

Session 1

April 14, 2019

“GOD WON’T FORGIVE THIS SIN”

Matthew 12:22-32

*Hermeneutics* is the art and science of interpreting the Bible. While a lot of people think that Bible interpretation should be left up to academic scholars, it’s really not that complicated. The main tools needed are the Bible (to present the truth), the Holy Spirit (to impart the truth), and some common sense (to apply the truth). But there are a few rules to help guide us:

- 1) Always interpret the text *plainly*. I take everything as literally as possible, whenever possible. But if it’s clearly figurative, then keep it that way. In every case, avoid excessive symbolism or allegory that complicates things. After all, God is not the author of confusion! (1 Cor. 14:33).
- 2) Always use Scripture to interpret Scripture. In other words, allow clearer teachings to inform you about more obscure ones. Since God cannot lie, the Bible will never contradict itself.
- 3) Always remember the saying, “Context is king!” Each text has one real *meaning* but may have many *applications*. So, start with the question, “What did this Bible writer mean to say to that particular audience at the time it was written?” In order to discover the original meaning, you must keep the verses in their context!

There are other rules which may come up, but these will get us started as we look at some difficult statements made by our Lord.

**The accusation (vv. 22-24).** As this drama plays out, three distinct characters are portrayed. First, there is the demon-possessed man. Blind and unable to speak, he was a suffering victim of both his physical ailments as well as social apathy. The cause of his malady was not natural, but demonic. Second, there is the crowd of onlookers. At this point of His ministry, Jesus was wildly popular. “Huge crowds followed Him, and He healed them all” (v. 15). They were both witnesses to the miracle He performed here and unknowing contributors to the melee that followed. Finally, there are the religious leaders. The Pharisees were legalists who wanted desperately to maintain the status quo. Jesus represented a threat to their way of life. Unnerved by all the fuss made over Jesus, they sought to destroy Him. Rather than celebrate the miraculous deliverance of one of their own, they attacked the authenticity of the One who brought that deliverance! Simply put, they accused Jesus of being empowered by Beelzebub, “the ruler of the demons.” We would call him Satan.

**The explanation (vv. 25-29).** Jesus simply pointed out the absurdity of their claim. Would it not be self-defeating for Satan to remove his own demonic influence from someone? Why would he? He goes even further: if Jesus cast out demons by the power of the devil, then did the Jewish leaders involved in that type of practice not do the same? Verse 29 provides proof of verse 28: Satan’s power could only be overcome by someone more powerful than he. If Satan (the strong man) was subdued, then it must have been done by the Spirit of God. Hence, the Kingdom of God had arrived!

**The application (vv. 30-32).** So, what does Jesus mean by accusing these Pharisees of the “unpardonable sin?” The clues are found in the context. “Because of this...” (v. 31) refers back to the hard line drawn in verse 30. There are only two choices: accepting that Christ is Lord or making Satan the Lord. *In general, then, the unpardonable sin is a continued, defiant rejection of Christ.* So why does Jesus allow that all other blasphemies and slanders, as well as attacks against Him personally can be forgiven (v. 32), but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot? I think it is because through the Holy Spirit, conviction of sin is brought (see John 16:8ff), and through the Holy Spirit the new birth takes place (see John 3:5ff). How can one ever be brought to repentance and salvation if he attributes those supremely divine works to the devil?