

## The Doctrine of the Unpardonable Blasphemy

### Background

Jesus had returned to His home on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee in the city of Capernaum. He had just arrived from a near-by mountain retreat, where He had selected His twelve disciples. Crowds followed Him, flocking at His door.

Mar 3:20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat.

The phrase in Mar 3:20 "Jesus entered a house" is better translated, "*Jesus had come home to house-life as distinct from hill life.*" The formal manner in which this is stated suggests a lengthy sojourn. How he was occupied there is not known. It is quite possible the Lord spent time teaching His disciples. He may have taught the large group that followed Him up the "hill" and then held special classes just for the "Twelve."

In Capernaum Jesus healed a demon possessed man of his torment. The people were amazed thinking He just might be the long awaited Messiah.

Mat 12:22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.

Mat 12:23 All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

The Pharisees, however, were jealous and sought to discredit our Lord.

Mar 3:22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the *prince* of demons he is driving out demons."

The word prince in Mar 3:22 brings to mind a person of royalty and noble bearing. The Greek word, however, is *archon* and means the first in a series of persons. Here we have a reference to Satan as the prince ruler of all the fallen angels.

The religious leaders were trying to break the force of the attesting power of our Lord's miracles done in the energy of the Holy Spirit. By saying He performed them in dependence upon Satan, they thus thought to discredit His claims of "Messiahship" and link Him with the Devil.

Jesus, not overawed by the religious leaders, invites them to drop by the house to discuss the matter. He then teaches them by parable. Our Lord begins with a question, "How can Satan drive out Satan? Jesus by His question is declaring; "It is impossible for Satan to cast out Satan."

Mar 3:24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

Mar 3:25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

Mar 3:26 And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.

Mar 3:27 In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.

Luk 11:19 Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.

Luk 11:20 But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

Luk 11:21 "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe.

Luk 11:22 But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.

Our Lord's argument is briefly:--Granted for the moment that spirits are cast out by the aid of other spirits. More is needed says our Lord "There must be a motive and Satan would have no desire to operate against himself."

#### Comment

If the "casting out" of these evil spirits was not Satan's voluntary act, if it was not suicide, what was it? There was only one answer—Satan had been conquered and overpowered. Our Lord provides the true explanation. Far from being Satan's ally, Jesus was Satan's spoiler.

"No one," He said, "can enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man. No one can rescue the slaves and captives of Satan, unless he first over-come Satan himself. The fact that Jesus had done it, e.g., the man formerly afflicted with a blind and dumb spirit was rescued from the grip of Satan. He now both spoke and saw, was that now proof that Satan himself had been bound. Satan had more than met his match.

That is the account Christ gives of this mighty deliverance; that is the great claim He makes for Himself. He is the "stronger than the strong." He has "bound the strong man." He has "cast out" Satan. He can "spoil his house." He can rob him of all his captives and slaves. And no one else can do it.

The encounters are also described in Mat 12:31-32. It is here we first find the phrase, so troubling to many, "And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven ... whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

Mat 12:31 And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

Mat 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

To call the event described by Matthew “the unpardonable sin” is technically a misnomer. The lack of forgiveness is not due to the inadequacy of the atonement, nor may we infer any peculiar sacredness of the Third Person of the Trinity. For this reason there seems to be credible evidence that refusing the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit as described in Joh 16:7-11 is more appropriately termed the **unpardonable sin** and the **unpardonable blasphemy** is best used to describe the action of the scribes who credited Beelzebub as the source of Jesus’ exorcisms.

Joh 16:7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

**Joh 16:8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:**

**Joh 16:9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me;**

**Joh 16:10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer;**

Joh 16:11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

The context of Mark’s account relates to our Lord being accused of casting out demons by the power of Satan rather than the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mar 3:22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

Clearly, the bizarre attribution could not take place today given the fact Christ is no longer incarnate. Matthew and Mark’s account seems to give more credibility to the theory that this **blasphemy** is only a Kingdom Age phenomenon.

