

The Unforgivable Sin

Matthew 12:22-32

Intro

Let's jump right into our passage this morning...

Matthew 12:22-32 (NKJV)

22 Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw.

23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.

28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

29 Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."

Let's move into our first verse...

22 Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute;

There are a couple of things here that I want to draw your attention to...

First of all, this man is in a terrible situation — *he can't see, he can't speak and he is under the control of the demonic...*

- But the second thing to notice here is some good news — *someone was bringing him to Jesus...*

Wonderfully, someone — or a group of someones — brought this helpless man to the one who could help him...

APPLICATION — We each have the opportunity to bring those in need to the Lord — and prayer is the first step...

- [expand — other ways to bless those in need of help — healthcare, financially, counsel, etc...]

Continuing on in vs 22...

and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw.

Beautifully, the Lord Jesus completely heals the man...

The man begins to speak and see and is freed from demonic possession...

- This man is completely restored — *and this is something that the Lord loves to do — He loves to restore...*

[ex. Parable of the Prodigal Son — the son was fully restored...]

*Now, we must realize that the restoration that Jesus desires to provide is only **partial** in this life...*

- When we receive our resurrection bodies we will receive **Restoration+** ...

[ex. Disney+, ESPN+, Wal-Mart+, etc...]

This is the hope of believers — that the day is coming when we will experience **Restoration+** ...

- When we will receive an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, that does not fade away that is reserved in Heaven for us...

We will get to experience the reality of...

Revelation 21:4 (NKJV)

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

Continuing on in Matthew 12 to vs...

23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

The multitudes were astonished — they could not believe what they were seeing...

Something undeniably miraculous had happened — there was no denying it...

- And this led the crowd to rightly wonder, *was Jesus the Son of David — was He the Messiah?*...

APPLICATION — If you have not yet trusted in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, then I would encourage you to examine the evidence and make a well-informed decision...

I encourage you to simply allow the evidence to take you where it will...

- Because I am absolutely convinced that anyone who is willing to consider the facts with an open mind will come to the truth...

Unfortunately, the Pharisees refused to consider the possibility that Jesus was the Messiah — they had already made up their minds...

We see this as we move into vs...

24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

In response to the question, **"Could this be the Son of David?"** the Pharisees jump in and make the claim that Jesus was casting **out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons...**

Now, before we consider how Jesus responds to this bold declaration, let's consider the context in which the Pharisees came to this conclusion...

- And in order to properly ***understand the context*** we must ***understand the Pharisees...***

You see, by New Testament times the Pharisees were well-established in their extra-scriptural teaching as they had been in development for at least 200 years...

Schürer — History of the Jewish People in the Time of Christ
"They had the bulk of the nation as their ally... They had the greatest influence upon the congregations, so that all acts of public worship, prayers, and sacrifices were performed according to their injunctions. Their sway over the masses was so absolute that they could obtain a hearing even when they said anything against the king or the high priest, consequently they were the most capable of counteracting the design of the kings. Hence, too, the Sadducees, in their official acts, adhered to the demands of the Pharisees, because otherwise the multitude would not have tolerated them."

So, the Pharisees were extremely influential and they maintained their influence by convincing others to do things their way...

- Unfortunately, their way was incorrect — they had perverted the scriptures into a web of legalism that kept people away from a right relationship with the Lord...

And it was in the midst of this environment that God had sent John the Baptist onto the scene to prepare people for the Messiah...

- This was a chance for the Pharisees to get right with the Lord — to get on board with what God was doing...

Tragically, the Pharisees chose to reject John the Baptist — and the reason for this was quite simple...

Accepting John the Baptist would cost the Pharisees too much...

They would have to admit that their way of doing life was false...

- They would have to let go of their power and influence and begin to do life differently...

But they counted the cost and it was just too expensive...

So, they rejected John the Baptist...

Not because they had reasonable grounds for doing so — but because they would have to admit that *they were wrong* and they would have to live a life of humble obedience to God...

