Why Christ Could Not Sin

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Christ Is The Holy Light Of Deity

Christ as the divine Word is specifically identified as the impeccably holy Light of deity in John 1:1-5:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

Jesus Himself said in John 8:12:

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

The illuminating holiness of Christ as the divine Light is so overwhelmingly infinite that even the best of mere human beings (in this case John the Baptist) would have to be described this way:

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light (John 1:6-8).

John the witness could sin, and we as witnesses can sin, hut Christ the holy Light of the world could not possibly have sinned! Far from being capable of sinning, Christ came to earth as the divine Standard of holiness that all of us need to worship and obey!

Christ Is Holier Than Adam

To say that the divine Light of the world could have sinned while He was on earth is to say that Christ's human nature made Him less than impeccably holy. Yet this is exactly what some people are saying about Christ today. For example, some people say that Christ had to be tempted as the "last Adam" in order to find out whether He would sin, even as Adam in the Garden of Eden had to be tempted in order to find out whether lie would sin. However, no Bible verse can be used to validate this comparison, simply because no such Bible verse exists! The only directly stated Biblical comparison between Christ and Adam is actually a contrast between the first Adam as the bringer of death and the last Adam (Christ) as the bringer of life (Romans 5:12-20 and First Corinthians 15:4-5-56).

Christ Is Indivisible And Impeccable

Usually people who say that Christ could have sinned claim that it was only in His humanity that He could have sinned, since in His deity He is impeccable. Of course it is true that Christ is impeccable in His deity? the error is in assuming that Christ's overall decisions as the perfect God/Man could be dominated and overruled by a peccable human nature. People who make such claims forget that a nature can never sin: only a person can sin. Christ was not (and is not) two persons in one body? instead, Christ was (and is) one perfect Person with two perfect natures—a divine nature with all the infinite attributes of perfect deity, and a human nature with all the attributes of perfect humanity. A loosely connected, two-person Christ in which one person could have sinned without the consent of the other is a warped monstrosity that exists only in the minds of certain people. We need to be reminded once again of Christ's own personal claim of impeccable holiness in John 9:5:

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Christ Is Our Powerful Savior

Sometimes people say that Christ must have been able to sin because God would never ask us to follow an Example who has a greater intrinsic ability to resist sin than we do as fallible human beings. But this theory is incorrect for the reason that Christ did not come to earth merely as an exemplary human being who would show us how to live a good human life; instead, He came primarily to save us from our sins and to give us His own divine power to live a holy life according to God's perfect standards. Christ Himself said in Matthew 5:48:

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

God amplified this command in First Peter 1:15, 16:

As he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

God did not command us to imitate a peccable Christ, but to worship and obey the impeccably holy King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Impeccable Holiness Means Suffering When Tempted

People who say that Christ could have sinned usually claim that an impeccably holy Christ could not actually have suffered when tempted by Satan or sinful people. To really suffer in the face of temptation, they say, you must be able to sin. Although this view may sound superficially appealing, it is actually the very opposite of the truth. The actual fact is that the holier the being, the greater the suffering when tempted. When Eve was tempted by Satan in the Garden of Eden, she suffered very little during the temptation, for the twofold reason that she did not understand the seriousness of sin and she quickly yielded to the temptation.

Christ, on the other hand, suffered infinitely when tempted by Satan in the wilderness, for the twofold reason that He understood fully the awful nature of sin and He never yielded to the temptation. The same contrast could be made between Adam's temptation in the Garden by a human (Eve) and Christ's temptation in the world by the people who hated Him: Adam suffered very little in the face of his temptation, whereas Christ suffered infinitely. That is why Hebrews 2:18 tells us, "He himself suffered when he was tempted."

The purpose of Christ's temptation in the wilderness was not for God to find out whether Christ might sin, but for God to demonstrate to the intelligent universe— angels, demons, and humans— that Christ was impeccably holy, no matter how cleverly tempted by Satan, and that He was therefore magnificently qualified to be the holy Savior of sinful people.

