

# The Good Tree, The Good Treasure

Andrew Hancock, 7/5/2020, Matthew 12:22-32

## Scan Matthew 12 – three conflicts with Pharisees

1. (Sabbath) Conflict over the Sabbath (1-21)
2. (Source) Conflict over Source, Satan (22-37)
3. (Sign) Conflict over a Sign (38-50)

- Jesus and the Pharisees clash, over their unnecessary rules about the Sabbath. Jesus was healing people on the Sabbath, it got heated.
- Jesus left because they wanted to kill him!
- **“Many people”** followed Jesus; He healed all who came.
- Then the Pharisees came down causing more trouble, to slander his work and miracles.

## This Passage

Three parts – the healing, the conflict, and Jesus’ teaching.

- Jesus heals (22-23)
- Pharisees accuse Jesus, he responds (conflict, source, 24-32)
  - Uses questions and parables to make his points, pokes holes in accusation
    - 1 Makes no sense for Satan to work against himself!  
A city or home fighting against itself will fall, its doomed.  
If Jesus cast out demons by Satan’s power, would be like that!
    - 2 Makes no sense for them to accept their Jewish exorcists and not him!  
They are both producing good, they are being inconsistent! They’ll judge.
  - Imagery - Talks about the strong man, if someone wants to rob/invoke, they’ll get rid of the security first.  
Jesus is invading Satan’s domain and his kingdom is here, and coming!
- Jesus’ Teaching section, tree & heart (33-37)

## Two goals for my talk

- Worship Jesus, see how Jesus reveals himself to be the Messiah.
- Get our heads around the Blasphemy of the Spirit, the unforgivable sin.

## THE GOOD TREE (22-32) - how Jesus reveals himself to be the Messiah

- Believers are have good fruit, they are good trees, planted in Christ, good hearts.
- Jesus is the ultimate Good Tree – all his works are good and his heart is pure.
- I want to highlight three ways Jesus, the Good Tree, reveals himself to be the Messiah.
  - **Son of David** – (verse 23)
  - **Son of God** – (verse 28-29)
  - **Son of Man** - (verse 32)

## (I) Son of David – promised Messiah, anointed Savior (verse 23)

“And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?”

- People were amazed, astonished (NIV), they “marveled” (Luke 11:14)
- **“Son of David”** 2 Sam 7 – from David’s line to establish the kingdom and throne forever.
- When the people saw all the healing, they knew he had special power, something different, maybe the anointed from God from David’s line!?
- The people correctly wondered in their amazement, could this be the Messiah?

## (II) Son of God – King, Stronger Man (verse 28-29)

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

- He is the King, coming in the power of the Spirit of God, to establish God’s kingdom.
- In Luke (11:20) Jesus uses adds a phrase, that he casts out demons **“by the finger of God”** Very touch of Almighty God, the King is upon them!
- I like how the NET translation says it, Jesus says **“kingdom of God has already overtaken you”** Jesus is casting out demons, invading Satan’s realm, overtaking it!
- The King is on the move. Like in Narnia – Aslan is on the move!
- Jesus is the King, taking back his kingdom from evil.

How?

**“Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.”**

- Jesus ties up the strong man (Satan), and plunders his house, casts out demons. Beelzebul “master of the house.” A greater master has come!
- Jesus is the Stronger Man one who shows his power over Satan’s realm by healing demon-possessed, **“binds”** the **“strong man”** and **“plunders his house.”**
- *William MacDonald* says, “Far from being in league with Satan, the Lord Jesus was Satan’s Conqueror”<sup>1</sup>
- Jesus further bound Satan on in his resurrection! (Heb 2:14) “destroy Devils work” “power over death”
- And he will fully bind Satan in the end, (Rev 20:10) “cast him into the lake of fire” we are on the winning side!

## (III) Son of Man (verse 32)

**32a “whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven.”**

- Son of Man here refers to Jesus’ glory, that he has the authority of God. The authority to forgive sins, to justify or condemn (37).
- Jesus is God, the Daniel 7 type, who has the authority to judge and the authority to forgive, exalted Son of Man!

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<sup>1</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, 1250.

- We get distracted easily by the blasphemy of the Spirit we miss that Jesus came with the authority, as the Son of Man, to forgive sins. **“every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people.” (31)** Catch that, every sin will be forgiven!
- An amazing phrase, all sins will be forgiven who trust in Jesus, the Son of Man.
- In Matt 9, Jesus healed a paralyzed man. why? Jesus said, **“that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”**
- Jesus is God and has the authority to forgive, for he went to the cross and died for our sins so that all who repent and trust in him will be forgiven, wow!
- That is the good news of this passage, probably my favorite part of this passage!

