

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 12:31-32 | Jesus Christ: The Judge
Sunday January 21, 2024

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 12.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- Notes are in the foyer. Take them home with you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we learned about the big lie that the religious leaders kept spouting off about Jesus.

These Scribes and Pharisees didn't deny the miracles of Jesus—they simply attributed God's power through the Holy Spirit to someone else.

In other words, they told the very people that they were to shepherd a lie about God.

And it wasn't just anyone—they said that Jesus had the power of Satan.

We discussed how these religious leaders couldn't have been more wrong.

It's tragic—whether it was done out of ignorance or intentionality.

BTW, we have the same problem today.

There have always been false teachers, and there will always be false teachers.

So, we as disciples of Jesus must be discerning as we listen to how preachers preach God's Word.

I know I beat this drum a lot—and I sound like a broken record at times, but I need to repeat it—because everybody has a microphone.

And that microphone will make it into your home through TV, YouTube, podcasts, social media, etc— if you're not careful and discerning.

Scripture says that we are to be Bereans.

Ex:

In the book of Acts, Paul and Silas went to the city of Berea, which is about 40 miles away from Thessalonica—north of Jerusalem.

Acts 17:11—(The Bereans) received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

I pray that we're doing the same thing—that you're not simply taking my word for it—but that you, too, would examine the Scriptures and immerse yourself in God's Word daily.

When we turn off the world and dive into God's Word, the Holy Spirit becomes our teacher.

As you read the Word of God through the Spirit of God, reading God's Word over and over—cover to cover—you, too, will see how God's Word is better than gold and silver.

INTRODUCTION:

Last week, we saw how the Scribes and Pharisees committed a grievous sin by telling their congregations that Jesus is the Devil.

If that wasn't bad enough, today, we see how the Pharisees were an inch from committing a far worse sin.

And this sin— so heinous and so wicked that, Jesus says, is unforgivable.

Many people don't realize that God's patience does run out.

Many people don't understand that Jesus draws a line in the sand regarding forgiveness.

Yes, God is a God of love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness—but as we'll find out today, there is a limit and a timeframe for all those things.

2 Corinthians 6:1—"Don't receive the grace of God in vain."

Don't take God's grace for granted!
FAVOR → OUTWORKING of His good will.

2 Corinthians 6:2—^{God} For he says: (Isaiah 49:8)

At an acceptable time I listened to you,
 and in the day of salvation I helped you.,

See, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!

Yes, God is infinite—but his offer of salvation is not.

There is a divine timeline that we're all on! *God is not on a time frame.*
We're on this — ? today is the day of SALVATION

Now, please know that these two verses that we're studying this morning are not easy to understand at first glance.

These verses have been severely misinterpreted and misunderstood.

Because of their eternal consequences attached to them, it is critical to understand them correctly—and that's what we will do today.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

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

Matthew 12:32— Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the one to come.

These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

*I tremble in awe of you;
I fear your judgments. (Ps 119:120)*

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 12:22—Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to speak was brought to (Jesus). (Jesus) healed him, so that the man could both speak and see.

Matthew 12:23— All the crowds were astounded and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”

Matthew 12:24— When the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man drives out demons only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.”

Matthew 12:25— Knowing their thoughts, (Jesus) told them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is headed for destruction, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.

Matthew 12:26— If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

Matthew 12:27— And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons drive them out? For this reason they will be your judges.

Students/Exorcists

Matthew 12:28— If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 12:29— How can someone enter a strong man's house and steal his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

Matthew 12:30— Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not gather with me scatters.

— (Today's Passage)

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

So we have good news and bad news.

Let's look at the good news first—

Matthew 12:31(a)— Therefore, I tell you,

Notice how verse 31 is directly linked to the passages before it.

Jesus is providing a conclusion to the ridiculous accusation from the Scribes and Pharisees— that Jesus has demonic powers.

And His conclusion begins with great news—

Matthew 12:31(b)— people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy,

Each, any, and all sins!

Here, we see the graciousness, patience, mercy, and the overwhelming forgiveness of a holy God on wretched sinners.

The apostle Peter writes:

2 Peter 3:9—The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

Jesus came to save sinners!

Matthew 12:31(c)— people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy,

KEYPOINT 1:

Sin—thoughts, actions, and behaviors that violate the perfect moral standards of God.

How do we know if we've sinned?

Illustration: Ten Commandments

- #5—Obey your parents / *disobedience / sinful*
- #8—Steal
- #9—Lie

So even though we've committed these heinous sins against a holy God and other people...

