

# The Blasphemy Of The Holy Spirit

**Introduction.** Some have wondered, "Is it really possible to commit a sin of which one cannot repent?" We know of the great themes of God's mercy and forgiveness (1 Timothy 1:15). However, if one blasphemes the Holy Spirit, is that the one sin of which there is no repentance? This concern may be due, in part, to the phrases unpardonable sin or unforgivable sin which are used sometimes to describe this blasphemy. This terminology may lend itself to the idea that there is a type of sin, that once committed, may never be repented of or forgiven. We will see that Matthew 12:22-37 does not support this concept.

## I. ***Possible Interpretations***

- A. The following are several different ways that the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit has been interpreted.
  1. Some say it is merely blasphemy or "language irreverent or hostile to God." H. Leo Boles added, "There is always the idea of 'hurt' or 'injury' in blasphemy; the speaker means to do harm or speak evil of one."
  2. Some have believed it to be the sin of murder or suicide. The argument of murder is based off of 1 John 3:15.
  3. Some modernists believe that this was not an authentic utterance of Jesus because they claim that the saying does not fit Jesus' view of forgiveness. One modernist claims that our Greek versions have altered the original saying of Jesus, and that Jesus was speaking about blasphemy against this spirit not the Holy Spirit. Probably the strangest of all views is that those who do not accept the gay and lesbian lifestyle are disconnecting, sinning against the Holy Spirit.
  4. Early writers considered this sin to be the sin of apostasy in times of persecution or to be a denial of the divinity of Jesus.
  5. Some see this as the sin of Jesus' contemporaries who rejected Him before His resurrection, but the blasphemy against the Spirit was their rejection of Him after His resurrection, once the Spirit had come at Pentecost.
- B. So this verse has a number of different views, but these views do not fit the context of the passage, which will be the next area of our study.

## II. ***A Consideration Of The Context***

- A. The starting event.
  1. Jesus had entered into a house and a large multitude had gathered (Mark 3:19-20). Jesus then healed a blind and dumb man possessed with a demon. The reaction of the multitude was one of amazement.

2. The crowd began to see the implication of this miracle and wondered, "Can this be the son of David?"
  3. Luke also records this event, the argumentation, and the reasoning of Jesus that follows but does not record Jesus' warning about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit on this occasion. Luke records Jesus' warning about blasphemy later in His charge to the disciples to be faithful in the face of persecution.
- B. The blasphemous response.
1. Also in the crowd were scribes and Pharisees that had come from Jerusalem (Mark 3:22; Matthew 12:24). Upon seeing the multitude's response they said, "He hath Beelzebub, and, by the prince of the demons casteth he out the demons" (Mark 3:22).
  2. This was a desperate attempt by men who had already taken counsel against Him as to how they might destroy Him (Matthew 12:14). It was necessary for the Pharisees, who had determined to reject Jesus, to account in some way for His miracle.
  3. Here was an unmistakable miracle, superior to anything men could do. Whatever way of accounting for the miracle was adopted, it was necessary that they acknowledge that there was superhuman power. They therefore ascribed the miracle to the devil.
- C. The refutation.
1. Jesus attacks both the absurdity and wickedness of their charge in four ways.
    - a) The parable of division.
      - (1) Jesus identified Beelzebub with Satan. Why would Satan fight against Satan? Why would he seek to undo his own work? Satan's work is destruction.
      - (2) Jesus' work was in part to heal the man and manifest His power over Satan. Satan was not fighting himself, Jesus was fighting Satan by the Spirit.
    - b) The *ad hominem* argument made by Jesus.
      - (1) This is an argument which appeals to personal considerations, rather than to fact or reason.
      - (2) Jesus is not conceding that these sons were actually casting out demons (Matthew 12:27; Acts 19:13-14). He is simply showing the inconsistency of their accusation.
    - c) The parable of the strong man guarding his house and goods.
      - (1) In this parable Satan is the strong man and his goods are his demons. Satan is not going to bind himself!
      - (2) Jesus, however, was not in league with Satan, He was overpowering him and destroying his goods.

d) The metaphor of gathering and scattering.

