

Godhead Class

November/December 2018

December 30: Holy Spirit Questions

Studying about the Holy Spirit can be a challenge, but it is not impossible. What makes any study about the Holy Spirit more challenging are the volumes of misinformation about Him floating about the religious world – unbiblical ideas, but covered with a facade of biblical terminology that serve to obscure biblical teaching. In this lesson, we want to examine two issues relating to the Holy Spirit – **Holy Spirit baptism** and the **sin against the Holy Spirit**.

Holy Spirit baptism is a concept often associated with Pentecostal and Assembly of God religious groups. They claim it is an action that it is an action distinct from water baptism which is evidenced by speaking in tongues.¹ While the concept is defended with biblical language, Scripture reveals that Holy Spirit baptism is something completely different than what our charismatic friends would have us believe.

John the Baptist testified to the phenomenon of Holy Spirit baptism (HSB) in Matthew 3.11, noting it would be administered by Jesus (cf. Mark 1.8; Luke 3.16). Jesus would later draw a connection between what John prophesied and what would soon occur (Acts 1.4-5; Luke 24.49). In talking about fulfilling what John prophesied, Jesus referred to HSB as a “promise” (Acts 1.4). This promise was not directed to all men generally, but to those whom Jesus chose, the apostles (Luke 24.49; Acts 1.4-5; 2.14). Not a command to which one was to submit, this promise was received by the apostles in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, just as Jesus had promised in Luke 24 and Acts 1. While our charismatic friends use biblical terminology when they speak of HSB, the reality is their concept of HSB is foreign to Scripture – HSB was a promise made by Jesus to the apostles, not all believers.

The **sin against the Holy Spirit** is a concept that has troubled people through the ages. Jesus mentions this concept in only two places in Scripture – Matthew 12.31f and to a lesser extent Luke 12.10. By looking at the Matthew 12

¹ <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Topics-Index/Baptism-in-the-Holy-Spirit>

context, we'll be able to come to a clear understanding as to what Jesus was referencing.

In Matthew 12, Jesus healed a man with a withered hand (12.13), many nameless others (12.15), and finally a person possessed by a demon (12.22). After Jesus sent out the demon, the Pharisees accused Jesus of working by the power of Beelzebub/Satan (12.24). In His scathing response to them, Jesus points out the utter ridiculousness of what they were saying – Satan casting out Satan is nonsensical and illogical (12.26). It is directly from this context that Jesus goes on to make His pronouncement about sin against the Holy Spirit. Don't lose that fact – Jesus is speaking in response to a people who saw a demon-possessed person healed and attributed that action to Satan.

When Jesus is describing this *unforgivable* sin, we must see the context. Jesus is not talking about a singular action or thought that suddenly renders us beyond the redeeming grace of God. Indeed, the rest of the NT argues against such a concept, with John passionately declaring that Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient for the redemption of all sin (1 John 2.2). No singular sin is unforgivable when encountered by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10.12-18).

How, then, are we to understand this seemingly unforgivable sin in Matthew 12? What does the context reveal? A people were so determined to overthrow the people's perception of Jesus (12.23) that they looked at what was a good, wholesome, and merciful act and they ascribed it to the father of murders, lies, and torment (12.24). These people, the Pharisees, had so hardened their hearts against the truth that they could no longer see the purity and graciousness of the Holy Spirit's work through Christ (12.28). This is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which Jesus describes as unforgivable – to harden our hearts against God to the point that we are no longer touched by the message of grace, mercy, and goodness. When we thus remove ourselves from God's grace there is nothing that avails to redeem us. Put another way – once we turn away from Christ, "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10.26). This is the *unforgivable* sin described by Christ.