

Spring Quarter

March | April | May 2023

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

Superintendent



Sunday School Superintendent

SPRING QUARTER

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Editorials

BY JOHN LODY

The Sinless Son

In John 8:29, Jesus told the Pharisees, “He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” This is quite a claim! Jesus asserted publicly that everything He did was according to His Father’s revealed will. Imagine—living a life completely and utterly aligned with every demand of God’s Law, His unchanging standard of holiness for humans. James tells us that to violate even one of God’s laws is to be guilty of violating all of them (2:10). So, in order to remain sinless, Jesus’ obedience (24/7/365 for some 33-odd years!) had to remain completely flawless.

Since God’s standard of holiness is absolute, in order for Jesus’ atonement for the sins of the world to be acceptable to the Father, it had to be perfect. In His divine nature, Christ was already perfectly holy, but His atonement needed to be for humans, so it was also necessary for Jesus to live a perfectly holy human life. Only a perfect sacrifice would merit vindication through His resurrection from the dead, as well as sufficient righteousness to save a world of condemned sinners and transform them into the children of God (cf. II Cor. 5:21).

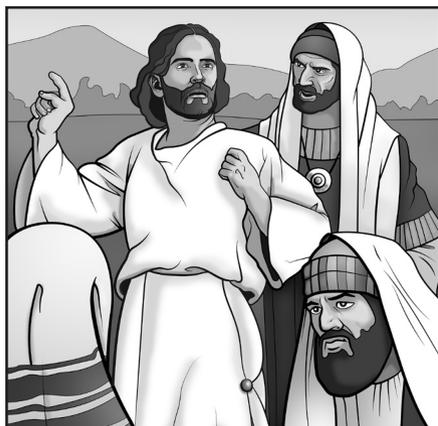
Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus was tempt-

ed by hunger (Matt. 4:2-4; Luke 4:2-4), by political power and idolatry (Matt. 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-8), by a dare to tempt God (Matt. 4:5-7; Luke 4:9-12), and finally, by a pull to decline death on the cross (Matt. 26:39-42; Mark 14:36-39; Luke 22:41-44). Through it all, He overcame temptation by the same means available to all of us—by God’s grace through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

In John 10:32, when the Jews picked up stones to kill Jesus in the temple, He boldly challenged them, “Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?” What audacious sarcasm! But because Jesus was confident that the Father was always with Him, He could rightfully make such claims. On this occasion, He once again evaded all attempts to arrest Him, since the time of His death had not yet arrived (cf. vs. 39; 7:30; 8:20; Matt. 21:46; Luke 4:29-30). Jesus knew that the testimony of His holy life could withstand any and all scrutiny, whether human or divine.

But was it even possible for Jesus to sin? That is a complex question that has occupied the minds of scholars for many centuries. As with just about everything theologians think about, it has an official sounding name: *the impeccability of Christ*. To be impec-

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cable is to be free from fault or blame; moreover, it involves being incapable of sinning or not *liable* to sin (merriam-webster.com).

To not be liable to sin means to have no obligation or need to sin. Jesus owed no debt to sin. Though He was “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3), yet He was without sin (cf. Heb. 4:15). When Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to a son, he said, “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). Jesus was completely holy in His humanity from the outset in Mary’s womb.

This is where the importance of Christ’s virgin birth enters the discussion. Because Jesus had no human father, His human nature was untainted by the curse that God pronounced on Adam (Gen. 3:17-19). Since He was exclusively the “seed” of a woman, He was therefore uniquely qualified to be the fulfillment of God’s prophecy to the serpent (cf. vs. 15), known as the *protoevangelium*, the first revelation of what would become the “gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16). Jesus is not only uniquely divine, but His virgin birth made Him uniquely human—the sinless Second Adam to begin a new race,

born of God through faith (John 1:12-13; Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:45).

Now, to answer the question whether Jesus could have sinned. Because He had a full human nature, it was *hypothetically possible* for Jesus to sin. But as R. Carlton Wynn has written, “Specifically, the Son’s incarnation entailed a harmony between his divine and human wills that precluded any possibility that he would ever fail to obey his Father in heaven. Yet at the same time, the holiness of Jesus’ humanity had to be worked out through a progressively intense, and ultimately excruciating, struggle against the temptation to sin and in the face of His genuine dread of divine judgment and death. Together, these truths commend to needy sinners an all-sufficient Christ who, exalted in heaven, is both sinless and sympathetic, both majestic and merciful” (“*Could Jesus Have Sinned?*” desiringgod.org).

Jesus’ sinlessness is the essential foundation of our eternal salvation. Without it, there is no virgin birth of Christ, no perfect and exemplary life of Christ in the Gospels, no meritorious righteousness of Christ to be imparted to us, no supreme high priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, no all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins, no resurrection of Christ from the dead, no ascension of Christ into heaven, no eternal advocate at the right hand of the Father’s throne to make intercession for us, and no ultimate resurrection of the just to eternal life.

I hope this article has provided you with a greater appreciation and a more profound gratitude for Christ’s sinlessness and His love for lost sinners.

Jesus' Baptism

Lesson Text: Mark 1:4-13

Related Scriptures: Matthew 3:1-17; Luke 3:15-22;
Matthew 17:1-7; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36

TIME: A.D. 26

PLACES: wilderness of Judea; Jordan River

GOLDEN TEXT—"There came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

OPENING MOMENTS

Suggested Song (Adults)

"Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee"
(attrib. Bernard of Clairvaux)

Suggested Song (Children)

"I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"
(Anonymous)

Icebreaker

Why do you think Jesus submitted to John's baptism?

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The call to repentance (Mark 1:4-8)**
2. **Jesus' response (Mark 1:9-11)**
3. **The wilderness temptation (Mark 1:12-13)**

KEY ISSUES

Most tasks require some kind of preparation. The more challenging the task, the greater the preparation required. For example, if you want to be a schoolteacher, you normally will have to have a four-year college degree in teacher education. If you want to be a firefighter, you will have to pass an examination and finish the course at a firefighters school. Take a part-time job at a fast-food restaurant, and you will probably be trained for the job. No matter what

kind of work you want to do, you will probably have a period of preparation.

This week's lesson points the way for preparing to be a leader, especially a leader in Christian work, using the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as He prepared for His life's work, so we should expect to prepare for the work He has given us to do; and every one of us has work to do for His kingdom.

Biblical leadership, with its high and its low points, always calls for humble consecration and submission to God's leading.

John the Baptist had a most remarkable ministry. Crowds from all walks of life flocked to hear this unusual teacher and prophet. What they heard was a scathing denunciation of sin and an earnest call to repentance. Then they were offered a baptism as a sign of their sincere repentance and determination to lead a new life.

Remember that at the heart of John's message was the call to repentance. That is, a person coming to him for baptism had to acknowledge himself a sinner and express godly sorrow for sin. He had to vow to turn away from his sinful ways and pledge himself to walk in newness of life.

In Mark's account Jesus simply appeared before John one day and presented Himself for baptism. Jesus,