

Last Generation Theology and the Human Nature of Christ



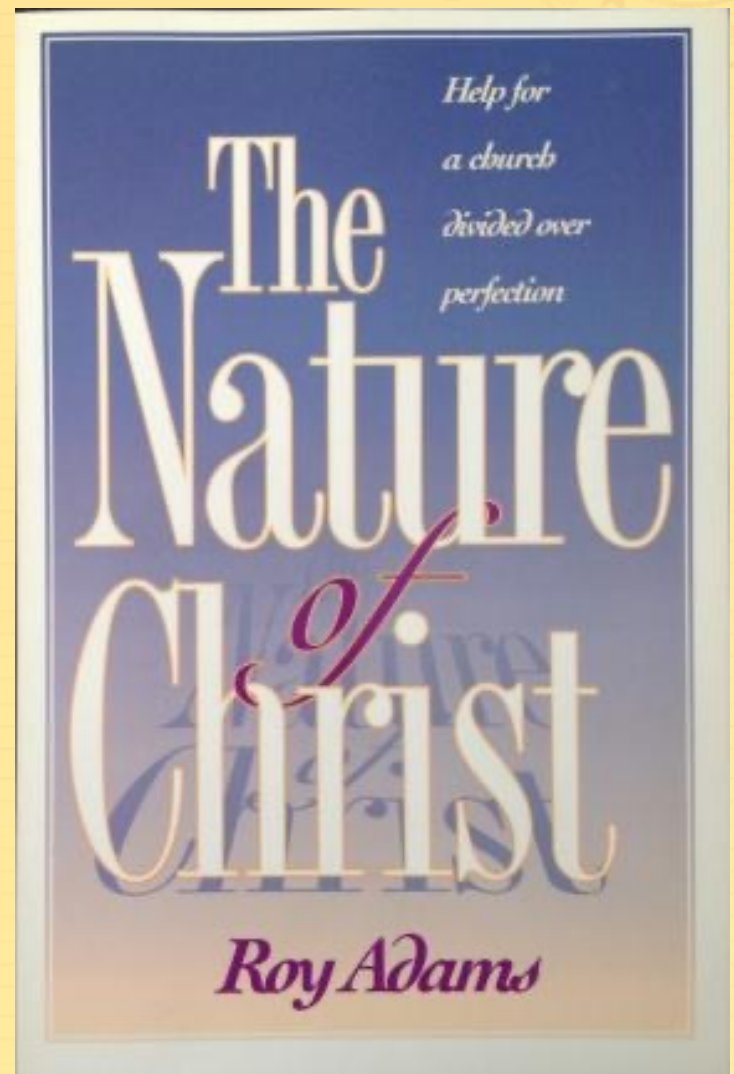
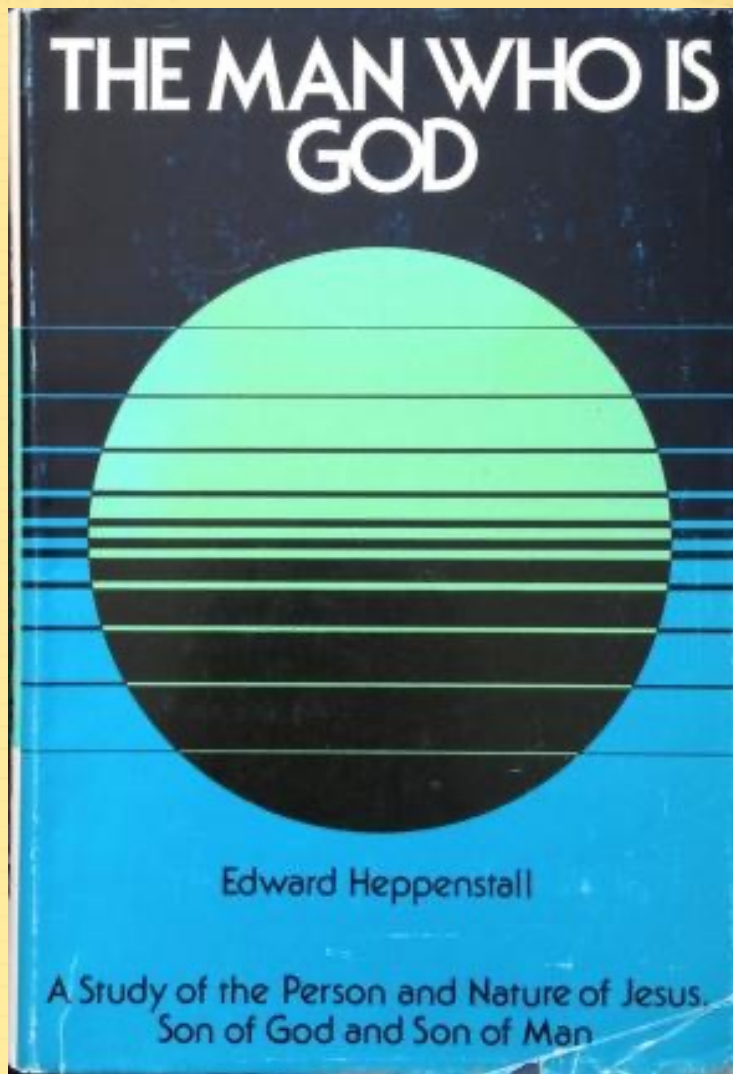
Denis Fortin (Ph.D.)

