

Topics of the Bible ~ Blasphemy ~ Leader's Guide

1. The word “blasphemy” comes from the Greek word *blasphemia*, which literally means *to speak harm*. From a religious point of view, it means showing contempt or the utmost disrespect or defiance toward God. A second meaning is claiming the attributes of the Lord (or actually to be God). In Biblical times, what was the punishment for cursing or blaspheming the name of the Lord? (Leviticus 24:15-16, Matthew 26:65-66, John 10:33)

Is this penalty still in effect today? (Think about it now, but we'll answer it when we get to Q 5 and 6 below.)

2. How can one blaspheme God? The Bible tells us six ways:

A. Leviticus 24:11 by speaking against God or against his name

B. Acts 6:11 by speaking against God's word

C. Ezekiel 20:27-31 (esp vs 27) by engaging in idolatry

D. 1 Timothy 1:13 by persecuting the church

E. James 2:2-7 by oppressing the poor

F. Revelation 13:1 by bearing a sacrilegious name

3. Have you ever blasphemed God? (Most of us have.) Which one(s) of the six ways above have snagged you or continue to be troublesome to you? Why?

4. The Bible differentiates between blasphemy against God and against Jesus, and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. What's the difference? (Matthew 12:22-31. Look at the New Living Translation if possible. Also see Mark 3:29-30)

Matthew 12:22-31 – ²² Then a demon-possessed man, who was blind and couldn't speak, was brought to Jesus. He healed the man so that he could both speak and see. ²³ The crowd was amazed and asked, “Could it be that Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah?”

²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard about the miracle, they said, “No wonder he can cast out demons. He gets his power from Satan, the prince of demons.”

²⁵ Jesus knew their thoughts and replied, “Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart. ²⁶ And if Satan is casting out Satan, he is divided and fighting against himself. His own kingdom will not survive. ²⁷ And if I am empowered by Satan, what about your own exorcists? They cast out demons, too, so they will condemn you for what you have said. ²⁸ But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you. ²⁹ For who is powerful enough to enter the house of a

strong man like Satan and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house.

³⁰ “Anyone who isn’t with me opposes me, and anyone who isn’t working with me is actually working against me.

³¹ “So I tell you, every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven—except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which will never be forgiven. [NLT]

What happened? A great miracle had taken place. The blind and dumb man spoke and saw. The multitude was amazed. The Pharisees knew they must discredit it or they would lose their following so they accused Jesus of casting out demons by the ruler of the demons. This indicates they recognized the miracle and had to attribute it to some power beyond man. They did not want to attribute the miracle to God, however, because then they would have to admit that Jesus came from God or had the power of God. A clear case of denying the truth in the presence of the facts. (People often do this today.)

Jesus showed them how ridiculous their assertion was. Satan would not wage war on Satan. That done, he explains how his power was superior to that of Satan, the ‘strong man.’ “How can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man?”

Then He goes on to indicate how serious it was to reject Him: “Anyone who isn’t working with me is actually working against me.”

Explanation

These men, Jesus said, were blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Yet, rereading the passage, we see that they had not actually spoken evil of the Holy Spirit in so many words. Actually, their words were aimed at Jesus. In verse 24: “He” or “this man” or “this fellow” refers to Jesus, not to the Holy Spirit. In verse 31, Jesus said that such words spoken against Him could be forgiven.

No, it wasn’t what they had said that brought them into so much danger, though what they said was certainly a serious matter. The problem was what they were doing.

The words of J.W. McGarvey are helpful here:

“Blasphemy against the Son may be a temporary sin, for the one who commits it may be subsequently convinced of his error by the testimony of the Holy Spirit and become a believer (1 Timothy 1:13). But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is in its nature an eternal sin, for if one rejects the evidence given by the Holy Spirit and ascribes it to Satan, he rejects the only evidence upon which faith can be based; and without faith there is no forgiveness.”

Mark 3:29-30 adds, “but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin—because they were saying ‘He has an unclean spirit.’ ” Again, the words were uttered against Jesus, but the effect was

blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. These men went so far in their rejection of the clear evidence provided by the Holy Spirit that they called God Satan. Their words were indicative of the hardness of their hearts and their willful rejection.

Therefore

When a person sees the clear evidence provided by the Holy Spirit (in this case a real miracle) yet is so against it that he rejects it, he blasphemes the Holy Spirit and cannot be forgiven. The reason he cannot be forgiven is that by rejecting God, he has cut himself off from the forgiveness God offers.

5. Blasphemy against God and Jesus can be forgiven (1 Timothy 1:12-14), but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the *only unforgivable sin* in the Bible. Why is this? (Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-29, Luke 12:10, Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26, 29)

Matthew 12:31-32 – ³¹ And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Mark 3:28-29 – ²⁸ “I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, ²⁹ but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This is a sin with eternal consequences.”

Luke 12:10 – And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Hebrews 6:4-6 – ⁴ It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, ⁶ if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. [NIV]

Hebrews 10:26 – Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. [NLT]

Hebrews 10:29 – Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God’s mercy to us. [NLT]

These passages speak of one who has fallen away so completely that “it is

impossible...to be brought back to repentance.” If repentance is an impossibility, then such a person has reached a point where he cannot be forgiven. This is the very same condition as that brought on by blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Since Jesus said there was only one such sin that can bring about this result, we must of necessity conclude that this passage is referring to the same issue, i.e., in some way, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (though it is not described that way.)

(A=B, C=B, therefore A=C) The Hebrew writer speaks of a fallen condition for which there can be no forgiveness. Jesus speaks of a blasphemous condition for which there can be no forgiveness. Therefore, *to fall so completely that one cannot bring oneself to repent is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit.*

What does the behavior described in this passage have in common with what the Pharisees were doing? They were suppressing the evidence provided by the Holy Spirit and continued to do so, which was a sin. Jesus called this blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew writer called it insulting the Holy Spirit. (10:29) One who continually suppresses the truth God sends will not receive saving grace. Thus, he can never be forgiven.

[Thanks for discussion of #4 and #5 to Dave Reddick, <http://preacherstudy.com/blasph.htm>]

6. Have you ever been (or are you now) concerned that you may have blasphemed the Holy Spirit and cannot be forgiven? Put another way, can a Christian believer commit the unforgivable sin? (2 Corinthians 5:17, John 10:27-28, Romans 6:14, 1 John 1:7)

No. A believer cannot commit the unforgivable sin. How can someone who has been born again (John 3:7), made a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), and received eternal life (John 10:27-28) actually commit the unforgivable sin? He cannot. Jesus Himself said that we have eternal life, not conditional life: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.” (John 10:27-28). Besides, it says in 2 Cor. 5:17 that the Christian is a new creation in Christ. We are different, no longer slaves to the old nature (Romans 6:14). We are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

There is no biblical support for a believer committing this sin. It just hasn't happened. If you are worried that you may have committed the sin and can't be forgiven, don't be concerned. If you are worried about it, that is a good sign that you have not committed it. If you had, you wouldn't be concerned. If for some reason you are still concerned, I encourage you to read and accept 1 John 1:7: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from *all* sin.

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