

## **Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit**

**12-04-16 PM**

Matthew 5:9 *"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God"*

In Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-29, and Luke 12:10, Jesus taught something to the disciples. He tells them that they are not to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. He states (in Mark) that this is an eternal sin. What is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? What did Jesus mean in this teaching?

### **What is Blasphemy?**

First, we might want to acknowledge that the very idea of blasphemy is not easy to understand. The word itself means to scorn or despise (in Hebrew), and to speak injury (in Greek). The first time it is used is in Leviticus 24:16; there it is associated with the command not to take the Lord's name in vain. In John 10:33 Jesus is accused of blasphemy after declaring Himself to be one with God. Paul states that he tried to get Christians to blaspheme in denying Jesus as Lord in Acts 26:11. In Romans 2:23-24 Paul quotes the Old Testament to declare that someone who calls themselves a follower of God but lives as a hypocrite blasphemes God. Maybe it is best summed up in Numbers 15:30: *"But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the LORD"*.

Jesus' teaching on blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is difficult for several reasons. First, is Jesus saying that it is acceptable to blaspheme Him or others, just not the Holy Spirit? Second, what does He mean by this sin being unforgiveable? What is an eternal sin? Finally, what does He mean when He says *"This age and the age to come"*?

There are a number of difficult passages in the Bible. Peter says in 2 Peter 3 that some of the things Paul wrote were hard to understand. Yet the Bible also says in Ephesians 3 that we can all understand the Bible. It simply takes diligence and study, as Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15. Here is a pattern we might use to understand difficult passages:

1. Understanding what it cannot be saying
2. Understanding the context in which it was placed
3. Reviewing the parallel passages

### **Understanding What It is NOT Saying**

Jesus is NOT saying that this is a unique sin that cannot be forgiven. We can consider several sins that are unforgiveable. Suicide is a murder of one made in the image of God (Genesis 9:6, 2 Samuel 1:9-15). One who commits it cannot ask for forgiveness. The writer of Hebrews warns us not to be like Esau (Hebrews 12:17) and find ourselves in a place where it is too late for repentance. What this means is that Jesus was not declaring a straightforward literal idea, but a spiritual idea.

### **Context Tells Us**

The context of Matthew and Mark is that Jesus was working miracles and casting out demons. These works testified to His identity as the Messiah. The Jewish leaders however declared that Jesus was merely working as an agent of Satan. Thus, they were denying the work of the Holy Spirit, first in the prophetic identity of the Christ (compare Matthew 11:5 with Isaiah 42:7, for example), and second in the miraculous works (Luke 4:14). The Holy Spirit testified of the Christ (John 15:26). In Luke's account Jesus goes on to say that the Holy Spirit would work with the apostles too in their testimony (Luke 12:12). Thus, context reveals that this declaration is made in the context of denying the truth when it is revealed.

## Parallel Passages

Many statements made in Scriptures are made more than once (consider the four Gospels). This means there are different expressions and words used to describe an idea. In order to find parallel passages, we seek out those statements which use similar expressions or relate similar ideas.

First of all, in this passage, we look at the expression "this age and the age to come". Jesus uses this expression in Mark 10:30 and Luke 18:30 to describe the reward a Christian receives in the next life, in heaven. Thus the expression is used there to describe our lives now, and our lives in heaven. In Ephesians 1:21 Paul uses this expression meaning the same things. We note that Jesus did not use the expression in Mark 3, but instead said that the sin was "an eternal sin". Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus is saying that this sin affects our eternal destiny.

Are there passages that parallel the whole idea? We need to seek out passages that describe a sin in which forgiveness is not present. We find two such examples in Hebrews.

Hebrews 6:4-8 is one such passage. There we see several key parallels and points:

- *"those who have once been enlightened"*
- *"and then have fallen away"*
- *"they... put Him to open shame"*

We already noted that the word blasphemy brings to mind a shame; therefore, we can see that this passage is indeed a "Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit". More importantly, its point is clear: if we as believers turn away from God, there is no other way to be saved.

Hebrews 10:26-29 is another such passage. Once more, the parallels are strong, especially now with the earlier passage in Hebrews:

- received *"the knowledge of the truth"*
- *"sinning willfully"* afterwards
- has *"insulted the Spirit"*

This last point is a particularly clear reference to the "Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit". Again, this passage enables us to understand that the main idea is that if we turn away from God after hearing the truth, we are condemned by God.

One more passage to consider is 1 John 5:16. In this case we need to use James 5:16 to understand what it means to pray for forgiveness. It is NOT the case we can forgive the sins of others without their repentances or confession (1 John 1:9). So then this passage refers to a sin that cannot be forgiven because it is one form which we are not repenting. Again, it follows a pattern we have seen:

- a brother
- *"committing a sin"*
- confesses (James 5:16, 1 John 1:9)
- is not a sin that leads to death

In this instance, the point is that it is NOT blasphemy of the Holy Spirit UNLESS there is no repentance.

## Conclusion

What is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? By using some study tools we have concluded the following: A believer who falls away commits this sin. It leaves them in a condition worse than before, since they no longer have a forgiveness of sin. It also refers to anyone who has heard the word, but chooses not to believe or obey. As James said, to the one who knows what to do and does not do it, to them it is sin. These passages sum it up:

John 15:22 *"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin"*

2 Peter 2:20 *For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.*