

What Is the Unpardonable Sin?

Can it be committed today? Is it the same as the sin unto death? Is rejection of Christ unpardonable?

The two principal passages dealing with the unpardonable sin are Matthew 12:22-32 and Mark 3:22-30.

In both these chapters, you will notice that the Lord Jesus had been performing wonderful miracles of healing.

His enemies came and said that He was performing these miracles by the power of the devil, instead of by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus His enemies spoke against the Holy Spirit, or blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said that there was no forgiveness for this sin, either in this age or in the age to come (His coming kingdom on earth).

The unpardonable sin, then, is blaspheming against the Holy Spirit by saying that the miracles of Jesus were done by the power of Satan rather than by the power of the Spirit of God. In other words, the unpardonable sin was charging Christ with being Satan-possessed (Mk 3:22) or demon-possessed (Mk 3:30).

It is the opinion of many reliable scholars that this sin cannot be committed today. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, for instance, says Christ is not here on earth to do such miracles at the present time; therefore the possibility of speaking against the Holy Spirit does not arise. Mr. Harold St. John (see "An Analysis of The Gospel of Mark") says, "It is debatable whether such a sin could ever be committed today. When our Lord spoke, the Holy Spirit was present in a power which streamed forth from one who was truly man; but was also God. Could such conditions ever revive?" Mr. Chafer is absolute in stating that the sin cannot be committed. Mr. St. John says it is debatable, but clearly leans towards the view that it is not possible.

The unpardonable sin does not seem to be the same as the sin unto death, mentioned in 1 John 5:16, 17. Bible scholars are not agreed as to the exact meaning of the sin unto death. Some think it is a sin which results in physical death (see James 5:14,15; 1 Cor 11:30). Others believe it is the sin of apostasy, that is, the sin of renouncing Christ after having been convinced of the truth concerning Him and after having professed faith in Him. While it is true that it is impossible to renew an apostate unto repentance (Heb 6:6), the Bible does not speak of this as the unpardonable sin. Neither does it describe a sin which results in physical death as the unpardonable sin.

A person may reject Christ many times before he is finally saved. But if he dies while still rejecting Christ, he is forever lost. Yet, this is not the unpardonable sin mentioned in Matthew 12 and Mark 3. In those passages, the unpardonable sin consisted of accusing Christ of being devil or demon possessed, and of ascribing His works to Satan.