

Matthew 12b

What was the next incident in Jesus' life (v. 22)? The people brought a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute to Jesus. Since He was both blind and mute, communication with him was almost impossible. Jesus immediately healed him by removing the demon, and the man both spoke and saw.

How did the people react to Jesus healing (v. 23)? The people were astonished, which prompted their question, *"Could this be the Son of David?"* In other words, "Is this the promised Messiah?"

What was the Pharisees' reaction to the miracle (v. 24)? When Jesus healed the demoniac, the common people began to seriously consider that Jesus might be the Messiah. This enraged the Pharisees. Unable to tolerate any suggestion of sympathy with Jesus, they exploded with the charge that the miracle had been performed by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.

What three arguments did Jesus give to refute the claim that He was working by Satan's power (vv. 25-28)?

vv. 25-26 First, Jesus proceeded to expose their folly. He said if He were casting out a demon by Satan's power, then Satan would be working against himself and casting himself out. Furthermore, why would Satan let Jesus cast out a demon and free a man who was already under his control? To do either would divide Satan's kingdom and it could not stand. This accusation was absurd!

v. 27 Second, Jesus asked them about some of their Jewish associates, known as exorcists, who claimed to have the power to cast out demons. Jesus pointed out that if He cast out demons by Beelzebub, then these Jewish exorcists did also. The Pharisees would never admit this, but could not escape the logic of the argument. Jesus was saying in essence, "If you believe your exorcists work by the power of God in casting out demons, why do you not think I have that same divine power?"

v. 28 Thirdly... He said to the Pharisees, *"... if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."* This announcement must have been a crushing blow to the Pharisees. They prided themselves on their theological knowledge, yet the kingdom of God had suddenly arrived and was among them because the King was among them and they hadn't even realized that He was there!

What was Jesus' point in v. 29? Far from being in league with Satan, the Lord Jesus was Satan's Conqueror. This He illustrates by the story of the strong man. The strong man is Satan. His house is the realm in which he holds sway. His goods are his demons. Jesus is the One who binds the strong man, enters his house, and plunders his goods and comes away with the spoils of victory.

Actually, the binding of Satan takes place in stages. It began during Jesus' public ministry. It was decisively guaranteed by the death and resurrection of Christ. It will be true to a more marked degree during Jesus' thousand-year reign (Revelation 20:2). Finally, it will be eternally true when Satan is cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). At the present time, the devil does not seem to be bound; he still exercises considerable power. But his doom is determined and his time is short.¹

What was Jesus' message to the Pharisees in v. 30? Jesus invited the Pharisees to make a clear decision. They must either be with Him or against Him. Their blasphemous attitude showed that the Pharisees were not with the Lord; therefore, they were against Him. They had accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan, while actually they themselves were the servants of Satan, seeking to frustrate the work of God.²

What is the subject of Jesus' discussion in vv. 31-32? The unpardonable sin. **What is the unpardonable sin?** Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit....in this case, by charging that Jesus performed His miracles by the power of

Satan rather than by the power of the Holy Spirit. God would not forgive this sin because the person who committed it in Jesus' day was thereby strongly rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. Even today, the only sin that a person can commit that God will not forgive, and that will result in his or her eternal damnation, is rejection of Jesus Christ (cf. [John 3:18](#)).³

The unpardonable sin is not the same as rejecting the gospel; a man may spurn the Savior for years, then repent, believe, and be saved. Nor is the unforgivable sin the same as backsliding; a believer may wander far from the Lord, yet be restored to fellowship in God's family.

What are the consequences of committing the unpardonable sin (vv. 31-32)? There is forgiveness for other forms of sin and blasphemy. A man may even speak against Jesus Christ and be forgiven. But to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is a sin for which there is no forgiveness in this age or in the millennial age to come. When Jesus said "*in this age*", He was speaking of the days of His public ministry on earth. There is reasonable doubt whether the unpardonable sin can be committed today, because Jesus is not bodily present performing miracles.⁴

Many people worry that they may have committed the unpardonable sin. Even if this sin could be committed today, the fact that a person is concerned is evidence that he/she is not guilty of it. Those who committed it were hard and unrelenting in their opposition to Christ. They had no qualms about insulting the Spirit and no hesitancy in plotting the death of the Son. They showed neither remorse nor repentance.⁵

What is the illustration that Jesus uses in v. 33? Even the Pharisees should have admitted that the Lord had done good by casting out demons. Yet they accused Him of being evil. Here He exposes their inconsistency and says, in effect, "Make up your minds. If a tree is good, its fruit is good and vice versa." Fruit reflects the quality of the tree that produced it, i.e., conduct typically reflects character. The fruit of His ministry had been good, so He must be good. He had healed the sick, the blind, the deaf, and the dumb, had cast out demons and raised the dead. Could a corrupt tree have produced such good fruit? Utterly impossible! Why then did they so stubbornly refuse to acknowledge Him?

What was the criticism that Jesus levied against the Pharisees (vv. 34-35)? He called them a brood of vipers. Their malice against the Son of Man, evidenced by their venomous words, was the outflow of their evil hearts. A heart filled with goodness will be evidenced by words of grace and righteousness. A wicked heart expresses itself in blasphemy, bitterness, and abuse. Jesus' point was they needed a change of attitude toward Him, not just a change in their speech about Him.

What was the warning Jesus directed at the Pharisees (vv. 36-37)? Jesus solemnly warned them (and us) that people will give account for every idle word they utter. Because the words people have spoken are an accurate gauge of their lives, they will form a suitable basis for condemnation or acquittal. How great will be the condemnation of the Pharisees for the vile and contemptuous words which they spoke against God's Holy Son!

In the case of believers, the penalty for careless speech has been paid through the death of Christ; however, our careless speech, unconfessed and unforgiven, will result in loss of reward at Christ's Judgment Seat.⁶

¹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1250.

² Ibid.

³ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Matthew*, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 347.

⁴ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1250.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 1251.