

Matthew 12:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Analysis

'And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.' Jesus distinguishes between forgivable and unforgivable blasphemy. Speaking 'against the Son of man' (κατὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου/kata tou huiou tou anthrōpou) can be forgiven—even rejecting Jesus in ignorance (like Paul before conversion, 1 Timothy 1:13) finds forgiveness through repentance. But speaking 'against the Holy Ghost' (κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἀγίου/kata tou pneumatos tou hagiou) won't be forgiven 'in this world' or 'world to come' (ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰώνι...ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι/en toutō tō aiōni...en tō mellonti)—absolute, eternal unforgiveness. Why distinction? Jesus appeared in humble humanity; misunderstanding His identity was possible. But the Spirit's testimony to His deity through miracles is clear, undeniable. Rejecting that clear evidence demonstrates hardened, reprobate condition. Reformed theology: this isn't one-time utterance but persistent state of hardened rebellion.

Historical Context

Jesus spoke these words after Pharisees attributed His Spirit-empowered exorcisms to Satan (v.24). Context clarifies the sin: not mere insult but willful attribution of Spirit's work to Satan. Throughout history, confused theology

debated which specific words constitute this sin. But context shows: it's not particular phrase but heart condition producing systematic, persistent rejection of Spirit's clear testimony to Christ. Many believers have feared committing this sin—the fear itself proves they haven't, as true blasphemers are unconcerned. The phrase 'neither in this world, neither in world to come' uses Hebrew idiom meaning 'never, under any circumstances.' Some erroneously used this verse to support purgatory (sins forgiven in world to come), but Jesus's point is opposite: this sin won't be forgiven in either age—temporal or eternal. Early church fathers (Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine) wrestled with this text. Reformers clarified: unpardonable sin is persistent, final rejection of gospel.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this sin as persistent rejection (not one-time utterance) provide assurance to worried believers?
2. Why is blasphemy against the Spirit worse than blasphemy against Christ—what does this reveal about the Trinity's work in salvation?
3. What warning does this give about the progressive hardening that results from repeatedly rejecting the Spirit's conviction?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ὅς ἀν εἴπη λόγον κατὰ τοῦ νίοῦ τοῦ
And but whosoever speaketh a word against G3588 the Son G3588
G2532 G3739 G302 G2036 G3056 G2596 G3588
G5207

ἀνθρώπου ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ ὅς δ' ἀν εἴπη
of man be forgiven him but whosoever speaketh
G444 G863 G846 G3739 G1161 G302 G2036

κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἀγίου οὐκ ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ
against Ghost the Holy not be forgiven him
G2596 G3588 G4151 G40 G3756 G863 G846
G3588

οὐτε ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι οὐτε ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι
neither in this world neither in the world to come
G3777 G1722 G5129 G165 G3777 G1722 G3195

Additional Cross-References

Mark 3:29 (Holy): But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

John 7:39 (Holy): (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Job 36:13 (Parallel theme): But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them.

Ephesians 1:21 (Parallel theme): Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

Matthew 12:31 (Holy): Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

1 Timothy 1:13 (Parallel theme): Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Luke 12:10 (Holy): And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

Acts 3:19 (Parallel theme): Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Mark 10:30 (Parallel theme): But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

Matthew 11:19 (Parallel theme): The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

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