

# The Unforgivable Sin

Over the years I've heard a lot of talk about the unforgivable sin. There are all sorts of different opinions concerning what it is and what it isn't. Since there is a lot of confusion surrounding this topic I thought it would be a good idea to explain this sin in a clear and concise way.

The unforgivable sin is mentioned several times in the Bible:

**Matthew 12:31:** "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

**Mark 3:28:** "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."

**Luke 12:10:** "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven."

As you can see, all of these passages talk about something known as blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Matthew tells us that if you speak a word against the Son of Man then that can be forgiven, but if you speak against the Holy Spirit then that is unforgivable. But what does that mean? Is this something that we need to be worried about? Are we in danger of committing this sin?

This is a situation where context is absolutely critical. There are many people who focus solely on Matthew 12:31-32 and who miss the surrounding context. In this case the context makes all the difference.

When Jesus said those words He was engaged in a discussion with Israel's religious leaders. By this point in Christ's ministry He had done many incredible miracles. He had healed people, He had cast out demons, and He had done many wonders. He had the attention of the people and multitudes followed Him.

Then Jesus did something that truly astounded the nation: He cast a demon out of someone who could not speak. This immediately made the nation think that Jesus must be the Messiah, the son of David:

**Matthew 12:22:** "Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?"

To understand why this miracle had such a large impact, you have to understand how Jewish exorcisms worked. In order to cast out a demon you first had to discover its name. Once you knew its name you could then order it *by name* to come out of the person. This worked fine if the person could talk, but it did not work on people who were mute. Jewish tradition taught that only the Messiah could

cast a demon out of a mute man; no one else was capable of doing it. Therefore, when Jesus did it He was establishing His claim to be the Messiah – and the people recognized that.

Israel's religious leaders, however, had another explanation. They said that Jesus was doing His miracles through the power of Satan:

**Matthew 12:24:** “But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.”

When the Pharisees said this Jesus immediately rebuked them – *and in every single case that rebuke included a mention of the unforgivable sin.* In fact, the book of Mark actually makes it crystal clear that the unforgivable sin was a reference to what the Pharisees had just said:

**Mark 3:29:** “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.  
30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.”

In other words, the reason Jesus warned them against the unforgivable sin was because they had just accused Jesus of doing miracles by the power of the devil. *That was the unforgivable sin.* The religious leaders of Israel's day saw Jesus Christ, in person, doing miracles that only the Messiah could do, and they accused Him of doing them by the power of Satan. That was the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and that was unforgivable. They were looking at what was unquestionably the work of the Holy Spirit and they were saying it was a work of the devil.

It is no longer possible to commit the unforgivable sin because Jesus Christ is no longer here in person. Today we believe in Jesus by faith and trust Someone whom we have never seen. Israel was in a very different situation: they refused to trust in someone *who was standing right there in front of them.* None of us have ever had the chance to watch Jesus, in person, do mind-boggling miracles and then tell Him to His face that He was demon-possessed. That particular sin is no longer possible. There are a lot of very serious sins that are a real danger to you, but this is not one of them.

Yes, it is definitely a sin to not trust in Jesus. But refusing to trust in a Jesus who you have never seen is not quite the same as refusing to trust in a Jesus who you *have* seen. Refusing to believe in miracles that you have never seen is not the same thing as rejecting miracles that you personally saw Jesus perform. They are both sins, but they are very different sins.

There is one other unforgivable sin. Like the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, this sin is also impossible to commit during the Church Age. We find this sin discussed in the book of Revelation. Simply put, anyone who takes the Mark of the Beast is lost forever and will be damned:

**Revelation 14:9:** “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

*Everyone* who takes the Mark will be lost. That act cannot be undone and it cannot be forgiven. It is permanent and it is fatal. If you receive the Mark you will face the wrath of God and you will be

tormented with fire and brimstone *forever*. It is a one-way, irrevocable ticket to the Lake of Fire.

However, the Church will never be tempted to take the Mark. The Mark of the Beast does not appear until midway through the Tribulation, and the Rapture will remove the Church from the Earth before the Tribulation begins. By the time the Mark appears the Church will be long gone. The only ones who will be tempted by it are those who are still on Earth at that time (in other words, those who have been left behind).

The unforgivable sin is a very real thing with very real consequences, but it does not apply to the Church. We are spared of that temptation.