And since they rejected the forerunner of the Messiah, it was only natural that they would reject the Messiah Himself — and they manufactured reasons for their rejection...

The Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners...

- The Pharisees criticized Jesus for not adhering to their fasting traditions...

The Pharisees had previously accused Jesus of casting out demons by the ruler of the demons...

- But it is when the Lord Jesus refused to respect the Sabbath restrictions of the Pharisees that the Pharisees decided it was time to murder Jesus...

After the Lord Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath and we are told of the response of the Pharisees in...

Matthew 12:14 (NKJV)

Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.

So, this is the context of our passage...

The Pharisees' gradual accumulation of power and influence through 200 years of legalistic, unscriptural teaching...

- Their outright rejection of the forerunner of the Messiah...

Their unceasing criticism of Jesus and His teachings...

- Their single-minded desire to kill Jesus so that they might retain their position of power...

With all of this in mind, is it surprising that the Pharisees could not accept the Lord Jesus?...

The Pharisees had been trained in what was false and they had profited by that false system — so it is no wonder that they had every reason to reject the Lord Jesus...

LESSON — If a person is whole-heartedly immersed in a false system — then it is no wonder that they cannot believe...

For example, it is no wonder that the *materialist college professor* whose entire life is built on the idea that there is no God would reject Jesus out of hand...

Because he would lose everything he has built if Jesus is who He says He is...

From the professor's perspective, *all would be lost* — and he can't lose all — so he rejects Christ...

- So, like the materialist professor, the Pharisees have too much to lose and they are unwilling to let it go...

They cannot deny that the blind, mute, demon-possessed man has been miraculously delivered — so they say that Jesus used the power of demons to cast out the demon...

But this is an absurd argument — and the Lord Jesus shows this as we move into vs...

25 But Jesus knew their thoughts,

This truth reminds me of what we find in...

Hebrews 4:13 (NKJV)

...there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

This reminds us of the truth of the omniscience of God...

And the omniscience of God has some very practical applications...

1) Though I do not know all things, God does — and He knows what is good in every situation — and because He is also omnipotent He is able to work all things together for the good...

2) God knows everything about me — all my words, thoughts and actions — past, present and future — and He still loves me and is continually seeking my good...

Continuing on in vs 25...

But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

Although Abraham Lincoln is often credited with this saying, it was the Lord Jesus that Lincoln was quoting...

And the instruction here is very straightforward...

Whenever a household, city or kingdom begins to fight itself then destruction follows...

- If the fighting goes on long enough then the household, city or kingdom is completely destroyed...

Now, as we move into vs 26, the Lord Jesus applies this principle to the Pharisees' accusation that He is casting out demons by the power of Satan...

26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

In other words, it makes no sense to say that Jesus is casting out demons by the power of Satan because that would mean that Satan is attacking his own troops...

- [ex. D-Day attack — if the allied forces sent aircraft to attack the soldiers who were storming the beach...]

So, the Pharisees were making an absurd accusation because they were unwilling to come to grips with the most obvious answer — that Jesus was the Son of David — He was the Messiah...

Now, Jesus continues His argument in vs...

27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.

Jesus asks the question — “If the **sons** of the Pharisees (disciples of the Pharisees) were able to cast out demons — were they also doing it by the power of Beelzebub?”...[expand]

28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Please notice that the Lord Jesus is claiming to **cast out demons by the Spirit of God** — by the Holy Spirit...

- And we talked about this reality last week — that Jesus’ ministry was conducted in *the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit*...

So, what the Lord Jesus is saying in vs 28 brings us closer to the heart of the matter...

A rejection of the Lord Jesus and His ministry is also a rejection of the Holy Spirit and His ministry...[expand]

Now, please also notice the second part of vs 28...

But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

The Lord Jesus is claiming that the work of the Holy Spirit in His ministry — as manifested through the casting out of demons — is proof that the kingdom of God has come upon them...

***VITAL TRUTH — If a person rejects the person and work of the Holy Spirit then they cannot recognize the Kingdom of God...
[expand]***

So, if you are unable to see the Kingdom of God — if you are unable to recognize the work of God around you...