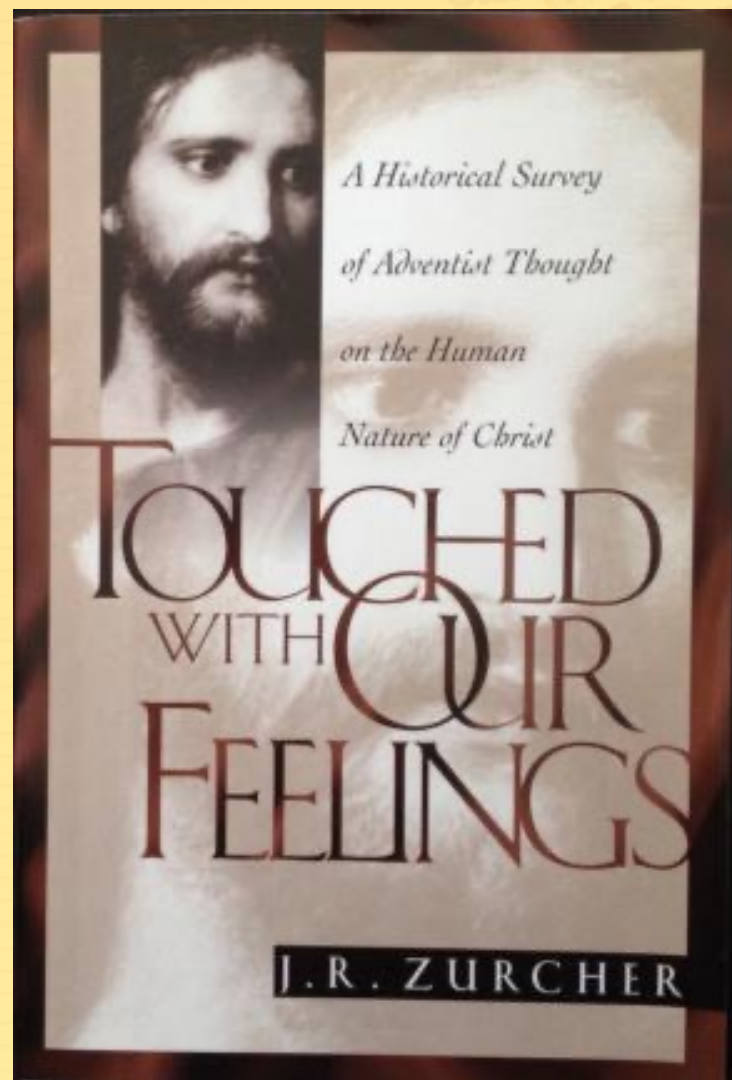
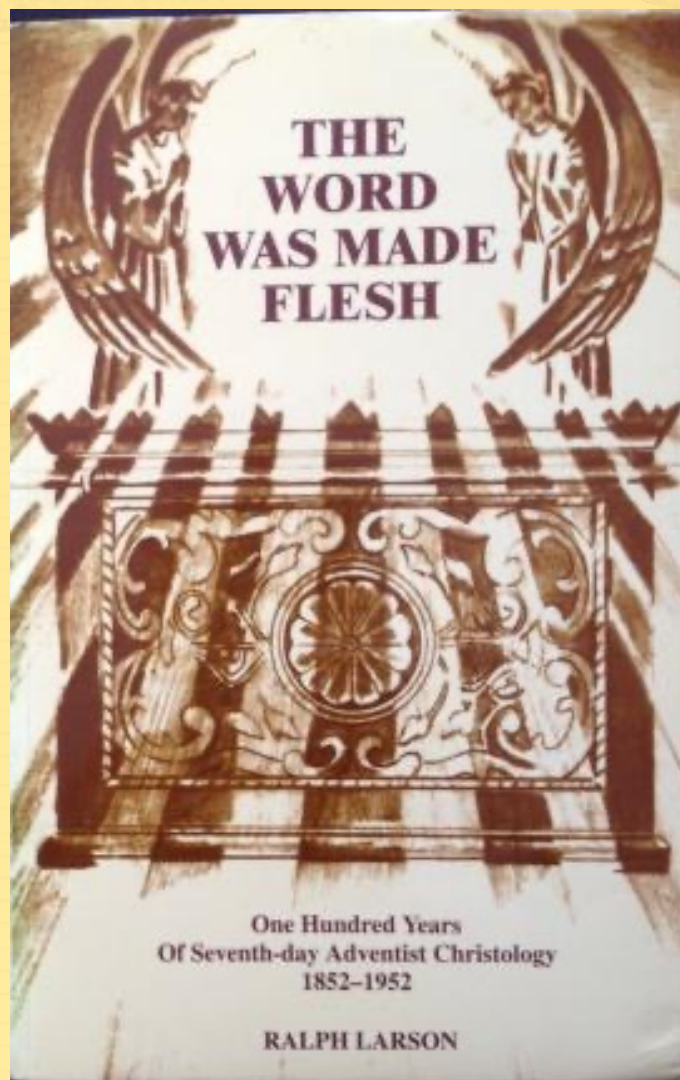
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“It was to redeem us that Jesus lived and suffered and died. He became "a Man of Sorrows," that we might be made partakers of everlasting joy. God permitted His beloved Son, full of grace and truth, to come from a world of indescribable glory, to a world marred and blighted with sin, darkened with the shadow of death and the curse. He permitted Him to leave the bosom of His love, the adoration of the angels, to suffer shame, insult, humiliation, hatred, and death. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5. Behold Him in the wilderness, in Gethsemane, upon the cross!

“The spotless Son of God took upon Himself the burden of sin. He who had been one with God, felt in His soul the awful separation that sin makes between God and man. This wrung from His lips the anguished cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46. It was the burden of sin, the sense of its terrible enormity, of its separation of the soul from God—it was this that broke the heart of the Son of God.” (*Steps to Christ*, 13)





Jesus' Sinless Humanity

- a. Testimony of the New Testament
- b. What is our definition of sin that Jesus is sinless of?
- c. Ellen White's statements
- d. The Temptations of Jesus

“The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. Yet He was God in the flesh. When we approach this subject, we would do well to heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5). We should come to this study with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth.” (*Youth Instructor*, Oct. 13, 1898, in *Selected Messages* 1:244)

Jesus' Humanity



John 1:14 – “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

A Real Human Being



Jesus grew up as any other child

Luke 2:52 – “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

Subject to the same **physical** limitations as other men.