Jesus says that it is possible—not automatic—for these sins to be forgiven.

God doesn't wink at sin

There is a way to be forgiven and made right in God's sight.

Is that hard to believe? Is that too good to be true?

The diary of your darkest days can and will be forgiven through the blood-stained cross and empty grave of Jesus Christ.

It is true! And not only will every sin be forgiven, but every blasphemous word will also be forgiven.

Matthew 12:31(d)— people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy.
What is blasphemy?

Blasphemy comes in at number three on God's Top Ten.

KEYPOINT 2:

Blasphemy is "defiant irreverence for God."

Blasphemy didn't start in Jesus' day—God addresses it during the Exodus.

Numbers 15:30—"But the person who acts defiantly... blasphemes the Lord. That person is to be cut off from his people."

Numbers 15:31— He will certainly be cut off, because he has despised the Lord's word and broken his command; (Sin) his guilt remains on him.

And the only way for our guilt to be relieved—is not for us doing things ^{trying} and please God, but for us to repent and believe in the Gospel.

Our defiant irreverence for God works itself out in both words and actions.

Isaiah 5:20—Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,

who substitute darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who substitute bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter.

Isaiah 5:21— Woe to those who consider themselves wise and judge themselves clever.,

Unfortunately, the Scribes and Pharisees were trying to be clever by calling the miraculous healing powers of Jesus demonic or even Satanic.

The Scribes and Pharisees were defiant because they attributed to Satan what is accomplished by the power of God.

But, Jesus is so gracious—telling the Scribes and Pharisees they can still be forgiven.

Matthew 12:31— people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy,
The good news is that our sins and defiance can be forgiven!

You can be pardoned by God!

You can be exempt from the legal consequences of committing these sins.

Matthew 12:31(b)— but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

This statement is known as the unpardonable sin / the unforgivable sin.

First and foremost, for Jesus to make this statement, there must be something extraordinary about blaspheming the Holy Spirit— the third person of the Trinity.

How is it that we can defy the Father and disrespect the Son—and still be forgiven—but not so with the Holy Spirit.

Think back to last week—

When the Pharisees said Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan, that was a self-conscious, thoughtful, planned, willful, and repeated rejection of God's goodness—attributed to Satan.

They called good evil and evil good.

The Scribes and Pharisees willfully gave credit to an obvious work of God—to Satan.

So, Blaspheming the Holy Spirit (intentionally defiant and irreverent to God) goes beyond simple doubt and unbelief.

The Scribes and Pharisees not only refused to believe but intentionally slandered Jesus and defamed His character.

The key to understanding this passage is that the Pharisees didn't know what they were doing.

Sins of ignorance, however severe, are forgivable.

We see several examples of ignorance in Scripture.

When Jesus was being murdered on a Roman cross—

Luke 23:34— "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing."

The apostle Peter—the guy with the foot-shaped mouth —blasphemed Jesus by taking God's name in vain while Jesus was on trial.

Mark 14:71—Then (Peter) he started to curse and swear, "I don't know this man you're talking about!"

The apostle Paul persecuted the church and blasphemed God before he was saved by God's grace.

1 Timothy 1:12— I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry—

1 Timothy 1:13— even though I was formerly, a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief,

1 Timothy 1:14— and the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

God is so gracious to us in the midst of our pride, arrogance, and ignorance—we can be forgiven for those things.

The Pharisees had not committed the unforgivable sin when they blasphemed Jesus.

But out of ignorance, they came dangerously close to blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

And that's why Jesus warns them...

Matthew 12:31(b)— but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

What exactly is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

This is a crucial question!

We must find out what this sin is so we stay far from it.

There's actually two parts to this sin.

The first deals with the Scribes and Pharisees in the first century.

The second deals with us today.

PASSAGE first - APPLICATION second

KEYPOINT 3:

For the religious leaders in Jesus day, blaspheming the Holy Spirit—

is the sober, clear-minded, deliberate rejection of Jesus [as the Christ/Messiah/Savior of the world]—despite seeing His miracles firsthand and then attributing those miracles to Satan.

Throughout the OT, God's people reject and resist the Holy Spirit in various ways.

As the first NT martyr, Stephen gives the history of sin throughout the OT, he said,

Acts 7:51— "You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are always resisting the Holy Spirit. As your ancestors did, you do also."

And Stephen was right. Just as the nation of Israel killed God's prophets in the past, they will soon kill God's son in the near future.

