

Blasphemy — What Is this Great Sin?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

For many people, one of the most fearful terms to be found in the New Testament is the word “blasphemy.”

Blasphemy is represented as a horrible sin, but what is it? Have I been guilty of it? Can one obtain pardon for it? These are serious questions that engage the attention of the devout person.

Blasphemy is an anglicized form of the Greek term *blasphemia*, which scholars believe probably derives from two roots — *blapto*, to injure, and *pheme*, to speak. The word would thus suggest injurious speech.

Contextually, though, the noun *blasphemia*, and its kindred terms—the verb *blasphemeo* and the adjective *blasphemos* — can refer to a variety of attitudes and actions. Let us consider several passages:

Blaspheming God

That one can blaspheme God is apparent from several New Testament passages.

For example, in the book of Romans Paul rebuked those wicked Jews who had been given a written revelation from God and who taught against certain vile practices, yet who nonetheless were guilty of the very sins they condemned. The apostle thus says,

“For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, because of you, even as it is written” (Rom. 2:24).

When the people of the world observe those who profess to be saints living immorally, they frequently speak injuriously against the Lord himself: “Some God he must be if his children live like that!”

Can we learn anything from this?

Similarly, Paul admonished Christian servants to honor their masters in order that “the name of God and the doctrine be not blasphemed” (1 Tim. 6:1).

So sacred is the authority of God and his doctrine, those early saints were obliged to be good slaves that such truths be not injured. The sweet influences of the Christian religion would, of course, in time cause the vile business of slavery to lose much of its grip on humanity.

But how can men otherwise blaspheme God?

Certainly those who deny his very existence blaspheme him!

“The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psa. 14:1).

Scripture speaks of those deluded souls who, in their senselessness, refuse to have God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:18ff).

To observe the great creation of which we are a part (Psa. 19:1), and then to attribute that to chance, fate, accident, or evolution is a vile form of blasphemy against its author!

Blaspheming Christ

As Christ was hanging on the cross, certain folks passed by his quivering body and “reviled him” (KJV), or “railed on him” (ASV), according to the record of Matthew 27:39. The Greek literally suggests they blasphemed (*blasphemeo*) him.

Here is what they said:

“Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days [cf. Jn. 2:19ff], save yourself: if you are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Mt. 27:40).

The apostle thus informs us that these who repudiated the **divine sonship** of Jesus were guilty of blasphemy.

If such was the rage of those ancient rebels, what shall be said of today’s rabid, slobbering modernists who deny that the humble Nazarene was born to the virgin Mary, as both Matthew and Luke affirm.

What about those who rationalize the Savior’s astounding miracles by saying they were but natural phenomena misinterpreted by a superstitious age, and those who insist that the Lord’s body still lies in some unmarked Judean grave?

Men who promote such ideas are blasphemers of the rankest variety, and yet, sadly, they occupy hundreds of pulpits in this nation of ours.

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

Christ declared,

“Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven” (Mt. 12:31).

Within this context the Lord indicated that those who spoke against him could find pardon, but those who spoke against the Spirit could not (Mt. 12:32).

Since both Christ and the Spirit are deity (Jn. 1:1; Acts 5:3, 4), why should it, within this setting, appear to be **more serious** to dishonor the Spirit than the Savior?

We believe the emphasis here has to be on the chronological aspects of their respective functions.

Though the Jews would presently crucify their Messiah, nevertheless, with the great outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the proclamation of his message of grace, thousands of them would receive pardon (Acts 2).

If, though, that kingdom of redemption, whose introduction was divinely verified by the workings of the Spirit (cf. Mt. 12:28), was repudiated, what else was there through which men could be saved? Absolutely nothing!

To harden oneself **against the gospel plan** is, therefore, blasphemy against the Spirit of God, and those who continue in such a disposition have no means of obtaining forgiveness.

But there are other ways of blaspheming the Spirit.

Would it not be a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit to deny his very personality? Indeed! Yet this is precisely what several religious cults do.

For instance, the Watchtower organization claims that the Spirit is but the impersonal “active force” of Jehovah. The Armstrong cult and Christian Science have similar bizarre notions.

Blaspheming the Word

We mentioned earlier Paul’s reference to blaspheming the doctrine of God (1 Tim. 6:1).

In a similar admonition the apostle exhorts Titus to “speak the things which befit the sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). He then proceeds to give instructions concerning the conduct that is expected of the maturer saints, both men and women.

He says, for example, among other things, that aged women are to be:

“sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Tit. 2:5).

Here, a lack of Christian fidelity can cause the divine word to be blasphemed.

Let every child of God take care! We must always remember that we are the only “Bible” that many people will read, and if they see in us shallowness, apathy, and hypocrisy, they may attribute those unholy traits to the word which we profess to believe.

Others, who arrogantly contend that the Bible is merely a collection of human works, blaspheme that holy document which is “inspired of God” (1 Tim. 3:16).

And those who allege their confidence in the Bible’s divine origin, yet who confess they believe that it is nevertheless flawed with “jars, clashes, and contradictions” also revile the infallible word.

Moreover, any person who perverts the sacred teaching of the Scriptures to accommodate his worldly lifestyle or his theological prejudices, is assaulting the holy volume!

Blaspheming the Church

In the book of Revelation, chapter thirteen, John saw a beast rising from the sea. Obviously representing an enemy of God, the beast had seven heads, upon which were “names of blasphemy” (Rev. 13:1). The apostle declares,

“And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, even them that dwell in the heaven” (Rev. 13:6).

The Old Testament tabernacle, which was a prototype of the temple, prefigured the church (Heb. 9:8-9; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21), composed of those who have been raised up with Christ to sit in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).

It is possible, therefore, according to Revelation 13:6, to blaspheme the church of God. How do men accomplish that abominable act?

It may be done in any number of ways. Though the Bible clearly teaches that Christ is the savior of the body, which is the church (Eph. 5:23; 1:22, 23), numerous religious leaders boldly announce that that blood-bought organism is but an option, that a lost person does not necessarily need to enter the church in order to enjoy the blessings of redemption.

Others blaspheme the tabernacle of God by suggesting that most any church will do. Just turn to the Yellow Pages and select yourself a good church!

One would do better to turn to the New Testament and select Christ’s church, for all churches not planted by him will ultimately be rooted up (Mt. 15:13).

Can Blasphemy Be Forgiven?

Any sin for which one seeks forgiveness through God’s prescribed plan can be forgiven. This can be demonstrated by the case of no less a person than Paul.

Prior to the time of his conversion to Jesus Christ, Saul of Tarsus was “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,” howbeit, he “obtained mercy” (1 Tim. 1:13). When he, in penitent faith, submitted to the Lord’s command to “be baptized,” his sins (including blasphemy) were washed away (Acts 22:16).

Furthermore, the same gracious promise of comprehensive pardon is available to every child of God—even those who have acted injuriously with reference to Jehovah and his cause—who will repent of his wrong, acknowledge it, and ask the Lord’s forgiveness.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”
(1 Jn. 1:9).

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Scripture References

Romans 2:24; 1 Timothy 6:1; Psalm 14:1; Romans 1:18; Psalm 19:1; Matthew 27:39; John 2:19; Matthew 27:40; Matthew 12:31; Matthew 12:32; John 1:1; Acts 5:3, 4; Acts 2; Matthew 12:28; Titus 2:1; Titus 2:5; 1 Timothy 3:16; Revelation 13:1; Revelation 13:6; Hebrews 9:8-9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21; Ephesians 2:6; Ephesians 5:23, 1:22, 23; Matthew 15:13; 1 Timothy 1:13; Acts 22:16; 1 John 1:9

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