### **So, Praise God for giving us the Messiah, who is... GOD!**

- The Son of David – the promised, chosen one of God! Savior!
- The Son of God – the King, the stronger man who overtakes Satan!
- The Son of Man – with the very authority to forgive!

### **THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN (31-32)**

There’s a lot of debate and questions that surround these verses.

- Wait, how is there a sin that will not be forgiven?
  - I thought Jesus has the power to forgive all sins.
- How does this work with assurance of salvation? If one blasphemes the Spirit as a Christian, can he lose his salvation?
  - I thought salvation is secure.
- I have heard people say the unforgivable sin is suicide or murder or adultery or speaking wrongly about the Spirit in some way ...
  - Who is correct?

Many issues surrounding this, but for the sake of simplicity and time, I’ll address three questions:

1. What is it?
2. Can it be committed today?
3. Can a Christian commit it?

**“Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 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.”**

This is an important concept to understand, it is in Matthew, Mark (3), & Luke 11 & 12, (11, 12:10).

Mark and Luke have similar phrase, Mark 3:29-30 says, **“whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” – for they were saying ‘He has an unclean spirit.’**

## 1. **What is the unforgivable sin?** We need to look at the context!

The Pharisees said that Jesus healed by the power of Satan, that he had a demon. Thus they blasphemed the Spirit by attributing the work of Holy Spirit to Satan. When in fact it was done totally opposite, it was done by Jesus through God's power.

### **My definition,**

A **willful, wicked, wide-eyed rejection** of the Spirit's work through Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

This was done by the Pharisees, who were Jesus' opponents. They hated him.

### **Willful**

This was a sin of the will. This was a conscious, determined, settled, persistent, conviction/decision over time – decision of the will. Intentional.

- They had already decided that they were going to kill Jesus. They wanted to destroy and ruin his life. Verse 14 says, **“the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.”** To put him to death.
- So, Jesus had withdrawn and started healing away from the Pharisees. But Mark 3:22 says, the religious leaders, **“came down from Jerusalem”** saying **“He is possessed by Beelzebul.”** They took the trip to cause problems and slander.
- The Pharisees repeated this sin. It was not a one-time thing, it was how they decided over and over to treat Jesus and explain God's work in him
  - They had already said that John the Baptist had a demon (11:18)
  - Mark 3:30 says, **“for they were saying ‘He has an unclean spirit.’** Which may have been repeatedly as the verb tense suggests.
  - John 7:20 and 8:52 they said Jesus had a demon! And they picked up stones to kill him.
- So, this was an intentional, repeated decision.

### **Wicked**

This sin was wicked.

- We see this in Sam's passage, 33-37, very telling!
- Jesus calls them wicked, he says **“they are a brood of vipers.”** (34) Alluding that they are children of the Serpent, Satan.
- He calls them the bad tree with bad fruit (33)
- He also says that they are the evil person who **“brings forth evil”** from the evil that is stored up in their hearts.
- Because of all this, their evil words about him reveal they will be **“condemned”** in the final judgment (37) they will **“not be forgiven”** (32).
- So from the lips of Jesus this sin came from evil, wicked people. It was a way of life for them. This sin came from an unrepentant, hard heart. An attitude that

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<sup>2</sup> I get this definition with the help of Sam Storms' article, “New Insights into the Unpardonable Sin.” (1/9/2020).

revealed their wickedness and their evil inner being. They maliciously slandered Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit in Him.

### **Wide-eyed**

This sin was wide-eyed. Meaning they understood what they were doing, with their eyes wide open. It was intentional deceit. They understood Jesus. They saw that his miracles were positive, not from Satan. They had crystal-clear knowledge of who Jesus claimed to be and that he had the power of God.

The Pharisees saw lepers become clean, dead people come alive, demons flee, blind people see, paralyzed people start walking. Think of all the people who they had seen healed and changed by Jesus. Yet they were so jealous, they tried to turn the people's hearts away by their lies.

One commentator, Sam Storms, is helpful on this point and I get some of the words in my definition from him,

“Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is willful, wide-eyed slandering of the work of the Spirit, attributing to the devil what was undeniably divine. These people had seen as clearly as anyone could see... that Jesus performed his miracles by the power of the Spirit. Yet they defiantly insisted, contrary to what they knew to be true, that it was Satan who empowered him. The miracles Jesus performed were credentials of heaven. The religious leaders declared them to be the credentials of hell.

