

# THE UNFORGIVEABLE / UNPARDONABLE SIN

[ Sometimes referred to as 'BLASPHEMING THE HOLY SPIRIT' ]

*What does the Bible mean/say about blaspheming the Holy Spirit? (Mark 3:29; Matt. 12:22-45)*

This sin (the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit) is mentioned in 3 Gospel accounts but all in the same context. The most detailed account is Matthew 12:22-45. This is the sin where the Jewish leaders said *"He is not the Messiah. He can do what he does because he is possessed, and not by a common demon. He's possessed by the prince of demons, Beelzebul."*

This (unpardonable) sin was committed by the Jewish Spiritual leaders, the Pharisees – rejecting Jesus' Messiahship. This is the only context that the unpardonable sin is mentioned (i.e. Jesus is possessed by the prince of demons).

## DEFINITION OF THE UNPARDONABLE SIN:

So, we can define the unpardonable sin as follows – **The national rejection by Israel of the Messiahship of Jesus while he was present, on the grounds of being demonized.**

There are 4 ramifications from this definition:

### **1. This is a national sin. It is not an individual sin.**

Individual members of that day and that generation could escape that judgment by becoming believers. Nor is this a sin that any individual can commit today, because it was never individual to begin with. The Bible does make one point very clear – regardless what sin anyone commits, any sin is forgivable to any individual who will come to Messiah through Messiah's blood. The nature of the sins is irrelevant. Why? Because when he dies on the cross, he doesn't die for particular types of sin (at the exclusion of others). He dies for every type of sin that renders every type of person forgivable. As an individual they will come to the Messiah through His blood. BUT for the nation, as a nation, it is unpardonable.

### **2. This is a sin that is unique to the Jewish generation of Jesus' day.**

It is not applicable to any other subsequent Jewish generation. It was that generation to whom he came to offer himself as the Messiah, and offering them the Kingdom. It was that generation that rejected him. So at that point you will see 2 words coming up in the Gospel accounts – *'this generation'*.

### **3. This is a national sin, but no other nation (other than Israel) can be guilty of this sin.**

Why? Because Jesus is not now visibly present with any other nation, or offering himself as that other nation's Messiah. It was a unique relationship to Israel, and there is only one covenant nation – Israel. No other nation could be guilty of this sin.

### **4. The commitment of the unpardonable sin by this generation, for this generation, means two things.**

The offer of the kingdom is now rescinded/withdrawn. The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day lost out on seeing the Kingdom established in their day. Someday it will be re-offered to a future Jewish generation that will accept it (being the Jewish generation in the Tribulation – refer Matthew 24 & 25). But this specific generation (at the time of Jesus on earth) has lost out on the privilege of seeing the kingdom established in their day.

It is a special divine judgement that arrives 40 years later in AD70 – the Roman destruction of the City of Jerusalem and the Temple (Herod's Temple). What's happened here is that a specific nation has gone beyond the point of no return. God is dealing with his covenant nation, and whenever He says that they have gone beyond the point of no return, no amount of repenting can change the fact of pending (coming) physical judgment.

What happens in Matthew 12 is the third time it happened in Israel's history.

The **first time** we see it happening, is the sin of Kadesh-Barnea (an oasis right on the border of the Promised Land) in Numbers 13 & 14 where the 10 spies rebelled and disagreed with the 2 (Joshua & Caleb) who said we can take the land. The other 10 spies were scared of the Canaanites, and advised not to take the land. This was followed by a mass rebellion against Aaron & Moses. That was the 10<sup>th</sup> act of rebellion since the Exodus. That is when that generation crossed the point of no return. God withdrew the offer of the Promised Land from the Exodus generation (just like he withdraws the offer of the Kingdom from the generation in Matt. 12). The Promised Land was re-offered to the next generation (the Wilderness generation) and they accepted it, just as one day God will re-offer the Kingdom to a future Jewish generation that will accept it (i.e. Tribulation Jews).

Once at the point of no return, no amount of repenting can change the fact of pending (coming) physical judgment. You can see this in Numbers 14. God did forgive their sin (v10). It doesn't change their salvation, but they have to pay the penalty/ physical consequences, which was physical death outside of the land. Even Moses had to die outside of the land because of a specific sin he committed. It didn't affect his salvation however.

