

Sinning Against the Holy Spirit Second Conclusion 12:31-32

Matthew 12:31 Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

“Sin against the Holy Spirit is the sin the historical Pharisees approached in attributing Jesus’ work to a nefarious spirit in order, in turn, to deflect the people of God from faith in Jesus as the messianic Son of David (12:22–24).”¹

blasphemy².... “The Pharisees have been attributing to Satan the work of the Spirit and have been doing so, as Jesus makes plain, in such a way as to reveal that they speak, not, out of ignorance or unbelief, but out of a “conscious disputing of the indisputable””³

“But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.”
(Numbers 15:30–31, ESV)

“Among the whole range of kinds of sin and blasphemy that human beings get caught up in none is so bad as to preclude forgiveness except what is called blasphemy against the Spirit...”⁴

“When a person takes up a position like that of the Pharisees, when, not by way of misunderstanding but through hostility to what is good, that person calls good evil and, on the other hand, makes evil his good, then that person has put himself in a state that prevents forgiveness. And there is no way to forgiveness other than by the path of repentance and faith.... People in such a situation cannot repent and seek forgiveness: they lack a sense of sin; they reject God’s competence to declare what is right. It is this continuing attitude that is the ultimate sin.”⁵

¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12* (vol. 1, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 567.

² *blasphemy βλασφημία* “...verbal abuse against someone which denotes the very worst type of slander...; wounding someone’s reputation by evil reports, evil speaking.” Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

³ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 291). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁴ Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: a commentary on the Greek text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (p. 505). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

⁵ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (pp. 318–319). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

Spirit.... In our most immediate context, the Spirit has been mentioned twice.

“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.” (Matthew 12:18, ESV)

“But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Matthew 12:28, ESV)

The Spirit of God is what Jesus is now addressing.

forgiven⁶.... The forgiveness of sins was the very purpose for which Jesus came to this earth.

“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21, ESV)

“...and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12, ESV)

“And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.” (Matthew 9:2, ESV)

“And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” (Luke 7:48–49, ESV)

“...the point is that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit stands out from the run of “ordinary” sins as being uniquely serious. It is to declare oneself against God. It is to “call evil good and good evil”. (Isa 5:20)”⁷ In fact, there can be little doubt that many do just that and as a result have no hope for eternity.

Matthew 12:32 *And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.*

⁶ *forgiven* ἀφίημι “To send forth or away, let go from oneself.” Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

⁷ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 483). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

Here in verse 32 "...the repetition of these truths by means of synonymously parallel statements...."⁸

speaks a word against the Son of Man or human beings⁹.... We view this phrase from the point of view of a resurrected savior. But is that the way Jesus is using it here. To his current audience "son of man" simply meant a human being. Sins against people can be forgiven. Sins against God: Father, Son or Holy Spirit are of a different significance.

speaks against the Holy Spirit.... "The context here is that of people ascribing to Satan deeds done by the Son of God in the power of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰ It is "...thoughtfully, willfully, and self-consciously rejecting the work of the Spirit even though there can be no other explanation of Jesus' exorcisms than that."¹¹

will not be forgiven.... "When someone brings an evil name against another person, that offender can be brought to court and if found guilty, fined and punished (Deut 22:13–19), but not killed. Defaming the name of God, however, deserved a death penalty. Defaming the Spirit means blaspheming God."¹²

"And speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death." (Leviticus 24:15–16, ESV)

What Jesus is saying in this passage corresponds to these verses in the Old Testament. One is here put to death for blaspheme. In keeping with the requirement of the Old Testament, the Pharisees are put to death for their blaspheme; it is an eternal death. Actually, the implication of the Leviticus passage is also eternal death as no atonement was possible for this sin. So the unpardonable sin is not a new one and not a strange situation. It was blaspheme against God. No atonement is possible for this sin, not in the Old Testament, not in the New.

⁸ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 52.

⁹ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 52.

¹⁰ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (p. 319). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

¹¹ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, pp. 291–292). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹² George Wesley Buchanan, *The Gospel of Matthew* (ed. Watson E. Mills and George Wesley Buchanan; vol. 1 & 2; The Mellen Biblical Commentary; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 532.

The Pharisees said of Jesus that “he functioned by the wrong spirit. They attributed his miracles to Beelzeboul. This meant they blasphemed the Spirit by calling it Beelzeboul.”¹³ This is the unpardonable sin. They did exactly what Leviticus 24:15–16 required for the death penalty of which no atonement is possible.

this age or in the age to come... ““This age” and “the age to come” are Jewish terms which apply primarily to the contrast between this life and the next.... Here, then, the consequences of the unforgivable sin apply not only to this life but also to the life to come, when judgment will have been finally given.”¹⁴ Or, “not in this life and not in eternity.”

Other passages seem to touch on the same subject but there is a major difference between our Matthew passage and these.

“For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.” (Hebrews 6:4–6, ESV)

“For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged 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 fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:26–31, ESV)

“If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.” (1 John 5:16, ESV)

In Matthew’s gospel, the enemies of God are not, nor have they ever been, identified as disciples of Jesus or members of his Church. But in Hebrews and John, “there is self-conscious perception of where the truth lies and the light shines—and a willful turning

¹³ George Wesley Buchanan, *The Gospel of Matthew* (ed. Watson E. Mills and George Wesley Buchanan; vol. 1 & 2; The Mellen Biblical Commentary; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 534.

¹⁴ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 484). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

away from it.”¹⁵ These others above have and therefore may need **an entirely different explanation.**

¹⁵ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 292). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.