

Matthew 9:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves,
This man blasphemeth.

Analysis

The scribes' internal objection—"This man blasphemeth" (οὗτος βλασφημεῖ/houtos blasphēmei)—is theologically astute. Blasphemy (βλασφημία) means speaking against God's character or usurping divine prerogatives. Only God can forgive sins, as sins are ultimately offenses against God (Psalm 51:4). The scribes correctly identify Jesus' claim to forgive as a divine prerogative. Their error lies not in theology but in failing to recognize that Jesus IS God incarnate. They 'said within themselves' (εἶπαν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς), thinking privately rather than speaking openly, yet Jesus perceives their thoughts (9:4). This episode demonstrates both Jesus' deity (forgiving sins) and omniscience (knowing hearts). The charge of blasphemy will resurface at Jesus' trial (26:65), when religious leaders condemn Him for the very truth they should have embraced.

Historical Context

Blasphemy carried the death penalty under Mosaic Law (Leviticus 24:16). The scribes (γραμματεῖς/grammateis) were professional Torah scholars who copied, interpreted, and taught Scripture. They held significant religious authority and would have been deeply troubled by any violation of monotheism or divine honor. In Second Temple Judaism, forgiveness came through temple sacrifices and priestly mediation. For someone outside the priesthood to pronounce forgiveness, bypassing the sacrificial system, challenged fundamental religious structures. The scribes' concern about blasphemy reflects genuine theological vigilance, though tragically misdirected.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' forgiveness of sins demonstrate His deity?
2. Why is forgiveness ultimately a divine rather than human prerogative?
3. What does this passage teach about the relationship between physical healing and spiritual forgiveness?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἰδοῦ,	τινες	τῶν	γραμματέων	εἶπον	ἐν	ἑαυτοῖς
And	behold	certain	<small>G3588</small>	of the scribes	said	within	themselves
<small>G2532</small>	<small>G2400</small>	<small>G5100</small>		<small>G1122</small>	<small>G2036</small>	<small>G1722</small>	<small>G1438</small>

Οὗτος	βλασφημεῖ
This	man blasphemeth
<small>G3778</small>	<small>G987</small>

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 26:65 (Parallel theme): Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

Luke 5:21 (Parallel theme): And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

Leviticus 24:16 (Parallel theme): And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.

Mark 14:64 (Parallel theme): Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

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