

Matthew 12D

- Let's just pick right back up where we left off last week, at the crucial moment when Israel lost the Kingdom
 - Jesus had just healed a mute, demon-possessed man, which I explained is one of those unique miracles we call a Messianic miracle
 - The crowd immediately recognized the miracle for what it was and for what it meant
 - Notice in v.23 the crowd said, "This cannot be the Son of David, can he?"
 - They asked their religious leaders to rule on the question of whether they should trust what they just witnessed
 - So then the religious leaders responded by asserting that Jesus was operating with the power of Satan
 - In v.24 they tell the crowd that Jesus performed this surprising miracle by the power of the ruler of the demons
 - Jesus responded saying their answer was ridiculous since Satan would never act against his own demons
 - The real answer, Jesus says in v.28, was that He was working with the power of the Holy Spirit
 - And that meant that the Kingdom of God had come to Israel
 - So let's pick up there again tonight...

[Matt. 12:31](#) "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.

[Matt. 12:32](#) "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

- Jesus' words in vs. 31-32 are well known among Bible students, but they are just as commonly misunderstood
 - We call Jesus' statement the "unforgivable sin", and if you've studied this section of Scripture before, I'm sure you've heard many explanations

- Some assume Jesus was speaking of unbelief, while others suggest specific sins of one kind or another
- You can even find young people who make a game out of attempting to commit this sin intentionally
- They utter profane things against the Holy Spirit in videos that they post on the internet, claiming they are now unforgivable
- Thankfully for the sake of those misguided souls, they have grossly misunderstood this passage
- We are going to understand the passage properly by allowing the context to dictate our understanding just like for any other passage
 - Let's start with a simple definition...blasphemy is diminishing or slandering God's work, words or character
 - Blasphemy is a sin, and there are many ways one could commit the sin of blasphemy (e.g., taking the Lord's name in vain)
 - But is Jesus' suggestion we can't be forgiven for such utterances? Are those provocateurs on YouTube cut off from God's grace?
- Simply put the answer is no, and there are two reasons we can say this without a doubt
 - First, notice what Jesus says at the beginning of v.31...
 - To make sure we knew that Jesus was not referring to individual sin, He give us this explicit exception
 - He says that *any* sin and blasphemy *shall* be forgiven *people* (or we could say individuals)
 - Jesus said that any sin you or I could commit is forgivable by the blood of Christ...there are no exceptions
 - Which tells us that the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is something else entirely
 - It's not a sin that can be committed by an individual person
 - Simply put, there is no such thing as an unforgivable sin for individuals
 - Secondly, the testimony of the entire Bible confirms this conclusion

- The Bible teaches repeatedly that the blood of Christ forgives all sin past, present and future

[Col. 2:13](#) When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, **[Col. 2:14](#)** having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

- Paul says that in Christ we have been forgiven of “all” our transgressions
- No sin is left uncovered, no sin is unforgiven by faith in Christ
- Furthermore, once we are forgiven by our faith (declared not guilty by God), Paul says that declaration will never, ever change

[Rom. 8:1](#) Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- Paul teaches plainly that the believer never experiences condemnation from God once they place faith in Jesus
 - The righteousness we received by faith was won for us by Christ
 - And nothing we could ever do diminishes Christ’s righteousness
 - Therefore, the one God has justified (acquitted of sin) remains forever acquitted
- And God’s declaration of righteousness for our sake will never change

[Rom. 8:31](#) What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

[Rom. 8:32](#) He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

[Rom. 8:33](#) Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies;

[Rom. 8:34](#) who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

- Once we have been acquitted of our sin, Paul asks who could possibly condemn us at some later point?
- Who is going to overrule God, especially since Christ is interceding for us continually?

