

From the March 4, 2010 Issue

St. John of Damascus on Humanity's Salvation

We're sometimes asked "Are you sure the adoption of humanity is the gospel? I've never heard it before." That's why we like to bring in the thoughts of various theologians from history to add to our understanding of the gospel.

In the following passage St. John of Damascus (ca. 676 - 749) explains how Jesus included all mankind in his victory over death:

Throughout all the earth the Gospel of the knowledge of God has been preached; no wars or weapons or armies being used to rout the enemy, but only a few, naked, poor, illiterate, persecuted and tormented men, who with their lives in their hands, preached Him Who was crucified in the flesh and died, and who became victors over the wise and powerful. For the omnipotent power of the Cross accompanied them. Death itself, which once was man's chiefest terror, has been overthrown, and now that which was once the object of hate and loathing is preferred to life. These are the achievements of Christ's presence: these are the tokens of His power. For it was not one people that He saved, as when through Moses He divided the sea and delivered Israel out of Egypt and the bondage of Pharaoh; nay, rather **He rescued all mankind from the corruption of death** and the bitter tyranny of sin: not leading them by force to virtue, not overwhelming them with earth or burning them with fire, or ordering the sinners to be stoned, but persuading man by gentleness and long-suffering to choose virtue . . . (*The Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book 4, Chapter 4, emphasis ours.)