

## What is Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit? Eric Roseberry

<sup>31</sup> Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. <sup>32</sup> 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 (Matt. 12:30-32).

<sup>28</sup> “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, <sup>29</sup> but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — <sup>30</sup> for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Also See: Luke 12:20

Numerous readers of the Bible have stumbled upon these passages, and a number of questions come to their mind. I thought God could forgive all sins? What type of sin could be so serious that God wouldn't forgive it? The most likely question to run through someone's mind as they find these passages is, “Have I committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?”

So what is this eternal sin? Blasphemy was broadly understood to be “some form of profaning God's name.”<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the idea of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is defined in scripture, and so we are left with the context of the phrase helping us understand what it means.

In Matthew and Mark's account Jesus has just healed an individual possessed by a demon. Numerous others times in the gospels we see Jesus performing exorcisms. Opponents of Jesus throughout the early church's history would not attack Jesus with the criticism that he did not perform miracles. Rather they would attribute his miracle working power to Satan and demons (cf. m. San. 7:4).

The main thrust of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is attributing to Satan what is of God (cf. Isa. 5:20). Why is this such an unforgiveable action? Part of the reason for this is the historical situation this account is found in.

For years the Jewish people had been waiting for a Messiah. It becomes evident in the gospels that many of the leaders of the day did not want nor believe that Jesus was this messiah. They looked for opportunities to discredit him, and ultimately would hang him on a cross.

Jesus mentions a word spoken against the Son of Man will be forgiven (Mt. 12:32). At this point in his life Jesus identity as the Son of Man was up for debate among many, and largely required people to believe in Jesus by his actions and teachings.

However, the Holy Spirit was upon Jesus (Isa. 61:1) in such a way to empower his supernatural ministry. The exorcisms, healings, and all other

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<sup>1</sup> Blomberg, 203

miracles were the realization of the Kingdom of God coming to earth (Matt. 12:28). A new age was dawning and the salvation of God's people was at hand.

When Jesus demonstrated who he was through the power of the Holy Spirit he was giving the clearest expression of who he was. If an individual rejected the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus there was no where else for them to turn to believe in him. If they did not believe in him because of the Spirit at work they were *never* going to believe in him.<sup>2</sup>

The same is true for us today. If we encounter the work of the Holy Spirit in the world around us and continue to reject God there will be no greater work done in our life to bring us back to God. Blaspheming the Spirit is the ultimate rejection of who God is. Once one blasphemes the Spirit they have made a complete and total rejection of the work of God.

A couple of cautions:

1. If you're concerned you've committed this sin then you haven't. None of the leaders ridiculing Jesus in these passages would have had any concern for their spiritual condition based on what they believed about Christ.
2. Be careful in attributing possible works of the Spirit to demons. It has been popular in some circles to call out some abuses in the charismatic movement as demonic. Christians would be wise to not make this declaration too quickly.

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek word for "blasphemes" is an imperfect verb possibly denoting a continuous rejection of blaspheming.