

**Better: A Study of Hebrews – Chapter 6:1-12**  
**Pleasant View Church of Christ – Winter / Spring 2025**

**The Greater Mediator (Chapters 1 to 7)**

Greater Than the Priests (4:14 to 7:28)

**Elementary Doctrine**

-Heb 5:12-14

- (1) Repentance from *dead works*  
-Acts 2:38; 17:30  
-Gal 5:19-21  
-Jam 1:21
- (2) Faith toward God  
-Rom 3:21-26  
-Eph 2:8-9
- (3) Washings →
- (4) Laying on of hands  
-Acts 8:14-17; 19:5-7  
-Rom 1:11-12  
-2Ti 1:6-7
- (5) Resurrection of the dead  
-Acts 17:29-32  
-1Co 15:20
- (6) Eternal judgment  
-Mt 25:31-46

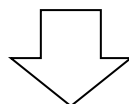
**Therefore** let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of **repentance** <sup>(1)</sup> *from dead works* and of **faith** <sup>(2)</sup> *toward God*, <sup>(3)</sup> and of instruction about **washings**, the **laying on of hands**, <sup>(4)</sup> the **resurrection of the dead**, and **eternal judgment**. <sup>(5)</sup> <sup>(6)</sup> And this we will do if God permits.

Warning About Falling Away

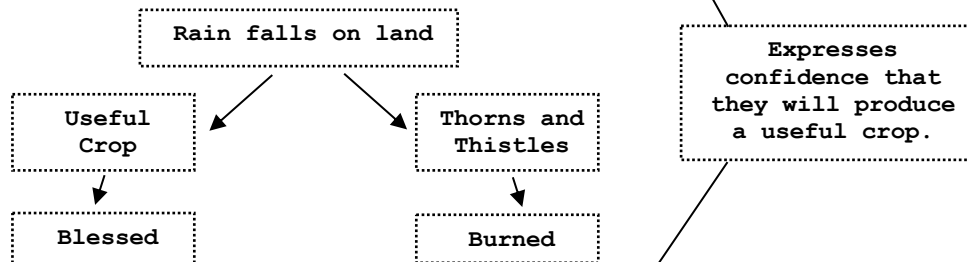
<sup>4</sup>For it is **impossible** in the case of those who have **once been enlightened**, who have **tasted the heavenly gift**, and have **shared in the Holy Spirit**, <sup>5</sup>and have **tasted the goodness** of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, <sup>6</sup>and **then have fallen away**, to **restore them again to repentance**, since they are **crucifying once again the Son of God** to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Illustration from Agriculture

Mt 13:1-8, 18-23



<sup>7</sup>For land that has **drunk the rain that often falls on it**, and **produces a crop** useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a **blessing from God**. <sup>8</sup>But if it bears **thorns and thistles**, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be **burned**.



<sup>9</sup>Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we **feel sure** of **better things**—things that **belong to salvation**. <sup>10</sup>For **God is not unjust** so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in **serving the saints, as you still do**. <sup>11</sup>And we desire each one of you to **show the same earnestness** to have the full assurance of hope until the end, <sup>12</sup>so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Mt 25:31-46

What are "washings"?

- Plural
- βαπτισμός (*baptismos*)
- Translations**
- "baptisms" - NIV84, NRSV, KJV, NKJV
- "washings" - NASB, ESV
- \*Jewish Ritual Washings?**
- Ex 19:10; 30:17-21
- Lev 15:19-30
- Num 19:18-19
- Heb 9:10
- \*Proselyte Baptism?**
- \*Baptisms mentioned in the New Testament?**
- (1) The baptism of the Holy Spirit  
-Mt 3:11
- (2) The baptism of fire  
-Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16
- (3) The baptism of John the Baptist  
-Acts 19:2-4
- (4) The baptism into Christ  
-Matt 28:16-20  
-Acts 2:38  
-Rom 6:1-4
- One Baptism (Eph 4:4-6)  
- Which one is the ONE?