Hunger – Mat 4:2

Thirst – John 4:7

Fatigue – John 4:6



Human emotions:

Love – John 13:33

Compassion – Mat 9:36

Sorrow – Mat 26:37-38; John 11:33-38

Joy – John 15:11

Anger – Mark 3:5

Indignation – Mark 10:14

“When Jesus took human nature, and became in fashion as a man, He possessed all the human organism. His necessities were the necessities of a man. He had bodily wants to be supplied, bodily weariness to be relieved. By prayer to the Father He was braced for duty and for trial.” (Letter 32, 1899, in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 5:1130)

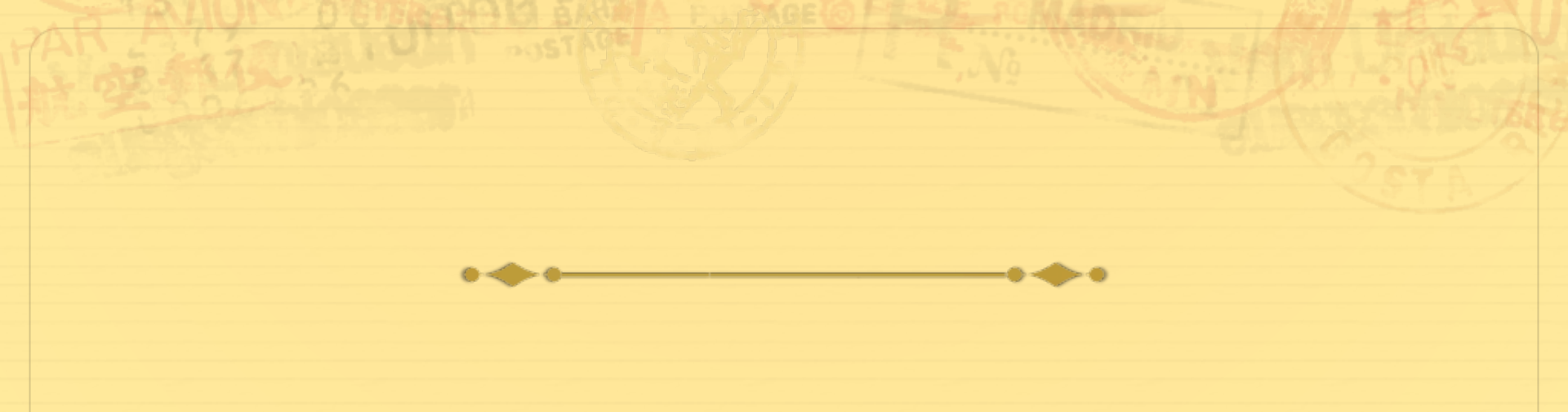
Sinlessness of Jesus



Although the Bible emphasizes that Jesus was **identical** to us in his humanity, it also declares that Jesus' humanity was **unique** from us. **Jesus was sinless – and we are not.**

At least three important issues regarding Jesus' **sinlessness** and **uniqueness**:


1. Whether he sinned or not,
2. Whether he could have sinned or not,
3. Whether his humanity was infected by the consequences of the Fall and sin to the same extent we are.



2 Corinthians 5:21 – “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.”

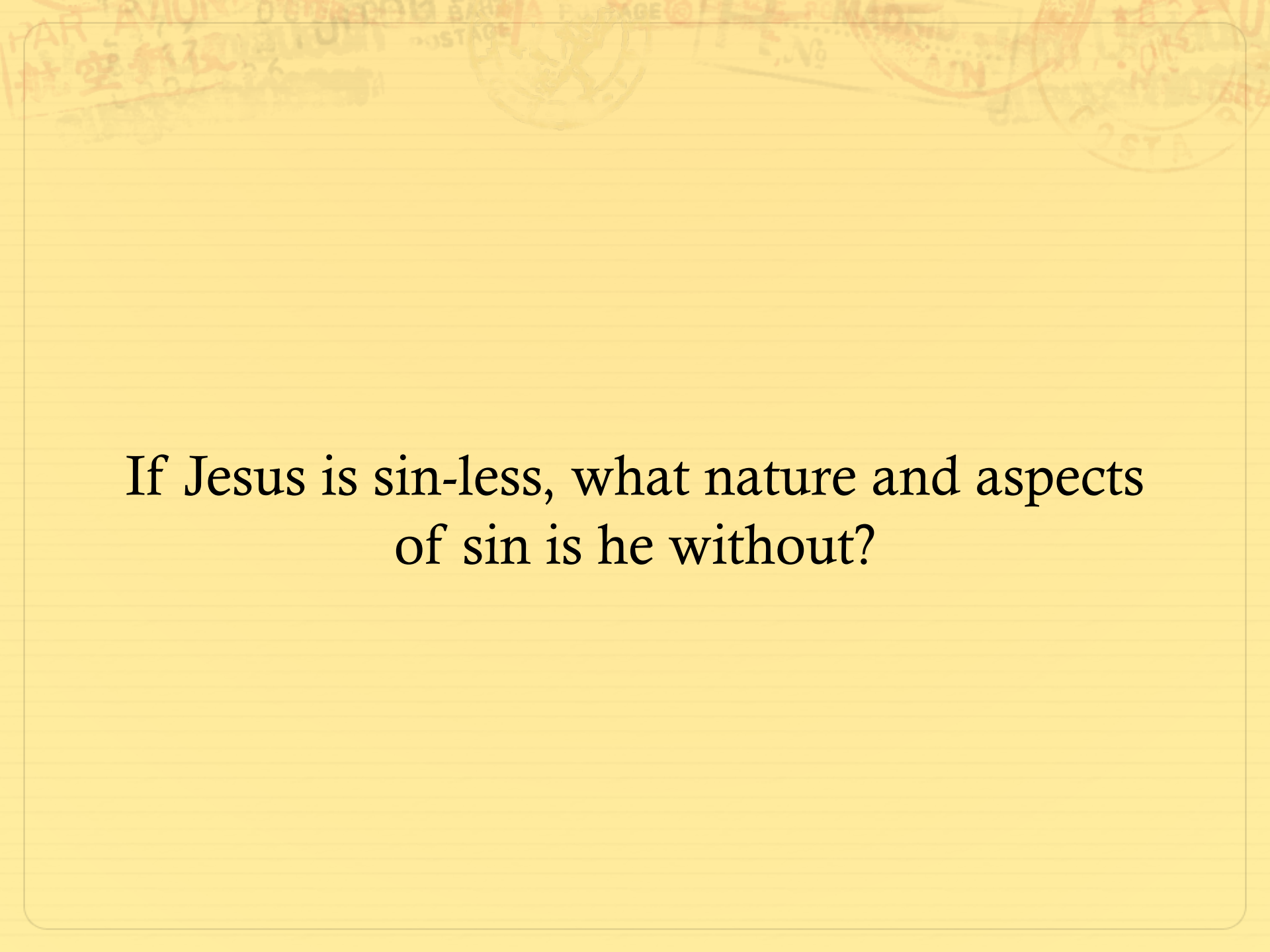
1 Peter 2:22 – “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

