

LECTURE 7: THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST

What does it mean that Jesus Christ was sinless?

Is there any point in life where he violated the Mosaic Law under which He lived on earth?

Is there any area where Christ failed to show in His life at all times the glory of God?

- a. Christ was weary (John 4:6)
- b. Christ was hungry (Matt. 4:2; 21:18)
- c. Christ was thirsty (John 19:28)
- d. Christ slept (Matt. 8:24)

According to Christian orthodoxy, at every stage of His life, infancy, boyhood, adolescence, and manhood, He was completely without sin.

Luke 1:35

John 8:46

Matt. 22:15

John 8:29

John 15:10

During the Trials and Crucifixion, He was acknowledged as innocent eleven times (by Judas, Matt. 27:4; by Pilate six times, 27:24; Luke 23:14, 22; John 18:38; 19:4, 6; by Herod Antipas, Luke 23:15; by Pilate's wife, Matt. 27:19; by the repentant thief, Luke 23:41; and by the Roman centurion, Matt. 27:54).

Furthermore, there is no record of Jesus Christ ever offering a sin sacrifice, though He frequented the temple (Hebrews 7:26-27).

2 Cor. 5:21

1 Peter 2:22; 1:19

1 John 3:5

Hebrews 4:15; 7:26, 27

THE DEBATE

Though Christians agree that Christ was sinless, people wonder whether or not He could have sinned. That He did not, Christians affirm; whether He could have is debated.

Impeccability (*non posse peccare*): Christ COULD NOT have sinned.

Peccability (*posse non peccare*): Christ could have sinned.

Peccability Argument:

Liberal theologians argue that not only could He have sinned but that He also did sin. That is peccability combined with sinfulness. However, the concept of peccability does not need to include sinfulness.

If Jesus could not have sinned then His temptations were not real. If his temptations were not real, then He cannot serve as a truly sympathetic High Priest. In other words, peccability requires a constitutional susceptibility to sin.

Those who support peccability, like Charles Hodge, note:

Temptation implies the possibility of sin. If from the constitution of His person it was impossible for Christ to sin, then His temptation was unreal and without effect, and He cannot sympathize with His people. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, 2: 457.

Impeccability Argument:

Those who support impeccability observe that his incapability to sin relates to His union of the divine and human natures in the one person so that even though the human nature was peccable, the person of Christ was impeccable. It could not be otherwise with a person who has all power and a divine will.

Those who support impeccability, like William T. Shedd, observe:

It is objected to the doctrine of Christ's impeccability that it is inconsistent with His temptability. A person who cannot sin, it is said, cannot be tempted to sin. This is not correct; any more than it would be correct to say that because an army cannot be conquered, it cannot be attacked. Temptability depends on the constitutional susceptibility, while impeccability depends on the will....Those temptations were very strong, but if the self-determination of His holy will was stronger than they, then they could not induce Him to sin, and He would be impeccable. And yet plainly He would be temptable. William T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, 2: 333.

The Nature of Christ's Testings from Matthew 4:1-11 (1 John 2:16)

- 1st test: Turn stones into bread (*lust of the flesh*)
2nd test: jump off of a high place and land unharmed (*pride of life*)
3rd test: Receive from Satan *all* the kingdoms of this world (*lust of the eyes*)

Were the tests real?

Could the tests be used to test any man?

Were the tests specifically suited or designed for the G-d-man?

The tests that Satan put the Lord through, do they fall into the categories of the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eyes?

Hebrews 4:15 and James 1:13: How do we harmonize these two passages?

Hebrews 4:15:

“*all*” (kanta panta): “The Lord was tested in *all*”

James 1:13:

God is not tempted with evil.

There is a major difference between His humanity and ours. He was “*without sin.*” He had not a sin nature and He never committed a single sin. Still that does not mean that His humanity was impeccable. It was peccable, though it never knew no sin. But the person of the God-Man was impeccable.

As Shedd writes:

“Consequently, Christ while having a peccable human nature in His constitution, was an impeccable Person. Impeccability characterizes the God-Man as a totality, while peccability is a property of His humanity” (2:333).

Results of Christ's Testings:

He became sensitive to the pressure of testing. He experienced it with emotion and powers we cannot understand.

He furnishes us an example of victory over the severest kinds of test.

He can offer sympathetic understanding to us when we are tested.

Christians argue that Jesus can also provide the grace and power we need in times of testing. People who have experienced the same problems we might have are sensitized and sympathetic, but often they can do little or nothing about our problems. He can do something and offers us grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16). Only a God-Man High Priest can do both-sympathize because He was genuinely tested and empower because He is God.