

act of obedience in baptism was a necessary part of the righteous life he lived that would be imputed to believers. It marked his identification with those whose sins he would bear (Isa. 53:11; 1 Pet. 3:18) and it publicly affirmed his messiahship by testimony directly from heaven (Matt. 3:17; cf. Ps. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1).¹⁹

Temptation

After John baptized Jesus (Matt. 3:13–17), the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, to be tempted by Satan (Matt. 4:1–11). The Spirit’s involvement in leading Jesus into the temptation demonstrates that this testing accorded with God’s sovereign purpose.

Satan’s temptations attacked Jesus according to his humanity, since God himself (and therefore Jesus according to his divine nature) “cannot be tempted with evil” (James 1:13). God never acts even as the agent tempting anyone to evil. However, according to his sovereign design, he does ordain that Satan, demons, or other human agents tempt us, and God uses those temptations for his own wise and holy purposes (Job 1–2; Luke 22:31–32; 2 Cor. 12:7–10). In accord with the categories listed in 1 John 2:16, Satan tempted Jesus with hunger as one of “the desires of the flesh” (Matt. 4:2–3; 1 John 2:16), with putting God to the test as an exhibition of “the pride of life” (Matt. 4:5–6; 1 John 2:16), and with the possession of the kingdoms of the world and all their glory to fulfill “the desires of the eyes” (Matt. 4:8–9; 1 John 2:16). Through this specific time of testing as throughout his earthly life, Jesus was tempted “in every respect . . . as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

The Bible is explicit that Jesus *did* not sin (1 John 3:5), but *could* he have sinned, whether in thought or deed? This is to raise the question of the peccability or impeccability of Christ. Those who argue for peccability—that Jesus was able to sin even though he did not actually sin—focus on two main points. First, they argue that because the Son of God took upon himself a complete human nature, and because the original humans had the ability to sin even when they were unfallen (cf. Genesis 3), therefore the incarnate Christ must have been able to sin. To argue otherwise, they claim, is to undermine the genuine humanity of Christ. Second, peccability advocates argue that the inability to sin would undermine the genuineness of Christ’s temptations. If there is no ability to sin, then there can be no true temptation. Thus, to argue that Jesus was unable to sin is to compromise the clear biblical teaching that he was in every respect tempted as we are (Heb. 4:15).

The Scriptures, however, testify that Christ was not able to sin. In the first place, in John 14:30, Jesus states that the ruler of this world (Satan, cf. Eph 2:2; 1 John 5:19) “[had] nothing in [him]” (NASB). That is to say, there was nothing

¹⁹ For more on the significance of Jesus’s baptism, see the section in chap. 7 titled, “The Obedience of Christ” (p. 268).