(1) The Pharisees were jealous of the multitudes being gathered to the Lord. Had their explanation become popular, it would have defeated the purpose of His miracles (John 20:30-31; Mark 16:20).

(2) The scribes and Pharisees sought to scatter because they opposed the Lord; it was not just a battle of wits.

2. Because there is no room for neutrality in this spiritual battle between Satan and the Lord, He issues the following warning.

D. The warning.

1. Still speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men" (Matthew 12:31). At the outset Jesus declares that there is a blasphemy that can be forgiven and one that cannot. Therefore, there must be more to it than just the definition of the word "blasphemy."

2. Jesus also said that you could speak against the Son of man and be forgiven, but if you speak against the Holy Spirit you would not. Is the Holy Spirit a greater Being than the Lord? Is He more sanctified than Christ? What is the difference? Some points must be noted in the context:

a) Jesus was not giving this warning to the whole multitude.

(1) This warning was spoken to the rebellious scribes and Pharisees that had seen Jesus work this miracle. They knew that this kind of good was done by God, but they deliberately called the Spirit of God Beelzebub or Satan.

(2) These to whom He gave the warning were bent on evil. They had not just ignorantly or inadvertently spoken mere words against the Holy Spirit. Not everyone who rejects Christ will attribute His works to the devil, but these men did.

b) Jesus said that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven in this world nor the world to come.

(1) The phrase "this world" refers to the age in which Jesus lived and died, the Jewish age. The "world to come" was the gospel age following His death on the cross beginning at Pentecost.

(2) The Holy Spirit had a necessary role in both ages. Regardless of which age these scribes and Pharisees lived in, a blasphemous attack on the Holy Spirit would prevent their forgiveness.

- c) Christ came to this world to reveal God's will and to die for our sins.
  - (1) His death was necessary in order for God to have a basis upon which He could forgive man of his sins (Romans 3:24-26). Had they only blasphemed Christ, they would still have a chance to be convicted by the Holy Spirit.
  - (2) However, by rejecting the Holy Spirit, they rejected God's last means of convicting them. God cannot be just and forgive one who has completely rejected the Holy Spirit.
- E. This occasion with the scribes and Pharisees is not the only time in which this blasphemy could occur.
  - 1. In Luke 12:9-10, Jesus warns them not to deny Him in the face of persecution. He is speaking of a future time in which they would be guided by the Holy Spirit (vs. 12).
  - 2. If they allowed the same heart to develop in them that caused the Pharisees to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, they too would meet the same fate.

### III. ***Can This Sin Be Committed Today?***

- A. Let us summarize blasphemy by considering two aspects.
  - 1. The act of the sin. This was a sin in which the participants saw a miracle performed by the Holy Spirit. They attributed the Spirit's power to the power of the devil.
  - 2. The nature of this sin. What makes this unpardonable has to do with the heart of the one participating in the act.
    - a) This was a disposition of heart unwilling to believe which made it impossible to penitently apply the cleansing blood of Christ. There is no way for God to forgive this condition in any age.
    - b) The heart that deliberately rejects the evidence and power displayed by the Holy Spirit cannot comply with the requirements of the Spirit's revealed plan, and such a situation can never be forgiven (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-27; 1 John 5:16).
- B. Following Jesus' denunciation of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, He exposed three weaknesses of the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees.
  - 1. He exposed their corrupt fruit (Matthew 12:33-34).
  - 2. He identified their evil treasure (Matthew 12:35).
  - 3. He judged their idle words (Matthew 12:36-37).

**Conclusion.** Though we may not blaspheme the Holy Spirit today by rejecting Jesus' miracles, we can have a spiritual heart disease that causes us to sin, act hypocritically and carnally, and be worthless talkers. We cannot let this condition keep us out of heaven.