

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

Introduction

Text: Matt 12:22-32; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-23; 12:8-12

This is a difficult study of a sin with important consequences. How does one search out the matter? How do you search out a matter?

What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? We are told, as we will see, that it is an unforgiveable sin. Does that mean it is a possibly one time sin that damns us forever? An unrepentable sin? A sin we CAN'T repent of? Or is it a sin that if we continue in and that we don't or won't repent of, will condemn us forever? We know that once a person is in a saved condition that they must remain faithful. Therefore, once saved, always saved, is not true. But now are we faced with a sin where once you sin against the HS, you might as well give up? There's no chance, no hope? Is this now the once damned, always damned doctrine? Or is there more to the dire consequence than we see at first glance?

1. We are responsible for working out our own salvation, Philippians 2:12,13
 - a. Do you put your faith in the hands of someone else (i.e. preacher, elder, teacher, etc). Paul tells us in Philippians...

*12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

— Philippians 2:12-13 (ESV)

- b. Study and learn by **reason**... the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments by a process of logic. **Not** by *rote*, which a mechanical or habitual repetition of something to be learned, especially *vain repetitions*, when what you are learning doesn't mean anything to you.

(Study to show yourself approved)

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

— 2 Timothy 2:15

(Let us reason together)

18 “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.

— Isaiah 1:18

2. Be like the Bereans, examine & investigate the scriptures to see if these things are true, Acts 17:11

11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

— Acts 17:11

Our Investigation

1. Beginning with our *Definition of Terms*

Definitions - *American Heritage Dictionary*

blasphemy

the act or offense of **speaking** sacrilegiously about God or sacred things, from the Latin *blasphemia* ‘**slander.**’

sacrilege

violation or misuse of what is regarded as sacred, from the Latin *sacrilegus* ‘**stealer of sacred things,**’ from *sacer, sacr-* ‘sacred’ + *legere* ‘take possession of.’

slander

the action or crime of making a false spoken statement damaging to a person’s reputation, a false and malicious spoken statement.

2. Three occurrences of *Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit (BAHS)* in the New Testament. Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-23; 12:8-12.
 - a. Read [the combined text](#)

3. What are our **initial** observations?
 - a. **EVENT 1:** Notice the people wonder if Jesus is THE Son of David, Mt 12:23
 - b. **EVENT 2:** Jesus family makes accusations
 - i. He is out of his mind, Mk 3:21
 - c. **EVENT 3:** Notice the events and accusations leading up to the warning are slanderous to Jesus
 - i. He is possessed by Beelzebub, Mk 3:22; Mt 12:24; Lk 11:15,16
 - ii. He has an unclean spirit Mk 3:30
 - d. **EVENT 4:** Notice that the accusations motivate Jesus to reason with them:
 - i. Satan is not divided against himself or his kingdom would fall, Lk 11:18a
 - ii. He gives them a parable about the "strong man"
 - iii. Then He warns them about blaspheming the Holy Spirit, Lk 11:18b
 - e. **EVENT 4 continued** Notice in his warning Jesus mentions blasphemy against two persons of the Godhead with different consequences, we might ask, why the different consequences?
 - i. For the Son of Man, ie Jesus, blasphemy (slander) will be forgiven
 - ii. For the Holy Spirit, blasphemy (slander) will not be forgiven
- The implication is that these **particular** accusations about Jesus were actually blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

Let's investigate our four (4) initial observations

EVENT 1 — Could this be the Son of David? (ref 3a)

1. Could Jesus be “the Son of David?” — What are they asking?
 - a. Notice: It is the crowd's idea that Jesus could be the SofDavid, Mt 12:23
 - b. Later in his ministry Jesus mentions that the teachers of the law (scribes) say that **the Christ** is the Son of David, though they do not believe Jesus is the Christ. Mk 12:35-37 (a passage outside our text)

35 And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?”

— Mark 12:35
 - c. Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew word: Messiah, for the annointed one.
 - d. A descendant of David could be the King. They are looking for the Messiah.
 - e. Jesus IS a descendant of David, he could (legally) become the king.
 - f. Is it jealousy of the crowds being enthralled with Jesus that prompts the accusations against him?

g. If the Messiah comes now, he would become king when Israel is under the occupation of the most powerful nation in the world, Rome. This has to be on the minds of all who are looking for the Messiah!