1 John 3:5 – “And in him is no sin.”



Hebrews 7:26 – “Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.”

Hebrews 4:15 – “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.”



If Jesus is sin-less, what nature and aspects
of sin is he without?

Sins

1. Sin refers to evil actions we commit, conscious and unconscious transgressions of the law of God. This aspect of sin is existential and results from our inherent sinful life.

We **commit** sins.

Jesus did not commit any sins.

Sins of the “flesh”:

- Galatians 5:19-21
- Colossians 3:5-8

Sin

2. Sin refers to a condition with which we are born. This aspect of sin is ontological to the nature of human beings (the self) and includes an inherent depravity (*epithymia*), a bent to sin, selfishness, the power of sin, and propensities to evil.

We **are** sin (sinful).

Romans 6:12-18

“Therefore do not let **sin** (*hamartia*) reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires (*epithymiais*). Do not offer the parts of your body to **sin** (*hamartia*), as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For **sin** (*hamartia*) shall not be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.”

SIN (*'awon*; *hamartia*; sinful condition; innate power of depraved human nature; selfishness; “crookedness” – Romans 6:12-14; Jeremiah 17:9; Philippians 2:3)

↳ **Evil desires and inclinations** (*epithymias*; “lust of the flesh”; inner temptations; evil thoughts – James 1:14-15; Matthew 5:22)

↳ **Sins** (*chattah*; *hamartia*; “works of the flesh”; transgressions – Galatians 5:19-21; 1 John 3:4 KJV)

↳ **Death** (Romans 6:23)

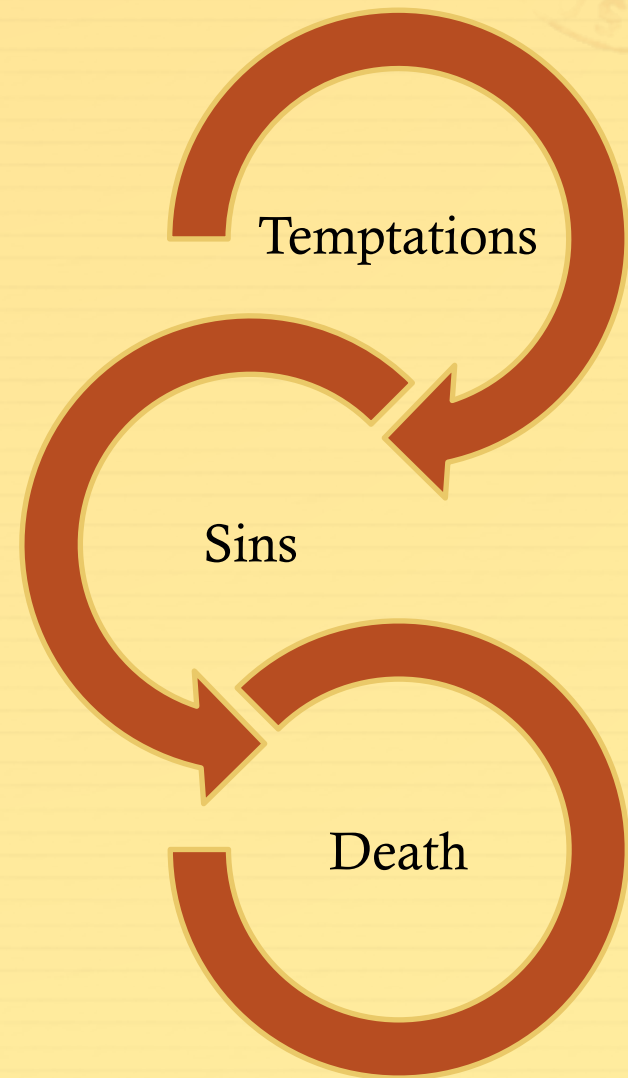
1 John 3:4 KJV
Galatians 5:19-21
Romans 6:23

Sin is a
transgression of
the law of God
and its result is
death.



