coincide with Easter, so they can capitalize on this fact.

Easter—commemorating the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ—is indeed the centerpiece of the Christian faith. In this event, God demonstrates His unbounded love for mankind, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him*” (John 3:16–17).

Students of the New Testament see Jesus going to great lengths to reclaim sinners. He even “hangs out with them” in order to save them. One time He went out of His way to spend time with a wealthy tax collector by the name of Zacchaeus. As a result of this visit, Zacchaeus ended up dramatically repenting of his great sin, to which Jesus proclaimed for all to hear, “Today salvation has come to this house... *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost*” (Luke 19:9–10).

But perhaps the most dramatic example of Jesus’ desire to save the lost is found in Luke 15. This chapter contains what is popularly called “The Parable of the Prodigal Son.” So profound is its message, that theologians have long referred to this chapter as “the gospel within the gospel.” The entire chapter is really one parable in three acts. It starts with a man seeking out and reclaiming a lost sheep, then moves on to a woman diligently seeking out a lost coin, and concludes with a father seeking out not one, but two wayward sons, in the hope of reclaiming their fellowship. In the process he withstands severe humiliation in order to hold out costly love to his rebellious sons. In the parable he is successful with the younger son, but we are left in tension regarding the fate of the older. His costly love, however, is extended equally to both.

Jesus’ work of salvation not only continued, but exploded after his resurrection. Some people, though, mocked these early believers, because they felt Jesus had not made good on His promise to return soon. Peter explains why the delay. “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. *He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9).

And so the Jesus of the Bible is portrayed as patient and loving, in the hopes of saving lost mankind. For this was His very purpose from the beginning. And His efforts to this end are epitomized in His death and resurrection, which we commemorate at Easter-time. His work of redemption is thus made available to all.

But in the Book of Mormon, we find another Jesus at work—one quite different from the Jesus of the Bible we’ve just been looking at. Those familiar with the Book of Mormon know that it claims Jesus visited the Americas after his resurrection. But before He gets here, he wipes out massive segments of the population. The 4th chapter of 3rd Nephi (RLDS version) describes a three-hour-long holocaust at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, followed by three days of absolute darkness. Horrific storms and violent

earthquakes overtake the land, such that the whole topography becomes deformed (v. 14). Many cities are burned, many others are sunk in the sea (v. 11), and a mountain of earth is heaped up upon at least one city, burying its inhabitants alive (v. 9). In each of these cases, the entire population is annihilated. When the dust clears, we are told, “It was the more righteous part of the people who were saved” (3 Nephi 4:66, see also v. 41). Whereas the real Jesus of the real Bible “came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10), the Book of Mormon Jesus annihilates the lost before He even arrives! And didn’t Jesus say, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31–32)? In the Book of Mormon, however, the doctor annihilates his entire hospital!

Yes, it is true that Latter Day Saints claim to believe in Jesus. But theirs is not the real Jesus of the real Bible. Their Jesus is one of Joseph Smith’s fertile imagination, and is radically different. The Biblical Jesus still lives today to “seek and save what was lost,” and His work continues around the globe, giving people of every nation hope, forgiveness and salvation, full and free. The mythical Jesus of Joseph Smith, on the other hand, only serves to ensnare people in a false hope of a false salvation based on a counterfeit gospel, which “is no gospel at all” (Galatians 1:7).

Please join with us and pray for the deliverance of those who have been ensnared by Joseph Smith? Remember, “Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins” (James 5:20). 🙏

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