This message is so important Jesus doubles down ^{→ of blaspheming the Holy Spirit} and says the same thing in verse 32 just in case the Scribes and Pharisees missed it the first time.

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

Matthew 12:32— *Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man,*

Son of Man: Scripture has over 150 titles and designations for Jesus.

The *Son of Man* is Jesus' favorite title for Himself. Why?

It refers to Jesus' humanity and humility.

It's also a title of his deity while fulfilling prophecy.

Matthew 12:32— Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him,

Why does Jesus say the same thing twice?

Because He wants the Scribes and the Pharisees to realize what a great privilege it is for them to see these miracles firsthand.

And for these men to attribute God's healing miracles to Satan is not only unbelief but rather a persistent, determined hardening of their hearts to the very truth they say they already know and understand.

These men have the unbelievable privilege of not reading the evidence or exploring Biblical facts like most people— but witnessing God Himself minister to sinners firsthand.

Many people had heard Jesus teach and preach God's truth, *as no man had ever taught before*, yet they refused to believe Him. (Matt. 7:28–29),

Many people had seen Jesus heal every kind of disease, cast out every kind of demon, and forgive every kind of sin—and instead of celebrating these miracles—

They said Jesus was a liar and demonic. *fraud, fake*

The Scribes and Pharisees demonstrated an absolute and permanent refusal to believe.

And God will never make anyone do anything they don't want to do.

think logically

So, if they refuse to believe and attack the Holy Spirit there is nothing else God can do for them.

Therefore, they would remain eternally unforgiven.

And that's exactly what Jesus says next...

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Matthew 12:32— ... it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the one to come.

Through this age (all of human history).

The age to come refers to eternity.

In other words, the time to believe is now.

Jesus is repeating the same message that the prophet Isaiah gave Israel.

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Isaiah 5:1 NLT— Now I (God) will sing for the one (Israel) I love a song about his (God's) vineyard:

My beloved had a vineyard on a rich and fertile hill.

+

Isaiah 5:2 NLT— He plowed the land, cleared its stones, and planted it with the best vines.

In the middle he built a watchtower and carved a winepress in the nearby rocks.

Then he waited for a harvest of sweet grapes, but the grapes that grew were bitter.

— God has worked to provide every thing!

+

Isaiah 5:3 NLT— Now, you people of Jerusalem and Judah, you judge between me and my vineyard.

Isaiah 5:4 NLT— *What more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not already done?
When I expected sweet grapes,
why did my vineyard give me bitter grapes?*

The Scribes and Pharisees had been blessed with every blessing.

They had every opportunity to be those sweet grapes—but they turned their backs on God and became bitter.

And when you continually turn your back on God, there comes the point when there is nothing left for God to do but turn His back on them.

→ And Attack Him

And that's precisely what Jesus did.

The Scribes and Pharisees cut themselves off from God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

KEYPOINT 4:

People don't want Jesus' forgiveness because they don't think they need forgiveness.

So, in the immediate context of our passage today, the unforgivable sin is Jesus' response to the Scribes and Pharisees.

The Scribes and Pharisees represent the nation of Israel—and they said, “Thanks but no thanks.”

In other words, this is a national rejection of Jesus to be Israel's Savior.

Jesus means what He says—

There are both present and eternal consequences to rejecting God's Son for salvation.

Within forty years, God destroyed Jerusalem, brought down the Temple, and did away with the priesthood and the entire OT sacrificial system.

Basically, everything that the Scribes and Pharisees loved about their religion—God destroyed.

And God used Rome to make his point—a pagan nation.
The Romans slaughtered over a million people.

They obliterated nearly a thousand other towns and villages in Judea.

In other words, God's chosen people had once again said "no" to God.

God responded, "If you don't want my Son, I've got nothing for you."

PREACH:

So, the big question for us this morning is whether or not we can commit the unforgivable sin?

Today, this sin of blasphemy—being defiant and irreverent towards God is more common than ever.

We live in a culture that constantly and unashamedly blasphemes the name of God. *The Father is God the Son.*

→ defiant irreverence
The sin of blasphemy is uttered daily in movies, television, books and magazines, blogs, podcasts, etc.

In fact, certain words are still censored on TV, but the blasphemy against an infinite and thrice Holy God is allowed.

Regardless of what the world does, God still takes the sin of blasphemy very seriously.

Remember the third commandment:

+ **Exodus 20:7**—Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God, because the Lord will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name

+ **Leviticus 19:12** ~~NET~~ ^{CSB}—Do not ~~bring shame on the name of your God by~~ ^{swear falsely by My name.} using it to swear ~~falsely.~~ ^{(Profaning) the Name of your God.} I am the Lord.