The Pharisees had been present when Jesus healed the sick. They saw him perform miracles up close and personal. They witnessed him raise the dead. They watched with their very eyes as skin infected with leprosy suddenly and decisively became clean and smooth and whole. They had heard him teach with power and authority. They had watched as demons fled his presence as he set free those in bondage. They watched with their own eyes as he gave sight to the blind. Notwithstanding all this, they openly and persistently and angrily and arrogantly declared that he did it all by the power of the Devil!”<sup>3</sup>

### ***The Chosen and Jesus healing***

- I was struck by the reactions of people that Jesus healed. Happy, changed, amazed
- Sometimes I forget, each healing was a life completely changed for good.
- This wasn't the work of Satan!
- Yet the Pharisees saw so much of this and, with eyes wide open, said it was of the Devil – to draw people's hearts from Jesus.

I hope we see more clearly the specifics of this sin now.

- It's not a one-time slip of the tongue.
- Not getting a detail wrong about the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>3</sup> Sam Storms. “New Insights into the Unpardonable Sin.” (1/9/2020).

- It's not an attitude of someone who is sensitive to the Spirit and repenting.
- It's not a moment of ignorance or a general unbelief

It is a **rejection, full opposition to the Spirit's work through Jesus!**

## 2. Can the unforgivable sin be committed today? Maybe, maybe not.

Probably not this specific, particular sin – blasphemy of the Spirit in Jesus' time, but the category of this sin may be committed today - a type of "unrepentance"

### Maybe not

- This particular sin, this exact sin perhaps can't be repeated now because Jesus is not walking among us.
- Perhaps this sin was for a specific time period (dispensation), and described by the Gospel writers to make a point about Jesus' healing power and the wickedness of the Pharisees.
- This phrase is not repeated in the rest of the New Testament, so this specific sin could only be possible then.
- So, we need to use caution when seeking to apply it today, perhaps it could be repeated somehow, but caution is good here.

### Maybe

- Blasphemy of the Spirit is an attitude of the heart, an opposition of the Spirit's work in Christ, even when the knowledge is present.
- So, this falls under the umbrella of sins we see in the NT of what I call "unrepentant rejection."
- Intentional turning, permanent turning, because of a heard heart.
- **Two passages** that describe the same category with our passage.

**(first passage)** Esau's unrepentant heart is described in Heb 12:16-17,

**Esau "sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears."**

- He treated the birthright with great irreverence, sold it for one meal!
- Then he was sorry later because he did not get the blessing.
- He wanted the blessing, the things of the world but repentance was not in his heart. He loved the world, not God.
- He was rejected, because he couldn't find a place in his heart for genuine repentance.
- So, Esau's heart was an unrepentant rejection, like we see in our passage.

**(second passage)** Hebrews 6:4-6 comes the closest to the Blasphemy of the Spirit "unrepentant rejection," because they both describe a person who has knowledge, yet deliberately turn away.

**“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.”**

- Passage is debated! Some say this describes a believer who turns from the Lord (apostasy), some say this is a hypothetical situation used to warn the Hebrew readers, some say this is describing an unbeliever who has been around Christians and the church, and has some knowledge.
- This person, I believe, is an unbeliever who has been **“enlightened”** and understands the **Holy Spirit’s** work, has seen it.
- But still rejects Christ. **“have fallen away”**... “involves a sustained, committed rejection of Christ.”<sup>4</sup>... for those people
- It is **“impossible to restore again to repentance”** (Heb 6:4-6). Unrepentant rejection.

**So, can this be committed today?** my answer is maybe, maybe not. Its included in the category of unrepentant rejection, which can be committed today. But the particular sin described in our passage is probably specific for that time period.

### **3. Can a Christian commit the unforgivable sin? No.**

- Jesus, **“The kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.”**
- Acts 16:31 says, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”**  
So, anyone who repents and believes, turns and trusts Jesus will be saved.  
If someone is not repentant and refuses to believe, they will not be saved.
- The “unrepentant heart” with knowledge of the truth is a deliberate rejection of the work of Christ, not going to be saved. This passage is a clear warning!
- Jesus said that it came from the Pharisees who were evil. A believer is not evil.
- Are you repentant in your heart of hearts, trusted Christ and soft to the Spirit? Then you haven’t committed this sin. You can’t, it’s one committed by an unbeliever.
- So, if someone you know is worried or if you are worried you have committed this sin, then you haven’t. One who commits this sin is not worried. Quite the opposite, it opposed to Christ, unrepentant, and rejecting the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Yet the good news of this passage is that, as verse 31 says, for everyone who turns to Christ, **“every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people.”**
- Praise God for providing forgiveness through Christ. He is the powerful Son of Man as the authority to forgive sins!

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<sup>4</sup> *ESV Study Bible*. 2369.