

SPEAKING AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 12:10

I. MEANING OF “BLASPHEME”

The word “blaspheme” means “to speak reproachfully about, rail at, revile” (Thayer). It means the same as to “speak against” (Matthew 12:31b, 32b) or to speak abusively or contemptuously about someone or something.

II. WHAT WAS DONE IN MATTHEW 12:22-32?

The Pharisees were *verbally* attributing Jesus’ miracle of driving out demons to Satan. In effect, they were accusing Him of having an “evil spirit” (i.e., demon) Himself. Mark 3:29-30. Jesus indicates that *this sin* could be forgiven (Matthew 12:27, 32), but that *something else*, called speaking against the Holy Spirit, could *not* be forgiven, *ever!* (Verse 32).

Notice, Jesus did *not* actually accuse them of committing sin by speaking against the Holy Spirit, but warned them of the grave danger of doing so! It seems that He was saying there was something *worse* than just accusing Him of performing miracles by the power of Satan!

III. BLASPHEMY OR SPEAKING AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT IS AN ATTITUDE OF HEART

The key to the Matthew 12 passage is verse 25, “*Jesus knew their thoughts.*” It was what was in the hearts of these Pharisees that constituted their main problem; the words they spoke were simply an expression of their inner rebellious spirit. They were evil in their hearts (verse 34); evil was stored up inside of them (verse 35).

The Jewish Sanhedrin resisted the Holy Spirit by rejecting the truth that Stephen was preaching (Acts 7:51-54). Jesus referred to such people as those who loved the darkness [of sin] (John 3:19). The Scriptures warn against a hardened, unbelieving, sinful heart (Heb. 3:12-13). Gentiles with hardened hearts are “callous” (NASB) and have “lost all sensitivity” (NIV) and are “past feeling” (ASV). (Eph. 4:19). They can come to the point where they refuse to have God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:28), even though they acknowledge His existence (Rom. 1:21). Even Christians can come to the point of sinning willfully (the Greek verb for “sinning” suggests habitually, in total disregard for the Spirit’s law) and thereby cease having a sacrifice for their sin (Heb. 10:26-29). So, the “unforgivable sin” is probably a condition of heart consisting of a total rejection of and contempt for the Holy Spirit inspired message of God, the only message providing any hope of forgiveness! Sinning against the Holy Spirit is rejecting His message, and thereby becoming cut off from the *only* source of forgiveness.

On the other hand, an honest and good heart, even in a lost person, provides a basis for forgiveness (when the person submits to God). Luke 8:15.

The Jews who accused Jesus of performing miracles by the power of Satan had rebellious hearts; they were rejecting the message of God's forgiveness, demonstrated by the life and works of Jesus.

IV. HOW COULD PEOPLE BLASPHEME THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY (THEREBY COMMITTING UNFORGIVABLE SIN)?

This sin could not be committed today by verbally accusing Jesus of performing miracles by the power of Satan, for He is *not here* doing that anymore! And if people attributed the miracles Jesus performed in NT times to the power of Satan, *that* could be forgiven because it would be "speaking a word against the Son of man," something Jesus says *can* be forgiven. (Jesus considered it possible for even His murderers to be forgiven. Luke 23:32-34).

Is "speaking against the Holy Spirit" an *observable act* today? If so, it could be recognized for what it is and be forgiven along with "every sin and blasphemy" (Matthew 12:31). The Bible says that people can speak against other people (Titus 3:2); they can speak against the truth (II Peter 2:2), against God's word (Titus 2:5), and against the apostles' teaching (I Timothy 6:1) and *still* be forgiven for it! If speaking against the Holy Spirit were a *specific act*, then why is it not mentioned, and warned against, in the other 24 books of the New Testament, written by Paul, John, Peter, James and Jude? If it were such an irreversible act, which, when once committed, insured no possibility of forgiveness, wouldn't it have been mentioned repeatedly in the Scriptures? (And in sermons by preachers today?)

V. WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE TODAY WHO FEAR THEY HAVE COMMITTED "THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?"

The very fact that some people today have a deep concern over whether they may have committed this sin shows they have not rejected God nor have contempt for His Truth. Their anxiety stems from a false idea that a *specific sin* can be committed which will cut them off from God forever! Instead of being guilty of "the unpardonable sin," these people are probably the *least likely* to be guilty of "an eternal sin!" The very fact of their feeling a sense of guilt over their condition suggests that the Holy Spirit is still convicting them (John 16:8).