His confidence is based on God being just:  
-Deut 32:4  
-Isa 45:21  
-Pss 11:7; 116:5; 145:17  
-Ezra 9:15; Neh 9:8

## Hebrews Chapter 6 - Questions for Discussion

What are the six things mentioned as “elementary principles of Christ?” Explain.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

What does the author mean by “baptisms?”

In what way is it impossible for someone to be restored once they fall away as described in verses 4-8? (vv. 4-8; 10:26-27; I John 1:8-9; 5:16-17)

- How would one “crucify again for themselves the Son of God?”
- How does this relate to “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?” Why is it unpardonable? (vv. Matt 12:22-32; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 12:8-10)
- What is the chief offense against the Spirit? (vv. John 16:8-14)

What did the Hebrew writer promise that God would not forget? (v. 10)

What is the “full assurance of hope?” (v. 11)

## Teacher's Notes

### Elementary Doctrine

#### Hebrews 5:12–14 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, <sup>13</sup> for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.

<sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

### Repentance from dead works

#### Acts 2:38 (ESV)

<sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

#### Acts 17:30 (ESV)

<sup>30</sup> The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,

#### Galatians 5:19–21 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

#### James 1:21 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

### Faith toward God

#### Romans 3:21–26 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his

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righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

**Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

**Washings**

**968** βαπτισμός (*baptismos*), οὔ (*ou*), ὁ (*ho*): n.masc.; ≡ Str 909; TDNT 1.545—**1.** LN 53.31 **washing**, ceremonial cleansing (Mk 7:4; Heb 9:10+; Mk 7:8 v.r.); **2.** LN 53.41 **baptism** (Col 2:12; Heb 6:2+)<sup>1</sup>

**909.** βαπτισμός **baptismos**; from 907; (the act of) *a dipping or washing*:—washing(1), washings(2).<sup>2</sup>

**Hebrews 6:2 (NASB95)**

<sup>2</sup> of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

**Hebrews 6:2 (NIV84)**

<sup>2</sup> instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

**Hebrews 6:2 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

**Hebrews 6:2 (NRSV)**

<sup>2</sup> instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

**Hebrews 6:2 (KJV 1900)**

<sup>2</sup> Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

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<sup>1</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). [\*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)\*](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, R. L. (1998). [\*New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition\*](#). Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

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**JEWISH RITUAL WASHINGS?**

**Exodus 19:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments

**Exodus 30:17–21 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>18</sup> “You shall also make a basin of bronze, with its stand of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it, <sup>19</sup> with which Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. <sup>20</sup> When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering to the LORD, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. <sup>21</sup> They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die. It shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his offspring throughout their generations.”

**Leviticus 15:19–30 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> “When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. <sup>20</sup> And everything on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean. Everything also on which she sits shall be unclean. <sup>21</sup> And whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. <sup>22</sup> And whoever touches anything on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. <sup>23</sup> Whether it is the bed or anything on which she sits, when he touches it he shall be unclean until the evening. <sup>24</sup> And if any man lies with her and her menstrual impurity comes upon him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

<sup>25</sup> “If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. <sup>26</sup> Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity. And everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her menstrual impurity. <sup>27</sup> And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. <sup>28</sup> But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. <sup>29</sup> And on the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. <sup>30</sup> And the priest shall use one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge.

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**Numbers 19:18–19 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> Then a clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water and sprinkle it on the tent and on all the furnishings and on the persons who were there and on whoever touched the bone, or the slain or the dead or the grave. <sup>19</sup> And the clean person shall sprinkle it on the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day. Thus on the seventh day he shall cleanse him, and he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and at evening he shall be clean.

**Hebrews 9:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

**TYPES OF BAPTISM MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

**THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**Matthew 3:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

**THE BAPTISM OF FIRE**

**Matthew 3:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

**Luke 3:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

**THE BAPTISM OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (ACTS 19:2-4)**

**Acts 19:2–4 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” <sup>3</sup> And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” <sup>4</sup> And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.”