Examples of modern-day blasphemy: Father & Son

+ 1. Cursing God
↳ to bring harm to God - denounce

Cursing God is using offensive and vulgar language against God. ^{defile pollute} To bring evil against Him

Why would we curse God? Job's wife - "Curse God & die!"

Because we're angry at God.

Many times, the plans we've created for our lives are not working out.

Many people have been taught the Prosperity Gospel—God wants me happy, healthy, and wealthy.

Well, if that's the case, why am I angry, unhealthy, and broke?

Does God not love me? Do I not have enough faith? Am I not saved?

People blaspheme God because God is not blessing their plan, and they refuse to get on God's plan.

People blaspheme and curse God because they think God has failed them.

Curse → cursing

FATHER'S SON

2. The second example of modern-day blasphemy is—Taking God's name in vain
For example—OMG!

Taking the name of Jesus Christ in vain.

People blaspheme God's name without thinking.

God's name is holy—it's different.

It is not to be used casually. let alone disrespectfully.

So because we have all disrespected God and used His holy and precious name flippantly ~~and casually~~, we have either taken His name in vain or insulted and assaulted God,

We need to ask for God's forgiveness—How is that done?

Psalm 25:11—Lord, for the sake of your name, forgive my iniquity, for it is immense. —MT. EVEREST.

And because of Jesus' sinless life and substitutionary death—God the Father has promised to forgive us when we repent and believe the Gospel.

The empty grave is proof of the Father's acceptance of His forgiveness.

So that's good news!

But what about specifically blaspheming the Holy Spirit—can that be done today?

Answer: Yes and no.

Yes, an unbeliever can certainly commit the unforgivable sin.

No, a Born-again Believer can not.

People who fear they've committed the unforgivable sin prove they have not.

In other words, if you have committed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, you don't care about the state of your soul because you've passed the point of no return (cf. Hebrews 12:17).

Today's blasphemer has heard the Gospel proclaimed with purity, passion, and power.

Today's blasphemer has watched Christians live transformative lives.

Yet he hates Jesus, hates the Gospel, hates all things holy, righteous, and good, and THEN says it's all filled with evil, wickedness, and deceit.

Today's blasphemer hears the Gospel message, understands it logically, and not only despises it but attacks it.

The famous atheists of our day are examples of those who commit this sin.

These people write books, speak at conferences, and peddle this stuff on podcasts.

By attacking the Gospel & call good evil & evil good.

KEYPOINT 5:

It is not easy to commit the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

You have to go well out of your way to do so.

Christians, who are kept by God's power— cannot commit the unforgivable sin.

Unbelievers who fear this sin— haven't committed it either.

If they had, they would be proud and smug— not fearful.

They wouldn't even ask the question.

However, there is an additional “unforgivable sin” that we need to mention today.

And that is the rejection of the Gospel.

The rejection of God the Father’s Son—Jesus The Christ.

And rejecting the Gospel is way easier than blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who bears witness to Christ (John 15:26) and who convicts the lost sinner (John 16:7–11).

However, if the lost sinner hears the Gospel and rejects the evidence—there is also nothing else God the Father can do for him.

Ultimately, this passage today is not so much about committing the unforgivable sin but rather what happens when you do—

Whether someone goes out of their way to blaspheme the Holy Spirit or reject the Gospel message—there are eternal consequences to those decisions.

What are they?

Jesus The Christ is not only the Lord, Savior, King and High Priest.

He is also our judge.

For those of us who have been chosen and called by God to believe—your life has already been judged.

It’s been judged by the person and work of Jesus himself.

By believing the Gospel, confessing your sins and obeying God’s Word—your sins have been cast as far as the east is from the west.

→ Fruit in your life
through joyful
obedience

Jesus lived a perfect life and died a substitutionary death—which means that He traded His perfect life for our sinful life.

It is by grace alone, through faith alone, that you've been saved.

You've done nothing to deserve salvation, and you surely can't earn it. ^{work}

But those who refuse to believe—who think that they are good people—who think they will tell God what to do—are in for an unfortunate and eternal consequence.

Jesus will judge them as guilty—because they are.

And that's why it's so important for us to fulfill the G.C.
↳ to share Jesus Day-by-Day.

 **PRAYER**

BENEDICTION

He who testifies about these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with everyone. Amen. (Rev. 22:20)

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