God Feels Our Rebellion

Sometimes people use the words “God cannot be tempted by evil” (James 1:13) to say that Christ as God could not have been tempted by men or demons at all. But of course what James 1:13 actually teaches is that God cannot be tempted successfully by men or demons. Hebrews 3:9 shows clearly that rebellious human beings can unsuccessfully tempt God to violate His holy character:

Your fathers tested [same Greek word for tempting as is found in James 1:13] and tried me, and for forty years saw what I did.

Was this temptation real? Did God actually feel it? Continuing with the next verse (Hebrews 3:10), God says:

That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, “Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.”

Yes, God really feels it when we tempt Him with our rebellious attitudes, even though He is so infinitely holy that He cannot respond in a sinful way.

Don’t Mar Christ’s Beauty

Even though some people hope they are not marring the beauty of Christ when they say He could have sinned, Christ’s reputation is definitely diminished by this erroneous teaching. For example, if Christ could have sinned while He was on earth, why could He not sin in heaven today? People who say that Christ could have sinned on earth sometimes recognize the seriousness of the implication that Christ could sin in heaven today, and so they try to resolve this problem by stating either that Christ’s glorified body keeps Him from sinning today, or else that Christ defeated Satan at the Cross and is no longer tempted by him, or else that Christ became humanly impeccable after a human victory over sin in the wilderness.

However, a glorified body is no guarantee of impeccability at all, because Lucifer once lived in heaven with a glorified body free of a sin nature, and yet he sinned in spite of all this. The reason Christ is impeccably holy today is the same reason He has always been impeccably holy—Christ is eternally God, and God can never sin.

To say that Christ is impeccable in heaven today only because He defeated Satan and is no longer tempted by him is to overlook a very important fact: Christ (along with the Father and the Spirit) is still tempted by wayward people on earth! First Corinthians 10:9 tells us:

We should not test [an even stronger Greek word for tempting than is used in James 1:13 and Hebrews 3:9]

the Lord, as some of them did, and were killed by snakes.

The reason Christ remains impeccably holy even in the face of all our testings of Him today is the same reason that He has always been impeccably holy—Christ is eternally God, and God can never sin.

Impeccability Is Based On Deity

To say that Christ became humanly impeccable after a human victory over sin in the wilderness at least acknowledges His impeccability from that time onward, but it does so for the wrong reason, and it also denies His impeccability before that time. To base Christ's impeccability on a one-time victory at the human level in the wilderness is to end up with no impeccability at all, since all of us know that we can resist a particular sin at one point in our lives and yet commit that very same sin a few days or weeks later.

It is sometimes said that the angels in heaven who resisted the temptation of Lucifer became eternally holy after that time. This may or may not be true (some Bible scholars believe there was a second fall of holy angels), but even if the angels became eternally holy at that point, their holiness is not based on their own intrinsic impeccability. Instead, the angels are kept holy by the power of God. In all the universe, only God is intrinsically impeccable—totally nondependent upon any other being for maintaining personal holiness.

The Dangers Of The Peccability Error

Any explanation of the moral character of Christ apart from His eternal deity falls far short of the truth about Christ and opens the door to a host of slanderous questions about our Lord: Why didn't Christ sin as a growing child when tempted by Satan and sinful people? Would Christ have sinned if tested on earth for longer than 33 years? Can Christ sin in heaven today? Has Christ sinned in heaven? All of these derogatory questions, plus others even more slanderous, emerge like a deadly disease when people attempt to separate the deity of Christ from His personal moral character. That is why the peccability error must be vigorously and Biblically refuted.

Worship The Anointed Lord

Not only is it imperative that we reject any teaching about Christ that denies the impeccable holiness of God manifest in the flesh, but it is also imperative that we worship Christ as the holy, anointed Lord, impeccably sinless from eternity past to eternity future. That is our highest obligation and our highest privilege.

Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.

—Hebrews 1:8, 9

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