

The Unforgivable Sin

Over the years there's been a lot of confusion about the unforgivable sin. There are all sorts of different opinions concerning what it might be. Since there's 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 12:31-32: “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. 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 3:28-29: “Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: 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.”

All of these passages talk about something called 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's unforgivable. But what does that mean? Is this something we need to be worried about? Are we in danger of committing this sin?

In order to figure this out we need to take a close look at the context of these verses. This is a situation where context is absolutely critical! There are some people who focus solely on Matthew 12:31-32 and miss the surrounding context. *The context makes is exceptionally important.*

When Jesus said these words He was talking to Israel's religious leaders. By this point in His ministry He had performed 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 couldn't speak. This made the people think that Jesus must be the Messiah, the son of David:

Matthew 12:22-23: “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. 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 ancient times, 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 didn't work for people who were unable to speak. 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 clear that the unforgivable sin was a reference to what the Pharisees had just said:

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

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 the devil. 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's 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 we've never seen. Israel was in a very different situation: they refused to trust someone *who was standing right there in front of them doing miracles!* None of us have ever had the temptation to watch Jesus, in person, do astounding 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 we can commit,

but this isn't one of them.

I agree that it's definitely a sin to not trust in Jesus. But refusing to trust in a Jesus you've never seen is different from refusing to trust in a Jesus you *have* seen. Refusing to believe in miracles that you've never seen isn't the same thing as rejecting miracles that you personally saw Jesus perform. They're both sins, but they're very different sins.

There's one other unforgivable sin. Like the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, this sin is also impossible to commit during the church age. We can find this sin discussed in the book of Revelation. Anyone who takes the Mark of the Beast is lost forever and will be damned, with no exceptions:

Revelation 14:9-11: “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, 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: 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's permanent and fatal. If you receive the Mark then God will pour out His eternal wrath upon you, and you will be tormented with fire and brimstone *forever*. It's a one-way, irrevocable ticket to the Lake of Fire.

The good news is that the church will never be tempted to take the Mark. The Mark of the Beast doesn't 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 gone. The only ones who will be tempted by it are those who are still on Earth at that time.

The unforgivable sin is a very real thing with very real consequences, but it doesn't apply to the church. We are spared that particular temptation.