

The Unpardonable Sin: Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit

1. Look up the Greek term “blasphēmēō” found in Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:29-30; Luke 12:10 and define the term.

The common use of the verb “blasphēmēō” during the first century generally meant to “speak harm” in the context of to bring ill repute or slander. The noun form generally meant profane language, slanderous speech or defamation by which another person is damaged.

In the religious context of the Greeks, it meant to falsely represent a deity in order to debase the authority of the deity.

2. Besides blasphemy, can human beings oppose the Holy Spirit? Study Acts 7:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-20, Ephesians 4:30-31, and Hebrews 10:26-31.

Yes we can!! Here are some examples:

Human beings can resist the Holy Spirit.

You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; (Acts 7:51-52)

Human beings can extinguish or put out the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. (1 Thess 5:16-20)

Human beings can cause great sorrow or sadness to the Holy Spirit.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (Eph 4:30-31)

Human beings can insult the Holy Spirit.

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb 10:26-31)

It is worthwhile to note that these examples of resisting the Holy Spirit are forgivable sins. They are not considered an act of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

3. Observe carefully the passages in Matthew 12:22-24, Mark 3:7-30, and Luke 12:10. Make a table and note the similarities of all three instances.

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What Jesus Did	Pharisees' Accusation
Healing of the demon possessed man who was blind and mute so that he could both see and speak (Matt 12:22)	Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul ruler of demons (Matt 12:24)
Healing multitudes of various afflictions and demon possessions (Mark 3:7-12)	Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul ruler of demons (Mark 3:22)
Healing a mute demon possessed man so that he could speak (Luke 11:14)	Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul ruler of demons (Luke 11:15)

In all three instances of Jesus rebuking with a comment about the unpardonable sin, it was directed towards a specific group of people who slandered Him for His miracles.

4. If the Pharisees were slandering Jesus, why does Jesus say they were blaspheming "the Spirit?" Hint: see John 4:24.

Jesus makes a distinction between His person and His works. Despite being the agent of miracles, Jesus credits His work of miracles to "the Spirit" who Jesus teaches is in reality God.

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

When the Pharisees were slandering Jesus, they were instead ignorantly slandering God.

5. Why was Jesus' rebuke so severe to the Pharisees?

As teachers of the Law, the Pharisees were supposed to know God's word especially concerning Moses.

Then Moses said to the Lord, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." The Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? (Ex 4:10-11)

Rather than recognize Jesus as the Son of God because of the miracles that only God could do, the Pharisees accuse Him of being possessed by Satan and doing works by demonic power!

This is in stark contrast to Jesus' name, God's salvation, and His purpose.

But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. (John 5:36-38)

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. (John 6:38)

6. Why was this sin unpardonable?

Because of their hard hearts, the Pharisees defamed God by attributing His miracles to Satan and in so doing violated the third commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." (Ex 20:7)

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Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Ex 3:13-14)

Hebrew language scholars indicate that grammatical construction of the phrase "I AM WHO I AM" makes the connection between the name YHWH and God's essence Himself. The phrase can be understood as "I AM HE WHO EXISTS."

The name of God is more than just a title, it includes His nature, being, and very character / word. In debasing God's very character by attributing miracles that only God could do to Satan, the Pharisees were taking God's name in vain (Hebrew: false, worthless, nothingness).

Jesus' severe rebuke of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, in the manner of the Pharisees who slandered God despite their scholarly knowledge of His word, finds its basis in the violation of His Father's third commandment. Jesus is holding accountable the teachers of the Law who know the Old Testament but who willfully deceive others about the work of God as Satan's.

References:

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