

Lesson 248

Jesus Warns of the Unpardonable Sin

Story Elements



- **Text:** Matthew 12:22-37 (also Mark 3:19-30)
- **Setting:** circa AD 28 in Galilee
- **Characters:** God, Jesus, and some Pharisees
- **Plot:** Jesus answers his enemies' accusation that he works miracles by the power of the devil.
- **Key word(s):** "cast out _____" (vv 24, 27, 28) – This miracle that the Pharisees dismissed was proof of the coming of the Kingdom of God – but their hardened hearts pushed it away, and in so doing, they pushed themselves further away from repentance and any hope of forgiveness.
- **Climax:** **Matthew 12:28** *But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.* After Jesus refutes the illogic of his enemies, he declares that the Kingdom of God is come in power. With these words Jesus draws a line in the sand: one must either follow him or face eternal judgment. **The Kingdom has come – whose side are you on?**

Miracle Criticized

1. (vv 22, 23) A demon-possessed man, who was blind and dumb, man was brought to Jesus for healing. Jesus *healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.*
 - (a) The crowd was amazed and wondered whether Jesus was indeed *the* Son of David, i.e. the Messiah.
 - (b) (v 24) But when the Pharisees heard of the miracle, they dismissed it by claiming that Jesus was casting out devils by _____¹, the prince of devils.
 - i. Mark's gospel (Mark 3:22) records how these Pharisees were not from Galilee but had "been a hostile party of the ecclesiastics, who had come all the way from Jerusalem to collect materials for a charge against Him."²
 - ii. Edersheim explains their animosity against Jesus: "They could believe in the 'miracles,' and yet not in the _____. To them the question would not be...whether they were miracles – but by what power, or in what Name, He did these deeds? ...it was enmity to the *Person and Teaching* of Jesus which led to the denial of His claims."³

Logic Contested

2. (v 25) Jesus knew their thoughts and responded by pointing out the nonsense of such a notion:
 - (a) (v 26) A kingdom divided against itself will fall. Jesus was destroying the powers of darkness. Why would Satan destroy himself?
 - (b) (v 27) If casting out devils can be done by the power of devils, then by what power do the Jewish exorcists cast out devils? Their accusation is a two-way street and became a _____ against them.

APPLICATION ➔ Were the Pharisees sons (disciples) accomplished exorcists? Scripture relates (Acts 19:13-17) how some Jewish exorcists were unable to cast out a devil but were instead overpowered by the evil spirit (even

¹ Beelzebub means, *Lord of flies* or *Lord of the dunghill*, compared to Beelzebul, which means *Lord of lords*. Beelzebub was a tongue-in-cheek way that the Jews referred to Beelzebul, the pagan deity.

² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 41.

³ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971) Book III, 574. Emphasis original.

when they used Jesus' name). These hypocritical Pharisees accused the real but applauded the _____. Spurgeon notes: "The bare idea of spoiling him while you are his friend, or he is unsubdued, is ridiculous."⁴

Kingdom Come

3. (v 28) To say that Christ operated according to the power of the devil is blasphemous and nonsensical; rather, Jesus said that his casting out devils by the Spirit of God was a sign of a kingdom _____, not a kingdom collapse.
- (a) (v 29) Jesus was not merely casting out devils; he was taking back Satan's _____. He has bound the strongman (the devil), broken his armor, and spoiled his house.
- (b) (v 30) Jesus words are momentous: the Kingdom has come, and there is no _____ ground.

Pharisees Condemned

4. (vv 31-32) Jesus warns the Pharisees that they are committing the unpardonable sin, which is a sin that *shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come*. What is the unpardonable sin?
- (a) It is _____ the Holy Spirit by attributing His work as that of devil.
- (b) It is wicked, willful blasphemy done with full understanding that that God is at work, but the devil is credited. Spurgeon warns, "He who is guilty of this outrageous crime has sinned himself into a condition in which spiritual feeling is dead, and repentance has become morally _____.⁵
5. (v 33) These words of Jesus show that the Pharisees knew Jesus was doing God's work: they tried to blame good fruit on a bad _____.
- (a) (vv 34, 35) And by the same standard Jesus shows them that they have an evil heart – *an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things*. They spoke blasphemous words because their hearts were evil.
- (b) (vv 36, 37) Words reveal the _____ condition, so by our words we shall be judged.

APPLICATION➔ Ryle notes: "Our words are the evidence of the state of our hearts...We shall have to give an account of our sayings as well as our doings. Truly these are very solemn considerations. If there were no other text in the Bible, this passage ought to convince us that we are all 'guilty before God,' and need a righteousness better than our own, even the righteousness of Christ. (Phi. iii 9)"⁶

Answer Key: key word(s) "devils" • 1. b) Beelzebub; ii. Christ • 2. b) judgment; ➔fake • 3. come; a) captives; b) neutral • 4. a) blaspheming; b) impossible • 5. tree; b) heart's

⁴ Charles Spurgeon, *An Exposition of Matthew, the Gospel of the Kingdom* (Springfield: Particular Baptist Press, 2015) 90.

⁵ Spurgeon, 91.

⁶ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel, VOLUME ONE, Matthew-Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books; 2007) 133.