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**THE BAPTISM INTO JESUS CHRIST**

**Matthew 28:16–20 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Acts 2:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 6:1–4 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

**ONE BAPTISM (EPH 4:4-6) - WHICH ONE IS THE ONE?**

**Ephesians 4:4–6 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

**The Laying on of the Apostles hands**

**Acts 8:14–17 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup> who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 19:5–7 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. <sup>7</sup> There were about twelve men in all.

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**Romans 1:11–12 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—  
<sup>12</sup> that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

**2 Timothy 1:6–7 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, <sup>7</sup> for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Resurrection of the dead

**Acts 2:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 6:1–4 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Eternal judgment

**Matthew 25:31–46 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? <sup>38</sup> And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'



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<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ <sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

## Blasphemy of the Spirit

### Matthew 12:22–32 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. <sup>23</sup> And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” <sup>24</sup> But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.” <sup>25</sup> Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. <sup>28</sup> But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. <sup>29</sup> Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. <sup>30</sup> Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. <sup>31</sup> Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. <sup>32</sup> And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

### Mark 3:22–30 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.” <sup>23</sup> And he called them to him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. <sup>27</sup> But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

<sup>28</sup> “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, <sup>29</sup> but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — <sup>30</sup> for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

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**Luke 12:8–10 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> “And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, <sup>9</sup> but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. <sup>10</sup> And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

**There can be NO neutrality in our relationship with Jesus (Mt 7:13-14)**

**KEY QUESTIONS**

- *What does “blasphemes against the Holy Spirit” mean? Why is it unpardonable?*
- *What is the chief offense against the Spirit?*
- *Why can those who speak against the Son of Man be forgiven, but not against the Spirit?*
- *What happens if we “accidentally” commit this sin?*

**SIN THAT LEADS TO DEATH**

**1 John 5:16–17 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. <sup>17</sup> All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

**CONTINUING TO CRUCIFY / CONTINUING TO SIN**

**Hebrews 6:4–6 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup> and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, <sup>6</sup> and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

**Hebrews 10:26–27 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

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**CONVICT MEN OF SIN, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUDGMENT / GLORIFY CHRIST**

**John 16:8–14 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

<sup>12</sup> “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

**FORGIVENESS OF SINS IF WE CONFESS**

**1 John 1:8–9 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**TWO WAYS / GATES**

**Matthew 7:13–14 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

**The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8 (Matthew 12:30-32)**

**30** Here several of Jesus' sayings are aphoristic. Their relation to the pericope is internal, not grammatical; and the relation to what precedes goes back to the tradition itself and cannot be ascribed to Matthew (cf. Luke 11:23).

The general thrust of v. 30 is straightforward: **in our relationship to Jesus there can be no neutrality**. As to some issues and persons, neutrality is possible and may even be wise. But in the great struggle (vv. 25–29), neutrality is impossible. The claims of the kingdom and the demands of Jesus are so exclusivistic that to be indifferent or apathetic to him is to be on the side of those who do not confess that he is the Messiah who brings in the kingdom of God (cf. 11:16–24). Jesus' claim implies a high christology, which is underlined by the harvest figure in v. 30b (cf. 3:12; 6:26; John 4:36). Jesus is the one who will harvest in the last days, a function the OT regularly assigns to God. Hill (*Matthew*) objects to the authenticity of the setting of this saying on the grounds that an affirmation about the impossibility of neutrality with respect to Jesus "is hardly likely to have been addressed to implacable opponents such as the Pharisees." But crowds were also present (Mt 12:23). And this form of statement could serve as both a rebuke to the Pharisees and a warning to the questioning crowd (v. 23) that failure to follow Jesus wholeheartedly is as dangerous as outright opposition.