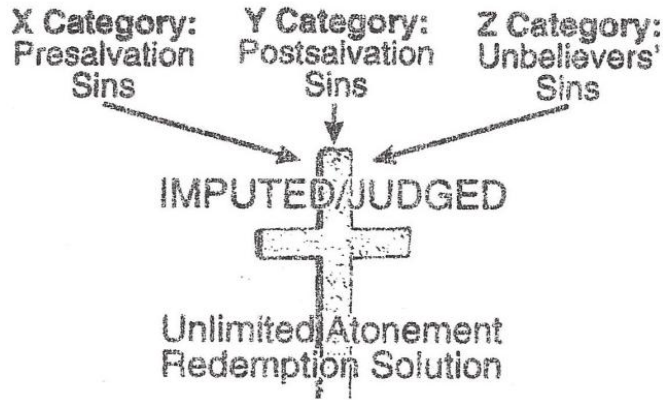
Let me now speak to the so called **unpardonable sin**. The definition is rather simple: it is "saying no" to the Holy Spirit's convicting ministry described in Joh 16:8.

Joh 16:8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:

That every sin shall be forgiven is an integral part of unlimited atonement. Atonement provided by Christ was sufficient to remit the guilt of all sins, for both the believer and unbeliever.

Sin is no longer an issue because Christ paid the price for all sin. 1Jo 2:2

1Jo 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.



A particular function of the Holy Spirit is to convince the unbeliever that he falls terribly short of God's standard, thereby facilitating salvation. The Holy Spirit lays open the terrible sore of personal sin, judgment for sin, and relative righteousness.

He who rejects the overture of the Holy Spirit removes himself from the only force that can lead to forgiveness. That such a settled state can be reached in this life is explicitly stated in Joh 3:36.

Joh 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

We cannot read hearts, and thus cannot judge when others have reached such a state, and it is really none of our business. Our job is simply to be ready to communicate our "hope" after the Holy Spirit does His job of convincing of sin, judgment and the futility of relative righteousness.

The real possibility of this sin does not weaken the gospel invitation, "Whosoever will," nor does it lessen in any way our responsibility to take the claims of Christ to others.

1Pe 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

As for the Pharisees of Jesus' audience, it is not stated whether or not they had committed this blasphemy of refusing the convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit, but the warning is clear. Their considerable instruction made their responsibility great; their previous hostility showed their determined unbelief.

The scribes were uniquely accountable because of their considerable knowledge of what the prophets had said of Israel's Messiah. By their rejection of Christ's kingdom offering and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, were thus, in danger of

- willful sin

Heb 3:26 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

- blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

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

- resistance to the Holy Spirit,

Acts 7:51 Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye.

- and insulting the Holy Spirit.

Heb 10:29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

The Scribes considered the good news of salvation foolishness, just as many unbelievers in prior and subsequent dispensations have.

Gen 6:3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God unto salvation.

1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

## Conclusion

Jesus concludes His discussion with the scribes with a change of tone. *Expositors* writes

“No longer does He attempt to reason with them. Now he solemnly warns them. ‘You do not really believe your own theory; you know as well as I how absurd it is, and that I must be casting out devils by a very different spirit from Beelzebub. You are therefore not merely mistaken, you are men in a very perilous moral condition.’”

H. A. Ironside has concluded and rather well, “To Sin against Him as Man is pardonable—but to reject Him as God is fatal.”

Kenneth Wuest concludes, “The words recorded in Mar 3:28-30 speak of the actions of the scribes, who deliberately and knowingly attributed the work of the Lord to Satan, and to do this is to break the attesting power of the miracles that Jesus was performing. This is the so-called **unpardonable blasphemy.**”

I think we can safely conclude the so-called **unpardonable blasphemy** could only have been performed in the Age of the Hypostatic Union. No less a Bible teacher than Col. R.B. Thieme has concluded the unpardonable blasphemy was a blasphemy unique to the age of the hypostatic union. Col. Thieme also has taught that the unpardonable sin is a failure to heed the convicting ministry of God the Holy Spirit, ergo, a failure to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