→ **IMPLICATION:** What kind of a king are the people looking for? What **MUST** he be like? From a worldly perspective, he **MUST** show **STRENGTH & POWER!** A warrior king. And Jesus will address this point in his response in a parable.

EVENT 2 — Accusation from his family (ref 3b)

1. His family says: He is out of His mind. Mk 3:21
 - a. They are personal **slander** against Jesus, beginning with His family

EVENT 3 — The Accusations are Slandering Jesus (ref 3c)

1. The Scribes say:
 - a. He is possessed by Beelzebub. Mk 3:22; Mt 12:24; Lk 11:15,16
 - b. And: He drives out demons by Beelzebub, Mk 3:22; Mt 12:24; Lk 11:15,16
 - c. Finishing with, to make sure you get their point: He has an unclean spirit. Mk 3:30 (Beelzebub, the prince of demons is Satan, Mk 3:22,23)
 - d. The accusations are meant to harm Jesus' reputation, they are false statements & slanderous
2. (ref 3b,c) What can we learn from these accusations?
 - a. They question Jesus' ability/authority to drive out demons
 - b. And they attribute Jesus' ability to drive out demons to Beelzebub.

EVENT 4 — The accusations motivate Jesus to warn about blaspheming the HS after he reasons with them and also tells them a parable. (ref 3d)

1. First Notice: We are told Jesus **KNEW** their thoughts, Mt 12:25
 - a. This allows him to tailor his arguments directly at their motives.
 - b. He will address two of the three accusations, specifically both the accusations from the Scribes. Interestingly, he does not address the accusation from his family (that he is out of his mind).
 - c. (ref 3c) He says before he gives them a parable that:
 - i. You claim I drive out demons by Beelzebub. Lk 11:18 (**THIS IS A CLUE**)
 - d. And after the parable and warning about blaspheming the Holy Spirit in Mark it says that He said this because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit." Mk 3:30 (**THIS IS A CLUE**)

Jesus begins by asking:

1. How can Satan drive out Satan? Mt 12:25a; Mk 3:23; Lk 11:17a
 - a. He first reasons with them about their accusations
 - b. He shows that attributing the driving out of demons to Satan is illogical / unreasonable
2. Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined and fall, Mk 3:24; Mt 12:25b; Lk 11:17b
3. Any city, or household divided against itself cannot stand, Mk 3:25; Mt 12:25c; Lk 11:17c
4. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided, his kingdom cannot stand, **his end has come**, Mt 12:26; Mk 3:26; Lk 11:18a
5. If I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive out demons?
 - a. He then drives home the absurdity of arguing that driving out demons is done when empowered by Satan (**THIS IS A CLUE**)
 - b. **They (the demons) will be your judge**

Next Jesus explores the implications of an alternative to Beelzebub

6. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit- / finger- of God, **then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**
 - a. The only other power and in actuality the ONLY power that can logically & reasonably drive out demons **IS** the Holy Spirit
 - The implication: **if the kingdom is here then so is the King**. Perhaps Jesus IS the Son of David!
 - b. He answers here the crowds question: Could this be the son of David? The answer IS YES HE IS THE SON OF DAVID! (**THIS IS A CLUE**)

Jesus follows up with a parable, Mk 3:27; Mt 12:29; Lk 11:21,22

7. In fact, when a strongman, fully armed, guards his house, his possessions are safe.

What's Jesus talking about?