- So we know conclusively that every personal sin can be forgiven by the blood of Christ
 - So what is this unforgivable sin, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?
 - The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a term Jesus uses to describe Israel's rejection of Jesus as their King and Messiah
 - Israel blasphemed the Spirit's testimony when they claimed Jesus' miracles were done by Satan
 - Remember Jesus said He accomplished that miracle of healing the mute demon-possessed man by the power of the Spirit of God
 - Then the Pharisees' claimed that Jesus performed His miracle by the power of Satan
 - And Matthew said the crowd agreed with the Pharisees' explanation
 - So both the religious leaders of Israel and the crowd slandered the testimony of the Holy Spirit by calling it the work of Satan
 - That's blaspheming the Holy Spirit, the unforgivable sin of Israel rejecting their King
 - The consequence of that national sin was the nation losing the opportunity to see the Kingdom appear in their lifetime
 - There would be no second chance for Israel to receive the Kingdom
- As a result of that error, the Lord withdraws the offer of the Kingdom for that generation of Israel
 - Remember, I said last week that Jesus wasn't going to walk around Galilee offering the Kingdom forever
 - Either Israel embraces Jesus as Messiah and receives the Kingdom or they don't
 - Sooner or later His offer was going to expire, and when Israel blasphemed Jesus' Messianic miracle, time ran out
 - And there would be no second chance for that generation... their sin of refusing the King was unforgivable

- In fact, notice Jesus says at the end of v.32 that Israel won't see the Kingdom appear in this age or in the age to come
 - The present age refers to the period of Jesus walking the earth offering the Kingdom to Israel...that opportunity was gone
 - But Jesus adds that Israel's sin wouldn't be forgiven in the age to come either...what is the age to come?
- Jesus can't be speaking of the Kingdom age that comes after Christ's Second Coming, because the Bible says Israel will be present in that age
 - So the age to come is a reference to a period of history after Jesus departs the earth...a time we call the Church age
 - During the Church age, the Kingdom becomes a program of reaching the Gentiles, as Matthew reminded us earlier
 - During this age Israel would continue to suffer the consequences of their unforgivable sin
- Paul describes it this way

Rom. 11:7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

Rom. 11:8 just as it is written,

"GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR,
EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT,
DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY."

Rom. 11:9 And David says,

"LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP,
AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM."

Rom. 11:10 "LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT,
AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

Rom. 11:11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- Israel's unforgivable sin has resulted in the Lord hardening the hearts of His people for a time
- Which gives opportunity for the Gospel to come to Gentiles

- But let me emphasize, we're talking about a *national* sin with a *national* consequence, not a personal sin that condemns someone to hell
 - Israel's national sin doesn't preclude individual Jews from being forgiven and receiving salvation by placing faith in Jesus
 - We see proof of this clearly in the New Testament
 - Think of all the Jews who were part of the nation that rejected Jesus yet still came to saving faith in Jesus later
 - Examples include Jesus' earthly brothers (like James and Jude), the Apostle Paul, to say nothing of all 3,000 Jews at Pentecost...
 - These Jews were in the nation of Israel, so they were a party to the nation's unforgivable sin of rejecting Jesus as King
 - Like the rest of the nation, they too suffered the penalty of failing to see the Kingdom appear in their day
 - Nevertheless, they could still be forgiven personally when they placed their faith in Jesus
 - And that continues today as Jews come to faith in Jesus
- In v.32 Jesus confirms that personal salvation will still be possible
 - Jesus says that a word spoken against the Son of Man shall be forgiven
 - A word spoken against the Son of Man refers to rejecting the Person of Jesus
 - When Israel spoke a word against the "Son of Man", the Lord was prepared to forgive Israel for that rejection on a personal level
 - Just as when someone rejects Jesus today, they can still be forgiven if they come to faith later
 - The only deadline for individual forgiveness is the death of the body
 - We are appointed to die once, then comes judgment
 - That's why the unforgivable sin can't be repeated today...
 - Because it's impossible to recreate the circumstances of Israel's national sin

- So having declared the end of the Kingdom offer, Jesus now condemns this generation of Israel for having lost the Kingdom

Matt. 12:33 “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.

Matt. 12:34 “You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

Matt. 12:35 “The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil.

- Beginning in v.33 Jesus speaks as a prosecutor making His case against the nation and declaring judgment against them
 - Jesus starts by indicting their poor judge of authority, saying they should either make the tree good or make it bad
 - If Jesus was a man working with Satan, as the Pharisees claimed, then call Jesus evil and call His work evil
 - But Jesus’ deeds weren’t evil...and the crowd knew that
 - They followed Him everywhere begging Him to heal them and they were astonished at His wisdom
 - They knew Him to be good, kind, merciful and loving
 - Yet when the Pharisees’ suggested Jesus was possessed by a demon, the crowd immediately embraced that suggestion
 - But Jesus says you can’t have it both ways...bad trees produce bad fruit, good trees good fruit
 - So if Jesus’ fruit was good, then He must be a good “tree” and therefore they should have rejected the counsel of their leaders
 - Conversely, the Pharisees’ fruit spoke for itself
 - In v.34 Jesus uses a phrase first offered by John the Baptist...calling the Pharisees a brood of vipers
 - That was a not-so-subtle way of calling them children of the devil, the serpent from the garden
 - They were evil men who spoke evil and did evil and the people knew that from years of watching those men operate

- The hypocrisy and pride and greed of these men wasn't hard to see, nevertheless, they sided with the Pharisees over Jesus
- So then Jesus formally pronounces judgment on the nation

[Matt. 12:36](#) "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.