James 1:13-15

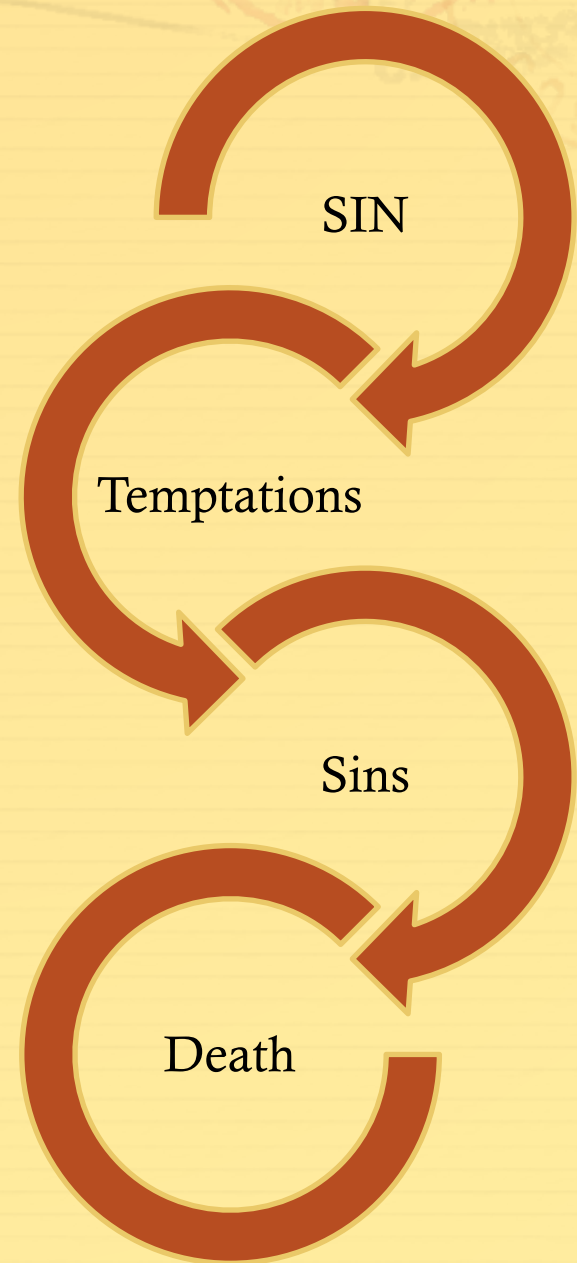
Temptations
come from evil
desires within
us and then give
birth to sins,
and then to
death.



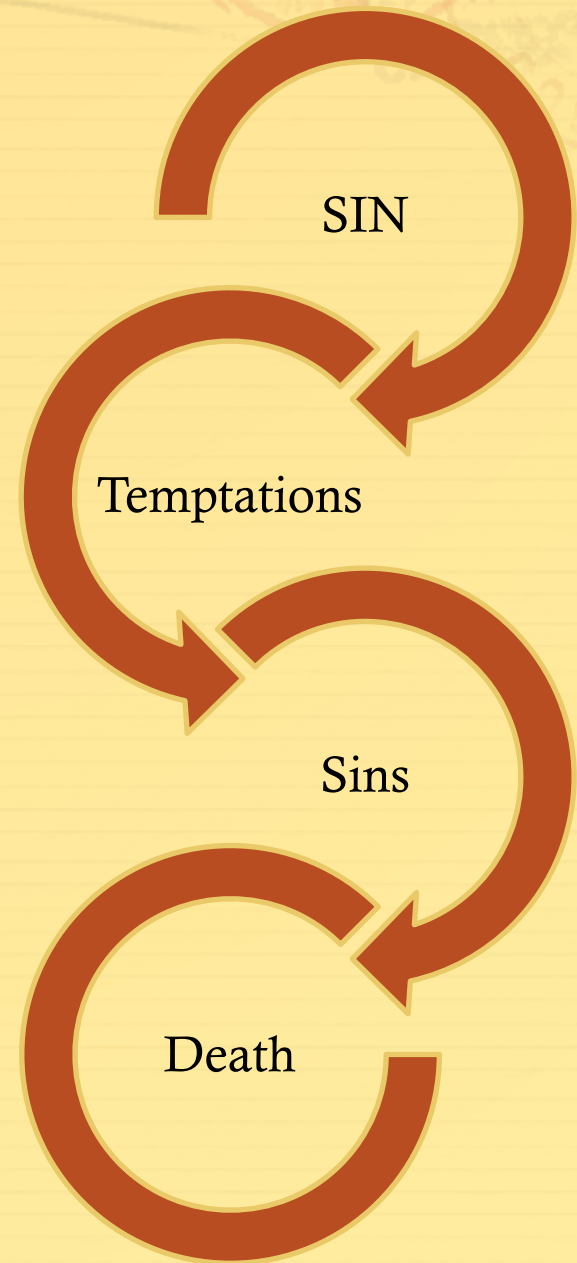
Romans 6:12-14

There is a presence of SIN in our own person (nature, being) and it naturally rules over us.