Then it may be due to the fact that you are ignoring the person and work of the Holy Spirit...

Jesus continues in vs...

29 Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

- [explain illustration...]

This is another evidence that the kingdom of God had come upon them — Someone greater than Satan had come to plunder Satan's house...

- Someone who was able to set the captives free...

Next Jesus warns the Pharisees that they have put themselves in a very dangerous position...

30 He who is not with Me is against Me,

The Pharisees are not with Jesus — they are not on His side — so they have set themselves up in opposition to Him...

- This is a very important thing to understand — there is no such thing as spiritual neutrality when it comes to Jesus...

For more on this subject, please turn to...

Colossians 1:15-18 (NKJV)

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

This passage makes it abundantly clear that everything was made by Jesus, through Jesus and for Jesus...

In light of this truth, He is to have the preeminence in all things...

So, to fail to be for Him — to fail to be for the One who made it all — is to be against Him...

- It is to fail to live in reality — it is to fail to live according to the purpose for which the world was created — for which human beings were created...

Turning back to Matthew 12 we come to the second half of vs 30...

and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

- [explain harvesting imagery...]

I believe that this verse is best understood by reminding ourselves of what the Lord Jesus said in...

Matthew 9:35-38 (NKJV)

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

So, the instruction is clear — as believers we are to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest...

- And that prayer should begin with asking for the Lord to *send us as laborers...*

[expand — we have different jobs — some plant, some water, some reap but it is God who gives the increase...]

The big idea is that no believer is to be a spectator...

We are all called to be disciples — we are all called to go out into the field to do the work that God has called us to do...

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Now, let's consider Matthew 12:30 one more time...

“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”

- [expand again on imagery of refusing to participate in the harvest and purposely scattering the crops...]

Now, let's consider this in light of what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 23...

Matthew 23:13 (NKJV)

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.”

Matthew 23:15 (NKJV)

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

So, the Pharisees are not only failing to gather — they are not only failing to participate in the harvest — *they are also actively scattering by teaching false doctrine...*

- They are actively deceiving people and as a result are actively working against the Lord...

This brings us to vs 31...

31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men,

This is good news — forgiveness is available!...

but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

So, there is only one sin that will not be forgiven — the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit...

The Lord Jesus continues this thought in...

32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."

What can this mean?...

Let's consider the context — the Pharisees are *attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit that is being done through the Lord Jesus...*

Now, as we consider what the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is — I will give you the definition that I have come to...

- ***The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is the full and final rejection of the Holy Spirit's witness of Jesus Christ...***

And why is it unforgivable?...

Because the Holy Spirit is the very one who draws individuals into relationship with the Lord Jesus...

To see this, please turn to...

John 16:5-15 (NKJV)

5 "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'

6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;

11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own

authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”

So, as we turn back to Matthew 12, please understand that...

The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is the full and final rejection of the Holy Spirit’s witness of Jesus Christ...

And the Pharisees’ were well on their way to committing this sin — so Jesus is issuing a warning to them...[expand]

- The Pharisees were like a person who is hopelessly lost and who rejects and reviles the only person who can lead them to safety...

This is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit — rejecting the witness of the One who came to lead you to safety in Christ...

Conclusion

Now, as we close, please understand that if you are concerned about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit you have not committed it...
[expand]

- But if you are not yet a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ you are currently resisting the Holy Spirit...

And if you fail to repent then eventually that resisting of the Holy Spirit will become the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit...

But it doesn't have to be that way...

The question is, are you willing to receive the witness of the Holy Spirit?...

- Are you willing to let go of any false belief you have — no matter how long you have held it — so that you might follow Jesus?...

For those of us who are believers we can still grieve the Holy Spirit and quench the Holy Spirit — we can walk in disobedience to the Holy Spirit...

- So let us repent and submit to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit and enjoy His fellowship as He brings us ever close to Christ...

Let's pray...