

Have I Committed the Unforgivable Sin?

Matthew 12:1–32

(black Bibles page 816; Children's Bibles page 1176)

[1] The Sabbath in the Old Testament. Jesus argues! In fact, he offered *many* arguments in this Sabbath controversy. Mainly they are about how God designed the Sabbath to be *humane* – that is, for humanity's benefit:

- 1) The Sabbath respects human need like food (v3-4)
- 2) Priests do helpful work on the Sabbath (v5)
- 3) Showing mercy is more important than feats of sacrifice (v7)
- 4) If the rescue of animals on the Sabbath is lawful... (v11-12)

Meanwhile, Jesus inserts statements about his identity:

- 1) "Something greater than the temple is now here" (v6)
- 2) "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." (v8)

Remember, this is what our sermon series is about, Jesus' identity. "Are you the One?"

[2] Jesus fulfills Isaiah 42:1–4. Matthew takes a moment (v15-21) to tell us that many are following Jesus, and that he is healing them all, and yet – perhaps surprisingly – Jesus is ordering them "not to make him known."

- Hardly your typical revolutionary, populist, or demagogue. No self-promotion, no calls to vindictive action.

Matthew tells us this fulfills Isaiah 42:1–4, the prophecy of the servant, who "will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets."

- By contrast, consider the demagogue Cleon, of whom Aristotle said: *"He was the first who shouted on the public platform, who used abusive language... all the others used to speak in proper dress and manner."*

[3] What does driving out demons prove? (- and the statement on the unforgivable sin)

How does Jesus drive out demons? By the power of the prince of demons. So say the Pharisees.

- Not a ridiculous argument – not at first blush, intellectually speaking. But it does offer the most Satanic interpretation possible to Jesus miracles. (!)
- Jesus' reply is that this would mean that "Satan casts out Satan," and that Satan effectively has no kingdom in such a case.

The unforgivable sin (v31–32)

- Not many people tend to worry about having committed this, but if you do, it can be terrifying! *Take heart: if you worry about this sin, almost assuredly you haven't committed it!*
- Jesus makes a distinction between himself (whom you can speak a word against and be forgiven) and the Spirit (whom you *cannot* speak against and be forgiven)
 - The Spirit is how Jesus does miracles (v28), being filled since his baptism (Matthew 3:16)
- People might not be 100% sure who Jesus is, since Jesus is in the process of revealing his identity. *But they should recognize the life-giving miracles of the Spirit.* If they call these wonderful works satanic, they might as well call black white and white black. They are hardened, confused, and committed against God – whether they know it or not.