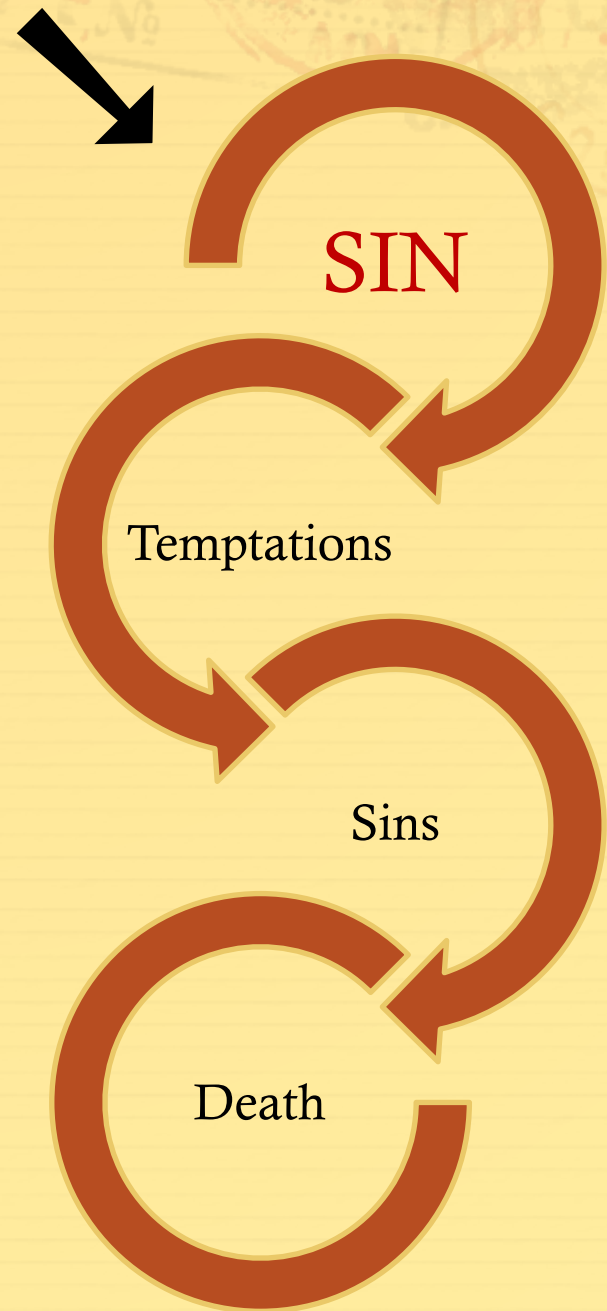
It gives birth to temptations and evil desires.



If Jesus is sin-less
(without sin), what
nature and aspects
of sin is he without?



Did Jesus inherit
SIN ?



The **essential nature of SIN** includes the concepts of idolatry, selfishness, sensuality, and displacement of God – loving oneself above God.

Sinless in sins



Sin as a verb (to commit evil actions):

1 Peter 2:22 – “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 – “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.”

Sinless in SIN



Sin as an internal evil force (to be born with an inherent depravity and the power of sin)

Hebrews 4:15 – “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet **was without sin.**”

1 John 3:5 – “And **in him is no sin.**”

A Sinful Heart?



Did Jesus inherit the human heart described in Jeremiah 17:9?

“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?”

Was Jesus born with such a selfish condition?

Ellen G. White




“There was no **sin** in Him [Christ] that Satan could triumph over, no **weakness** or **defect** that he could use to his advantage. **But we are sinful by nature**, and we have a work to do to cleanse the soul-temple of every defilement.” (*Review and Herald*, May 27, 1884)

Ellen G. White



“Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the **human nature of Christ**. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. **Because of sin, his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience.** **But** Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, **but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity.** He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.” (Letter 8, 1895 – Letter to W. L. H. Baker)

“The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers . . . to the heavenly sanctuary. . . . But passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God.” (Manuscript 50, 1900, in *Selected Messages*, 1:344)



“Nabożeństwa, modlitwy, uwielbienie, skruszone wyznanie grzechu wznosi się od prawdziwych wierzących ... do niebiańskiego sanktuarium. ... Ale przechodząc przez skorumpowane kanały ludzkości, są tak zbezczeszczeni, że jeśli nie zostaną oczyszczeni przez krew, nigdy nie będą mieli wartości dla Boga.”

(Manuscript 50, 1900, in *Selected Messages*, 1:344)

False principle of interpretation:

If Christ, in the writings of Ellen White, is said to have precisely the same human nature as the rest of humanity, then whatever is true of human nature is also true of Christ's human nature.

The incarnated Jesus took the weaknesses of human beings but not their sinfulness and he took the sinlessness of Adam but not his strength.

He was affected by sin but not infected by it.

Roy Adams – “For any of us to think, even for a moment, that the temptations we face can be compared, in intensity, to those that Christ endured is patently ludicrous. ... Although the temptations we face fall into the identical three categories that He had to meet, the fact that He was the God-man exposed Him to special, specific temptations unknown to us.” (*The Nature of Christ*, 82)

Millard Erickson – “The type of human nature each of us possesses is not pure human nature. The true humanity created by God has in our case been corrupted and spoiled. There have been only three pure human beings: Adam and Eve (before the fall), and Jesus. All the rest of us are but broken, corrupted versions of humanity. Jesus is not only as human as we are; he is more human. Our humanity is not the standard by which we are to measure his. His humanity, true and unadulterated, is the standard by which we are to be measured.” (*Christian Theology* [1998], 737)

High Christology

Christ's sinless human nature

We are saved in His victory

High Anthropology

Sin as bad actions

Selfishness is acquired

(Pelagian; Semi-Pelagian)

Low Christology

Christ is similar to us

We are saved by duplicating

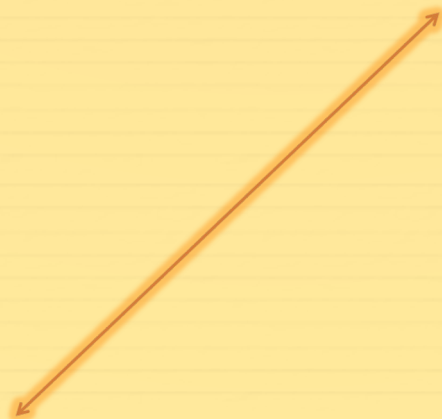
His example and victory

(Exemplarist view of Atonement)

Low Anthropology

Sin as an inherent condition

Selfishness is natural



High Christology

Christ's sinless human nature

We are saved in His victory

(Substitutionary view of atonement)

High Anthropology

Sin as bad actions

Selfishness is acquired



Low Christology

Christ' is similar to use

We are saved by duplicating His example and victory

Low Anthropology

Sin as an inherent condition; Selfishness is ontological

(Semi-Augustinian)




