

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The account of the unpardonable sin is only found in Matthew and Mark. No other reference is made to it anywhere in the New Testament.

THE OCCASION FOR THE STATEMENT ABOUT THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

The healing of a demoniac. (Matt. 12:22). The King (Christ) had come, preaching that His Kingdom was at hand and He had been performing miracles as Messianic signs to substantiate His claims (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 11:4-6). Christ made this claim in 12:28: "*But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.*"

The response of the people. (Matt. 12:23). The people were beginning to wonder whether Christ truly was the Messiah although there were lingering doubts.

The accusation of the Pharisees (Matt. 12:24): The Pharisees thought Christ was Satanically controlled and did this miracle in the power of Beelzebub. The Pharisees thought Christ was devilish and his family thought him deranged (Mark 3:21).

The answer of Christ (Matt. 12:25-30). Christ answers by saying that Satan does not cast out Satan. Division within Satan's kingdom is impossible. Jesus points out that He did His miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit and that He is Master of the spirit world. Christ also points out that in this struggle there is no neutrality. A person is either for Him or against Him.

THE REVELATION OF THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

What it is Not

It is not moral debauchery. The Pharisees, who are the objects of this warning, were not guilty of immoral actions. They were outwardly moral persons but hypocritical.

This is a specific sin because it is marked off by the definite article "the" blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

In Mark 3:28-29, the word *hamartema* is used and this usually refers to a specific act of sin and not some immoral act of a general nature.

What it is

It is a sin of blasphemy (Lev. 24:15-16; Ex. 22:28). By claiming that Christ's miracles were done by Beelzebub, the Pharisees were blaspheming the real author of them, the Holy Spirit.

It is a sin against the Holy Spirit. They are rejecting the King's testimony to the King (Matt. 12:28-29).

It is a sin of refusing the Kingdom and the King (Matt. 12:28; Mark 3:30). The Pharisees claimed Christ had an "evil spirit" (Mark 3:30). They refused the King by their accusation that He was in a conspiracy with the demonic world.

Why is it Unpardonable?

Man may misunderstand who Jesus was because His deity and dignity were veiled due to the incarnation. While sin against Him was blamable, it was pardonable. But the sin against the Holy Spirit was different because it was the rejection of works clearly done by the divine power of the Holy Spirit.

This sin was a deliberate, final refusal of light and it reveals a hardened, impenitent heart. The Greek word *elegon*, translated "they were saying" in Mark 3:30, is in the imperfect time indicating continuous action in the past. They were constantly saying this—it was a hardened attitude.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the argument of chapter 12 is pivotal, for the climax of rejection is reached by the religious leaders to the person and work of Christ. They had rejected Christ and now were rejecting the Holy Spirit who lived in Christ and this was unpardonable.

Who May Commit the Unpardonable Sin?

There are indications from the text that the unpardonable sin can only be committed when the King is personally present in the likeness of man. It is only then that a sin against the Son of Man could be considered less in significance than the sin against the Holy Spirit. The incarnation is the key to this interpretation.

Others feel that the unpardonable sin can be committed today if a person credits the works of Christ to Satan rather than to the Holy Spirit, which would involve a definite, deliberate rejection of clear light. This would invoke the sin of apostasy (Heb. 3:12; 6:4-6; 2 Chron. 36:15-16).

“There is such a thing as sin which is never forgiven, but those who are the most troubled about it are most unlikely ever to have committed it.”