The **second time** this happened was the time of King Manasseh – he was the worst King that Jerusalem ever had. He shed a lot of blood of the believing remnant of that day. Solomon built the Temple for the glory of the true God and King Manasseh turned it into a centre of idolatry.

He resorted to human sacrifice. Finally a point of no return was reached and God declared the Babylonian destruction of the city and the (first) Temple and the 70 years of captivity. Again, once at the point of no return, no amount of repenting can change the fact of pending (coming) physical judgment. At the end of his reign Manasseh did repent (2 Kings 23 & 2 Chronicles 34). He became a saved man. He was even followed by the rule of the righteous King Josiah. God said he would not bring on the calamity in Josiah's day, but the calamity was inevitable. The point of no return was reached. Not long after Josiah's death, the Babylonians came.

The **third time** in Matthew 12, the specific generation goes beyond the point of no return. What it means is this – no matter how many Jewish people come to believe. The N.T. tells us that myriads came to believe. The Church of Jerusalem had over 20,000 members! This still wouldn't change the coming physical judgment of AD70 – the city & Temple destroyed and forced dispersion to other lands.

So, Matthew 12 is a turning point. Here the ministry of Jesus changes in 4 areas:

**1. The purpose of the signs.** Initially, the signs were for the purpose of Israel, to get Israel to make a decision. Now that they have made their irrevocable decision, their sin is unpardonable. From now on the purpose of the signs will be to train the 12 Apostles for the new work they will have to conduct. Because of this rejection, the kind of work they will be doing is contained in the book of Acts. He announces there will be no more signs for the nation, except the one sign, the sign of Jonah – the sign of Resurrection. He will give this sign publicly three times. Lazarus, Jesus and the 2 witnesses during the Tribulation. But this is the only sign he will give them publicly. To summarize – his signs go from the nation to the Apostles.

**2. The second change concerns the miracles themselves.** More specifically, the people for whom these miracles are performed. There are 2 facets –

(1) until Matt. 12 he will perform miracles for the benefit of the masses. He did not require them to have faith first! (e.g. John 5 – healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda. The man didn't even know who Jesus was. No faith on his part at all). At that stage faith was not necessary for these miracles to occur. They were for the purpose of getting them to believe. It all changes after Matthew 12. After Matt. 12 Jesus will only respond to the needs of individuals, and now He will require them to have faith first. To summarize, His miracles go from Masses without faith → Individuals with faith.

(2) Before Matt. 12 Jesus would tell them to proclaim what God has done for them. But after Matt. 12 every time He heals someone He tells them not to tell anyone what God has done for you. He initiates a policy of silence, and those who benefit from his Messianic power are prohibited from telling anyone about it. To summarize – He goes from Tell all → Tell no one.

**3. The third result is the message that He and the Apostles will now proclaim.** Before Matt. 12 they went all over Israel, city to city, synagogue to synagogue, proclaiming him to be the Messiah. After Matt. 12 that changes. He even prohibits his own Apostles from telling anyone

who he is (e.g. Matt. 16 – Peter makes his great declaration. What does Jesus tell him? Don't tell anyone that I am the Messiah). The Apostles have to follow this new policy of silence until that policy is rescinded in Matt. 28 with the Great Commission.

To summarize – He goes from proclamation about His Messiahship → silence about His Messiahship.

**4. His method of teaching.** Until Matt 12 when He taught the people publicly, He taught them clearly, distinctly, in ways they could and did understand. (e.g. Matthew 5-7 – Sermon on the Mount). End of Matt. 7 – the people understood what he was saying. After Matt. 12 – He now begins to teach in parables only. To summarize – His teaching goes from clarity → parabolic. When the disciples question this, Jesus points out 2 reasons for the parabolic method.

(1) For the Believer, it will be to illustrate the truth.

(2) For the unbeliever, it will be for the purpose of hiding the truth. By now they have received sufficient to respond correctly. But they responded instead with the unpardonable sin.

Matthew 12 & 13 mark a major turning point ... and the unpardonable sin is what caused it to happen. It is a unique one-time sin by the Jewish leadership who rejected the Messiahship of Jesus, in that day.

The Basis of the Second Coming of Christ will be a realization of this national sin (by the remnant of Israel) & thus a repentance by the entire Jewish nation from this sin during the latter part of the Tribulation. It is at this point that the entire Nation of Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25-27) culminating in the Second Coming of Christ to defeat the Antichrist and his anti-Semitic armies.