High Anthropology and Low Christology lead to:

- ✦ Jesus's life is an example to duplicate, in order to be saved
- ✦ Emphasis on human works for salvation
- ✦ Perfectionism – people can live without sin **now** (but no one has ever done it! – which leads to guilt for failure to achieve an unattainable goal)
- ✦ God's character is vindicated through human actions



Low Anthropology and High Christology:

- ✧ Jesus died our death (substitutionary atonement)
- ✧ Jesus' righteousness covers us
- ✧ Human works are always tainted with sin (selfishness)
- ✧ Victory over sins is possible in Christ's victory and by His grace
- ✧ God's character is vindicated in the cross of Christ



Roy Adams –“We must ever keep in mind that *His victory is our victory*. That is to say, *we are saved by His victory*. We are saved as we participate *in* His victory – as we, in other words, accept His victory as our own. We are not saved by trying to duplicate His victory. Instead, *we are saved by accepting His victory as our own*. We cannot emphasize this too strongly.” (*The Nature of Christ*, 85)



The Temptations of Jesus

The Temptations of Jesus



Hebrews 4:15 – “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but **we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.**”

Postlapsarian theology has emphasized the need (even the requirement) for Christ to be totally like us in order to be able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses.

Part of this theology is also the requirement that the 144,000 will live a life similar to Christ and have complete victory of sin, usually limited to conscious wrong decisions or behavior.

Since Christ overcame all temptations, so can we, and so will we in order to be saved at the Second Coming.

Does Hebrews 4:15 imply that Jesus' temptations were exactly like ours in origin, intensity and quality, arising from selfishness (SIN) in his heart?

The problem with this postlapsarian question and theology is that Christ was not and could not be identical to us in his postlapsarian human nature.

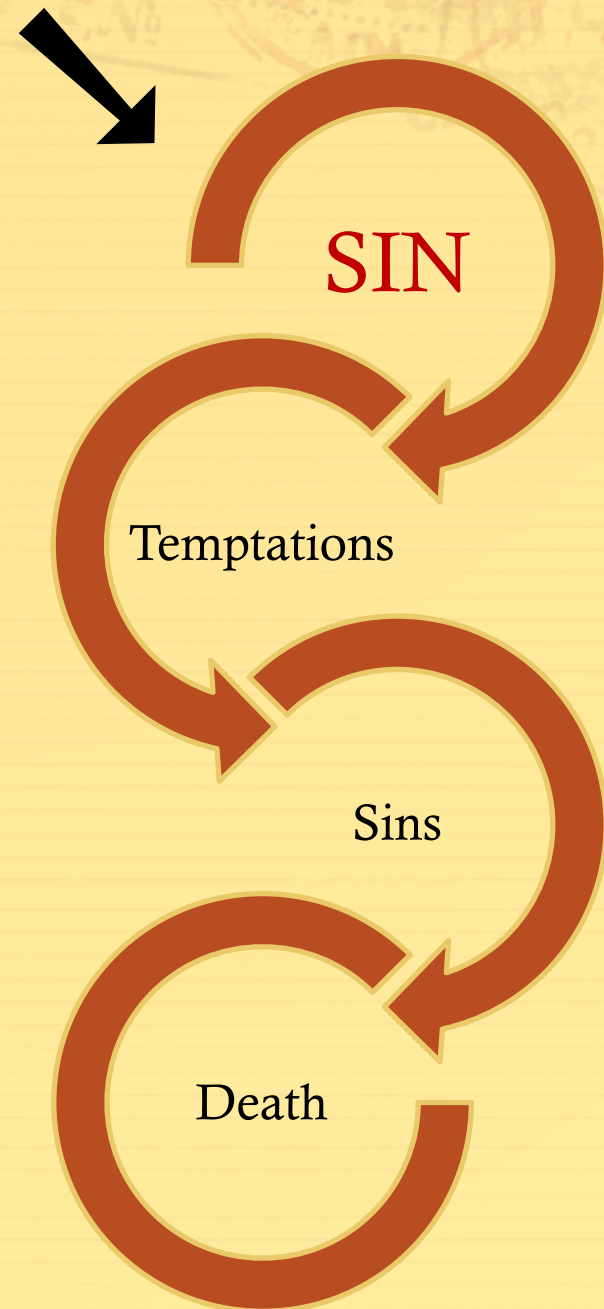
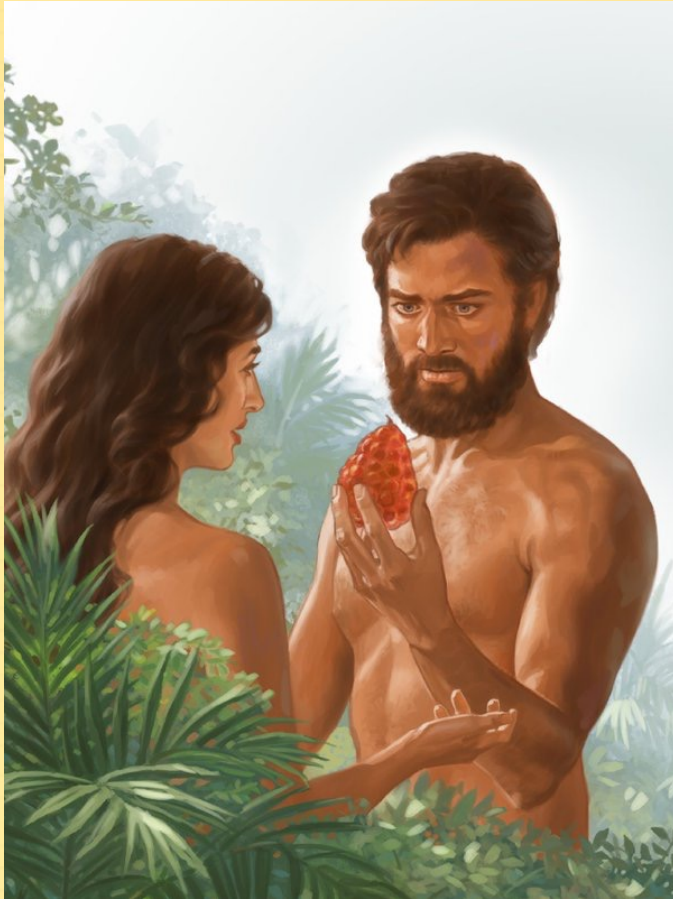
- ✧ Christ never had any cultivated inclinations to sin acquired after yielding to some inherited tendency to sin.

