



Kingdom Wisdom

The Foolishness of Willful Rejection

Matthew 12:22-32

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.gotquestions.org/who-Beelzebub.html>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-unforgivable-sin>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/can-a-christian-blaspheme-the-holy-spirit>

<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/sin-unforgiveable>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/what-does-the-Holy-Spirit-do.html>

Sermon Outline:

Matthew 12:22-32

1. Irrefutable Evidence. Vv. 22-24
2. Irrefutable Logic. Vv. 25-29
3. Unpardonable Refutation. Vv. 30-32

Matthew 12:22-32

The Pharisees Rebuked

22 Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw.

23 All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"

24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

25 And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.

26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?

27 If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges.

28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

29 Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

The Unpardonable Sin

30 He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

31 "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.

32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 12:22-32.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

1. Have you ever tried to help someone who willfully and consciously rejected your help? Why is it so hard to help someone who doesn't want it?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. Irrefutable Evidence. Vv. 22-24

2. What was significant about the miracle Jesus performed in these verses, and why did the people ask if He was the son of David?

3. What did the Pharisees claim about Jesus, and why did they choose to make this accusation? What does their accusation reveal about their hearts and their understanding of Jesus?

4. How do we see evidence of Jesus' power in our lives today, and how do we sometimes respond to that? What are some ways that people try to explain away or deny the power of God?

II. Irrefutable Logic. Vv. 25-29

5. What were Jesus' arguments against the Pharisees, and how did His logical response expose the foolishness of their accusation?

6. What was the ultimate conclusion of Jesus' logical arguments, and how did that affect the seriousness of the Pharisees' accusation?

7. How should we respond when God's Word and reason prove us to be wrong, and what kind of attitude do we need to cultivate to be able to respond that way?

III. Unpardonable Refutation. Vv. 30-32

8. What is blasphemy in general? How is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit different from blasphemy of the Father or the Son, and why does it result in unforgiveness but the others do not?

(According to the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary - copyright 2003, pp.222-223-, Blasphemy means "literally 'to speak harm.' In the Biblical context blasphemy is an attitude of disrespect that finds expression in an act directed against the character of God" ... blasphemy against the Spirit "is a state of hardness in which one consciously and willfully resists God's saving power and grace." The role of the Spirit in the Trinity is the active power of God working on His creation. Someone who consciously and willfully rejects God's power -i.e. the Holy Spirit- to work in his heart cannot be forgiven, because he doesn't want to be. On the other hand, we have all once rejected God and Christ in disbelief. But when the Spirit worked in our hearts and we received Him through regeneration, our hearts changed and we had faith in Christ and love for God.)

9. Why should we be careful not to presume that someone has committed the "unforgivable sin"/"blasphemed the Spirit?" How can we know if someone has not committed the "unforgivable sin"/"blasphemed the Spirit?"

(It would be extremely difficult for any of us to know if someone else had committed the "unforgivable sin"/"blasphemed the Spirit," since none of us truly know the condition of someone else's heart. All we can go by is what they say and do. If someone gives the evidence that he is an unbeliever, then we can safely believe so. But to tell someone they are beyond forgiveness is really up to the Lord. Our role would be to remind someone who is willfully rejecting the Lord of the perilous position they are in according to this warning. If, on the other hand, someone desires forgiveness and is willing to repent, then he is actively proving that he has not willfully rejected the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart.)

10. What kind of sins does Jesus say can be forgiven? Why should that encourage everyone who desires to be forgiven?

Matt. 11:1–12:50 Opposition to the Messiah Emerges. Resistance to Jesus' ministry has appeared occasionally (e.g., 9:3–4) but now begins to build significantly, occasioned first by the innocuous questions of John the Baptist (11:2–19), then through the overt hostility of the Jewish religious leaders (12:1–45).

Matt. 12:1–45 Confrontations with the Pharisees. The Pharisees accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath (vv. 1–14), suggest he is in league with Satan (vv. 22–37), and demand a cosmic sign (vv. 38–42). Jesus vindicates himself as lord of the Sabbath (v. 8), divine servant of justice (v. 18), and the Spirit-empowered inaugurator of the kingdom of God (v. 28). Judgment will come upon the hard-hearted blasphemers (vv. 30–45), but those who follow Jesus are his true family (see vv. 46–50).