[Matt. 12:37](#) "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

- Jesus says that every careless word that people speak will be held against them on the day of judgment
 - Jesus says this generation will be convicted by its statement that Jesus is the devil
 - There is probably nothing they could have said more offensive to God than that statement
 - Jesus is the Name above all Names, the King above all Kings, the Alpha, the Omega, and the Creator
 - Jesus literally made those men and every person in that crowd... He is their Creator
 - Moreover, Jesus is the Salvation of men, the perfect sacrifice, the healer, provider, the light of the world and the perfect love of God
 - On the other hand, the devil is the author of all the evil the world has ever known
 - He is great liar and deceiver who brought misery and chaos into God's perfect creation...a murderer from the beginning
 - You could not imagine two opposites more diametrically opposed than Jesus and Satan
 - So Jesus convicts that generation declaring their careless words would bring judgment upon them
 - Those words might have been spoken carelessly, without much thought, but that did not lessen the offense
 - The nation would suffer great loss over hundreds and thousands of years...because of those careless words

- That's how God's justice works...our sins are ever present even from childhood
 - But in the end we all will be justified or convicted by our words
 - By our confession of Christ we may be forgiven, and by our refusal to repent and confess, we will be convicted

Luke 12:8 "And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God;

Luke 12:9 but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

- Now at this point, the Pharisees try to recover a bit by engaging in a conversation with Jesus about their desire for more proof of His claims
 - In vs.38-50 Jesus denies their request by pointing out they aren't being sincere in their request nor have they lacked for signs
 - We will cover that conversation next week, and it will be a powerful footnote to this moment
 - But for the time remaining today, we need to cover one more interaction that Matthew doesn't record at this point
 - After Israel commits the unforgivable sin, Jesus issues a national condemnation
 - Matthew doesn't record the first time Jesus issues this national condemnation
 - Matthew records the second time Jesus speaks it near the end of His earthly life in Matthew 23
 - But Luke records the first occurrence that happened in this context, which we find at the end of Chapter 13

Luke 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!

Luke 13:35 "Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

- Jesus spoke these words as a lament against the nation knowing they had just rejected their King and Kingdom
 - Jesus begins with “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem” and we can sense His disappointment for His people
 - The city of Jerusalem represents the whole nation, which the Lord prepared for centuries to receive their King
 - He sent them prophet after prophet with the word of God telling Israel what would come one day, so they wouldn’t miss it
 - And time and time again the nation responded to the grace of God by rejecting the message and assaulting the messenger
 - The prophets were consistently mistreated and even murdered by the very people they were trying to help
 - Hebrews 11 reminds us of how the godly in Israel suffered terribly at the hands of the Jewish people
 - Time and time again Israel responded to the Lord’s grace and love for His people whose evil hearts were filled with malice and deceit
 - Yet all the Lord was seeking was to gather His people together like a mother hen gathering chicks together
 - Jesus chose a perfect comparison, because hens are renown for their mothering instincts

In the first century AD, the Roman historian Plutarch praised the many ways in which mother hens cherish and protect their chicks, “drooping their wings for some to creep under, and receiving with joyous and affectionate clucks others that mount upon their backs or run up to them from every direction; and though they flee from dogs and snakes if they are frightened only for themselves, if their fright is for their children, they stand their ground and fight it out beyond their strength.”

The Renaissance writer Ulisse Aldrovandi described how, at the first sign of a predator, mother hens will immediately gather their chicks “under the shadow of their wings, and with this covering they put up such a very fierce defense – striking fear into their opponent in the midst of a frightful clamor, using both wings and beak – they would rather die for their chicks than seek safety in flight.” Similarly, in collecting food, the mother hen allows her chicks to eat their fill before satisfying her

own hunger. Thus, he said, mother hens present, in every way, “a noble example of love for their offspring.”