(Who is this "strongman"? It is in the context of Jesus casting out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit that He makes this analogy. The Strongman is **Satan!** He is fully armed, he guards his house! You cannot cast out his demons... **UNLESS...**)

Jesus continues

- a. No can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions
- b. **unless someone stronger attacks and overpowers him,**
- c. **takes away the armor in which the man trusted**
- d. and **ties up the strong man.**

e. Then **he** (i.e. Jesus) **can rob his house and divide up the spoils.**

NOTE

Jesus is overpowering Satan and driving out his demons and reclaiming souls from Satan's grip!

f. Jesus is saying He IS stronger than Satan by the Holy Spirit, He has robbed Satan! THIS IS **JESUS' EXPLANATION OF WHAT HE IS DOING TO SATAN!**

g. After Jesus establishes that driving out demons by Beelzebub is ridiculous and **untruthful**, that the only true reason He can drive out demons is by the Holy Spirit and that, therefore, He IS THE Son of David, meaning, the rightful King, He issues the warning regarding Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

The warning about Blasphemy

1. Remember the definition: Blasphemy is the act or offense of speaking sacrilegiously (i.e. slanderously) about God or sacred things, a false and malicious spoken statement
2. Every sin & blasphemy of men will be forgiven them but BAtHS will not
3. Any word against Jesus will be forgiven, but speaking against the HS will not be forgiven

Why (we might ask) is blasphemy against Jesus forgiven, but against the Holy Spirit it is not? (ref 3d)

What does the context here tell us about the Holy Spirit?

1. The HS is mentioned once before and once after this warning in the combined text
 - a. Before the warning, Mt 12:28 & Lk 11:20, But if I [Jesus] drive out demons by the Spirit- [Mt says] / finger- [Luke says] of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
 - i. The Lawyers & Pharisees said Beelzebub was the reason demons could be driven out, Jesus says the Holy Spirit is the power that can drive out demons.
 - ii. Jesus also states that if the HS is how He is driving out demons then the Kingdom of God has come. There are only two possibilities for driving out demons: Satan & Holy Spirit
 - iii. Notice that Matthew mentions: the Spirit of God, Luke: the finger of God. Therefore, Spirit of God & finger of God are equivalent. We have just been given a Bible defined association!
 - iv. There are only four mentions of the "finger of God" in the Bible, three references are in the OT (the 4th is here in Luke)
 - A. Exodus 8:19, the 3rd of the 10 plagues (the plague of the gnats), it is the 1st time Pharaoh's magicians cannot perform the plague that Moses & Aaron can.

*Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is **the finger of God.**"
But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them,
as the Lord had said.*

— Exodus 8:19

The Holy Spirit is more powerful than man & stronger than Satan

- B. Exodus 31:18, Moses is on the mountain with God receiving the law. God has just finished giving the law to Moses.

*When He [God] had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by **the finger of God**.*

— Exodus 31:18

The Holy Spirit wrote the Law of Moses

- C. Deuteronomy 9:10, After the wilderness wandering the new generation of Israelites is preparing to enter the promised land, the old generation has died off in the wilderness. Deuteronomy is a retelling of Israel's history and the giving of the law to the new generation.

*The Lord gave me [Moses] the two tablets of stone written by **the finger of God**; and on them were all the words which the Lord had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.*

— Deuteronomy 9:10

The Holy Spirit AGAIN (a 2nd time) writes the Law of Moses

- b. The Holy Spirit mentioned After the warning against blaspheming the HS,

(Jesus speaking to His disciples)

“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

— Luke 12:11,12

- i. The HS has the ability to impart knowledge to individual men so that they can verbalize a response.
- ii. The HS can impart knowledge immediately, miraculously.

So how does Jesus compare to the Holy Spirit

1. Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are God, yet BA_TSo_FMa_N is forgiven, but BA_THS is not. If both are God then why the difference in consequence to this sin?
2. **If it's not how Jesus & the HS are alike then, it is how they are unlike that could explain the difference**
3. Jesus is, the Creator, the Savior, the author of our faith.