Matt. 12:1 pluck heads of grain. The edges of a field were not normally harvested, so that the poor and hungry, foreigners, orphans, and widows could gather food for themselves (see Lev. 19:9; 23:22). This law showed the compassion of God for those in need.

Matt. 12:2 Pharisees. See note on 3:7.

Matt. 12:4 ate the bread of the Presence. Twelve loaves of bread, representing God's covenant with the 12 tribes of Israel, were to be baked and placed in the tabernacle on each Sabbath as an offering. The bread was only to be eaten by the priests (Lev. 24:5–9), but Scripture does not condemn David for eating the bread during his escape from Saul. The law was intended to serve God's people, rather than God's people being intended to serve the law (cf. Mark 2:27).

Matt. 12:5 The fact that priests, in carrying out their duties, had to work on (and thus "profane") the Sabbath, but were guiltless in doing so, shows that God made allowances within the law.

Matt. 12:6 something greater. The Sabbath points to Christ (see v. 8) and to the "rest" he gives from the impossible task of earning salvation by good works (cf. 11:28).

Matt. 12:7 I desire mercy, and not sacrifice. See note on 9:13.

Matt. 12:8 the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath. Jesus does not challenge the Sabbath law itself but rather the Pharisees' interpretation of it. As Messiah, Jesus authoritatively interprets every aspect of the law (cf. 5:17–48) and here points out the Pharisees' blindness to the actual intent of the Sabbath—to bring rest and well-being. This final argument in response to the Pharisees' challenge (12:2) is the decisive argument—that because of who Jesus is, he has the authority to interpret the law.

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 12:9–10 heal on the Sabbath. In rabbinic teaching, numerous regulations defined minute categories of “work” that were prohibited on the Sabbath, but these legalistic regulations were never God’s intent for the OT law. (See the 39 things prohibited on the Sabbath in Mishnah, Shabbat 7.2.) Jesus’ opponents believed that the Sabbath could be broken only in extreme cases of life and death. Since the life of the man with the withered hand was not in danger, they believed his healing should wait until after the Sabbath.

Matt. 12:11–12 Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! Jesus contrasts the value of an animal to that of a human (see note on 6:26) and asserts that the higher principle is not simply refraining from activity on the Sabbath but doing good on the Sabbath.

Matt. 12:13 it was restored, healthy. The miracle confirms Jesus’ authority to interpret laws relating to the Sabbath (vv. 1–12) and further validates his claim to be the messianic Son of Man (cf. 9:1–8; 12:8).

Matt. 12:14 conspired against him. The religious leaders see clearly that Jesus’ claim concerning authority to interpret the law was in fact a claim to messianic authority, which they judged to be a heresy worthy of death.

Matt. 12:15 Jesus . . . withdrew from there (cf. 2:14, 22; 4:12, 13), not trying to escape all opposition but to prevent its escalation until the time comes for his predicted betrayal and death.

Matt. 12:16 ordered them not to make him known. See note on 8:4; cf. 9:30; 16:20; 17:9.

Matt. 12:17 to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah. Matthew’s typical fulfillment formula (see note on 1:22) introduces his longest OT quotation (Isa. 42:1–4). It comes from the “Servant Songs” (Isaiah 42–53), in which the “servant” represents alternately the nation of Israel and the gentle, Spirit-endowed, suffering servant, whose mission is to bring justice to the nations.

Matt. 12:18–20 my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved. The Father expresses the same delight in his Son at Jesus’ baptism (3:17) and at his transfiguration (17:5). he will proclaim justice. The servant brings the good news of the arrival of the kingdom but also pronounces judgment on the rulers of this world who reject him. will not quarrel or cry aloud. He did not come the first time as a conquering warrior. bruised reed . . . smoldering wick. Jesus the servant compassionately cares for those who have been abused (cf. 9:36; 11:28).