- Israel was so hard-hearted they failed to recognize Christ’s loving desire to brood over His children protecting, nourishing, loving them
 - After all, that’s why Christ lowered Himself
 - He left His place in Heaven to take the form of man so that He could present Himself to His people as their King
- But Jesus says Israel would not have it...Israel rejected Jesus and His offer of the Kingdom
 - I wonder what gave them such ignorance...did they not understand what was at risk? Did they not value what Christ was offering?
 - What causes anyone to turn their back on something so great as the love and care of God?
 - In despair Jesus reluctantly accepted Israel's decision, though it pained Jesus to turn His back on Israel
 - Nevertheless, they turned their back on Him first, and justice will be done, because a perfect God can do no less
 - So in v.35 Jesus declares that Israel’s house was left desolate
 - Desolate means like a desert, a wasteland, empty and dry
 - And the term house is a reference to both the temple specifically and the nation’s place in the land generally
 - So Jesus was promising that as a result of Israel’s national rejection of Him, the temple and the land would become empty
 - We know when this happened, historically
 - In AD 70 the Roman army invaded the land to put down a Jewish rebellion
 - When the fighting ended, the city of Jerusalem was in ruins and the temple itself was razed to its foundations
 - We will study more of that moment in Matthew 24

- In the decades that followed, the Jewish people were pushed further and further out of the land until in AD 134 Jews were barred from the land
 - And in the centuries that followed, Jews were virtually absent in the land of Israel
 - Truly, as Jesus foretold, Israel's house became desolate as a result of their national sin of rejecting their King
- But as terrible as that judgment was for God's people, notice that Jesus leaves open the door of hope at the end of His declaration
 - At the end of v.35 Jesus says "you will not see me until the time comes you say..."
 - Let's understand what Jesus is saying...He's talking to the same nation of people who had just rejected His offer
 - So "you" refers to the nation of Israel, and Jesus says that nation could "see" Jesus again
 - That word see is important, because to see someone indicates they are physically present
 - So Jesus is offering to come to earth again for Israel, to once more be physically present
 - And He offers to do so for Israel again at a future time
 - Which means all is not lost for the nation...they lost the Kingdom in the present age and the age to come
 - But they haven't lost it forever...there is a way that a future generation of Israel can have the Kingdom they were promised
 - Jesus says they must say, "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord"
 - Those aren't magic words...Jesus is referring to a future moment when the nation reverses their sin of rejecting Jesus
 - Instead of denying the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the nation will accept the Spirit's revelation and embrace Jesus as Messiah
 - Psalm 118 is a prophetic script, the words that Israel will declare in a future day when the nation receives Jesus as Messiah

- Jesus says that when the nation experiences this moment, then He will return for His people
- And upon His return, Jesus will bring that future generation of Israel the Kingdom that this generation lost
- What we're learning is that Christ's Second Coming and the establishment of the Kingdom as a place, is dependent on Israel's future acceptance of Jesus
 - To put it simply, Jesus departed the earth because Israel rejected Him as King
 - And Jesus returns to Earth when Israel receives Him as King
 - So today we are engaged in the Kingdom program, seeking to recruit men and women to faith in Jesus
 - So that in a future day when the Lord returns and sets up His Kingdom on earth, those Kingdom citizens can walk into the Kingdom with us
 - But now you know that the timing of that fateful day depends on Israel
 - That nation remains at the center of God's plan
 - Because they rejected their Lord, we have our opportunity to receive the Gospel
 - And when the nation eventually receives Jesus as Lord, we will then see the Kingdom appear
 - And in a day to come, the Lord will pour His Spirit on Jewish people so they come to recognize Jesus as their Messiah
 - They will cry out to Him, as Psalm 118 records, and Jesus says He will return to them in mercy and grace
 - And then this age ends and the next begins
 - Paul summarizes this way

Rom. 11:11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

Rom. 11:12 Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

- Does the love of God know any limit, any boundary?

- He tells us of His plans, He keeps His word, He covers every sin
 - And He chases His people over centuries of time and thousands of miles to bring them to Himself like a mother hen
 - And all He asks of us is a confession, a word of faith to accept in faith what He has revealed to us
- That's the God we worship
 - Christ is a God we can trust, a God we should obey, a God that loves you beyond time and space...and He's coming back soon