4. But, what do we know about the Holy Spirit? He is the power behind the miracles & the resurrection of Jesus. What else
 - a. He's the finger of God, who wrote all the words on the tablets, Deut 9:10
 - b. The sum of your word is truth, Psalm 119:160
 - c. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, John 14:15-18; 15:26,27; 16:12-15; 1 John 4:1-6
 - d. God is Love, **the Spirit is Truth**, 1 John 4:8,16; 1 John 5:6
5. Could the blasphemy/slander against the Holy Spirit be the blasphemy/slander against the truth?

→ The Holy Spirit is synonymous with the truth, i.e. the Spirit IS truth

Why won't blasphemy against the Holy Spirit/Truth ever be forgiven? (ref 3d)

1. Perhaps, because by rejecting the truth, one does not believe they are lost and therefore they don't or won't repent. The one who is never forgiven is the one who never asks for forgiveness and never repents.
2. See if Romans 1:18-25, 28; 2:5,8 about those who reject the truth fits our explanation.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised, Amen.

...

— Romans 1:18-25,28

28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

— Romans 1:18-25,28 - continued

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done." <Psa 62:12; Prov 24:12>, 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, He will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

— Romans 2:5-8

What does this mean to me?

Slandering the HS, slandering the truth about God or a sacred thing

1. How did Lawyers & Pharisees slander the truth?
 - a. When Jesus cast out demons, that was evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit
 - b. The implication is that Jesus is the Son of David, that is the King
 - c. The Lawyers & Pharisees refused to believe the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah
 - d. Therefore they argued that Satan was the power behind Jesus
 - e. If they believed Jesus then they would have to acknowledge that He was the Christ
2. Who rejects the truth?
 - a. Those who do not know God, we saw this in Romans 1:18-25,28; 2:5,8
 - b. Those who believe they belong to Christ but don't, Mt 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. :22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons, and perform many miracles?' :23 And I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you; away from Me, you evildoers.'

— Matthew 7:21-23

- i. Could this be THE reason they don't belong to Christ
- ii. They reject the truth (e.g. baptism) and slander against it (e.g. baptism)

- iii. They are never baptized for salvation & never put on Christ, therefore He never knew them, they were never His, though they take on His name
- c. Those who belong to God, How might we (Christians) slander the truth
 - i. None of us has a complete and flawless comprehension of the scriptures.
 - ii. When a new understanding is presented and we reject it without reason
 - iii. When we continue a tradition of men (something we learned from men), but can't support the practice from the scriptures
 - iv. We should be continually learning and if you haven't changed your mind about anything you learned early in your Christian life then you probably have some error in your beliefs
 - v. Look at the context of the combined text for more ideas of what might be considered slandering the Holy Spirit.

You Shall Know the Truth...

Context

27 They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. 29 And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." 30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

— John 8:27-30 (ESV)

Text

31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 33 They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

— John 8:31-33-38 (ESV)

NOTE

*Look at the response of "the Jews who had **believed** him"... "We... have never been enslaved..." This is national pride, pride in their heritage, pride in their culture... and it blinded them to the fact that they were enslaved by the Romans, that they had been enslaved for 400 years, 1st by the Babylonians, then by the Medo-Persians, by the Greeks, and now by the Romans. And as Jesus informs them, they are slaves to sin too.*

34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. 38 I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

— John 8:31-34-38 (ESV)

39 They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, 40 but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. 41 You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.” 42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. 43 **Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.** 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. 46 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? 47 **Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.**”

— John 8:39-47 (ESV)

48 The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” 49 Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. 50 Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. 51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” 52 The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’ 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?”

— John 8:48-53 (ESV)

54 Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ 55 But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

— John 8:54-59 (ESV)

Conclusion

This was a lot to take in. Give it some time. Reread your combined scripture. Read the passages in your translation of the Bible. Look over the outline. If you come up with some ideas I didn't consider, please let me know. I want to know the truth. I hope you do too.

Seek and you shall find the truth