Does Hebrews 4:15 imply that someone must have a sinful nature in order to be tempted?

Much of postlapsarian theology imply that yes, this is the only way Christ could be our example.

The theological consequences of this argument are fraught with theological errors, even heresies.

Did Adam and Eve
inherit **SIN** ?

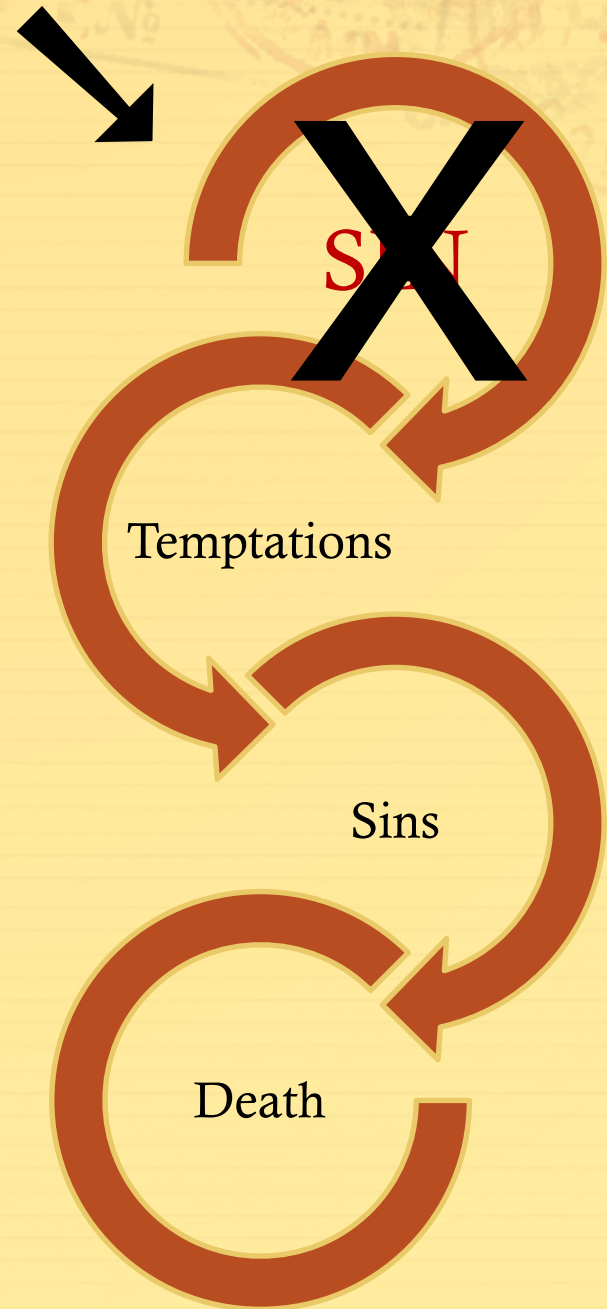


Did Adam and Eve
inherit **SIN** ?

NO !

Were they real
human beings if
they did not have
SIN ?


YES !



Then we must conclude that Jesus was
also a real human being even though
he did not inherit SIN ?

He was the second Adam.

The Temptations of Adam and Eve



Genesis 3:1-7

Adam and Eve's temptations implied a perversion of good qualities and desires in their hearts and minds, to fulfill valid desires in ways outside of the boundaries God had given them.

The Temptations of Jesus



Just as Adam's temptations implied a perversion of good qualities and desires in his heart, to fulfill valid desires in ways outside of the boundaries God had given him; so it was with Christ's temptations. The devil and people tempted Christ to fulfill His legitimate human needs in ways outside of the boundaries He had accepted as a human being, by using His own divine nature to save himself.

Three categories of temptations



1 John 2:16

“... for all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh** and the **lust of the eyes** and the **boastful pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”

- Temptation of bread: natural desire to eat; to pervert this desire by fulfilling it with divine power.
- Temptation of presumption: natural desire to be loved and supported by his Father; to pervert this desire by pushing God out of his life.
- Temptation of worship: natural desire to avoid pain and to have success in his mission; to pervert this desire by seeking the easy road and worshiping the devil.

“He had received honor in the heavenly courts, and was familiar with absolute power. It was as difficult for Him to keep the level of humanity as for men to rise above the low level of their depraved natures, and be partakers of the divine nature. Christ was to be put to the closest test, requiring the strength of all His faculties **to resist the inclination when in danger, to use His power to deliver Himself from peril, and triumph over the power of the prince of darkness.**” (*Review and Herald*, April 1, 1875, in SDABC 7:930)

“Bro. Baker, avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood. Truth lies close to the track of presumption. In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. **His birth was a miracle of God**; for, said the angel, [Luke 1:31-35 quoted].

“These words are not addressed to any human being, except to the Son of the Infinite God. **Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption.** He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, **yet He is called that holy thing.** It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, **but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves: for it cannot be.** The exact time when humanity blended with divinity, it is not necessary for us to know. We are to keep our feet on the rock, Christ Jesus, as God revealed in humanity.”
(Letter 8, 1895, Letter to W. L. H. Baker).