The inverted saying—"whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40; Luke 9:50)—and this one "are not contradictory if the one was spoken to the indifferent about themselves and the other to the disciples about someone else" (McNeile).

**31–32** "And so"—*dia touto* (lit., "on account of this")—ties the statements about blasphemy against the Spirit (v. 31) to the preceding verse. But the transition cannot easily be readily grasped till vv. 31–32 are understood. Introduced by the solemn "I tell you" (see on 5:18), these statements constitute a pair, one from Mark (Mt 12:31 = Mark 3:28), one from Q (Mt 12:32 = Luke 12:10, in a different context; cf. comment, above). "Blasphemy" is extreme slander (see on 9:3), equivalent to "speaking against" (cf. 12:32). Blasphemy against God was viewed by Jews with utmost gravity (26:65); but here Jesus makes a sharp distinction between blasphemy against the Son of Man, which is forgivable, and blasphemy against the Spirit, which is not.

His statement is remarkable because one of the glories of the biblical faith is the great emphasis Scripture lays on the graciousness and wideness of God's forgiveness (e.g., Pss 65:3; 86:5; 130:3–4; Isa 1:18; Mic 7:19; 1 John 1:7). A common interpretation of Mt 12:31–32 is that they originated with a Christian prophet speaking for the exalted Jesus and are here read back into the life of the earthly Jesus. The blasphemy against the Son of Man is rejection of him by nonbelievers, and this is clearly forgivable when a person becomes a Christian. But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is committed by a Christian (Christians after Pentecost would understand that only believers enjoy the Spirit) and is equivalent either to apostasy or to rejection of a Christian prophet's inspired message. For this there is no forgiveness (so Stendahl, Peake, 684q; and in a highly structured

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scheme, M.E. Boring, “The Unforgivable Sin Logion Mark III 28–29/Matt XII 31–32/Luke XII 10: Formal Analysis and History of the Tradition,” *NovTest* 18 [1976]: 258–79).

But there is strong and consistent evidence that the writers of the NT did not read words of Christian prophets back into the life of the historical Jesus (cf. esp. Bonnard; J.D.G. Dunn, “Prophetic ‘I’-Sayings and the Jesus Tradition: The Importance of Testing Prophetic Utterances within Early Christianity,” *NTS* 24 [1978]: 175–98). It is highly unlikely that “Son of Man” would be used as an object of blasphemy without some qualifications about “Son of Man” (i.e., as “earthly Jesus only,” etc.), which do not appear until Origen. Moreover this does not explain what these sayings are doing in their Gospel contexts (esp. Mark and Matthew).

The views of many older conservative scholars are also unhelpful. Broadus, for instance, ties blasphemy against the Holy Spirit to the “age of miracles” when the Spirit’s power could be directly perceived—and rejected. But apart from the question of whether miracles take place now, Jesus elsewhere warned that miracles are not *necessarily* the criterion of true discipleship (7:21–23), i.e., they do not *necessarily* reveal the Spirit’s presence and power.

Among the many other interpretations of this difficult incident, the best treats it in its setting during Jesus’ life. The Pharisees have been attributing to Satan the work of the Spirit and have been doing so, as Jesus makes plain, in such a way as to reveal that they speak, not, out of ignorance or unbelief, but out of a “conscious disputing of the indisputable” (the phrase is from G.C. Berkouwer, *Sin* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], p. 340; cf. pp. 323–53, to which this exposition is indebted).

The distinction between blasphemy against the Son of Man and blasphemy against the Spirit is not that the Son of Man is less important than the Spirit, or that the first sin is prebaptismal and the second postbaptismal, still less that the first is against the Son of Man and the second rejects the authority of Christian prophets. Instead, within the context of the larger argument the first sin is rejection of the truth of the gospel (but there may be repentance and forgiveness for that), whereas the second sin is rejection of the same truth in full awareness that that is exactly what one is doing—thoughtfully, willfully, and self-consciously rejecting the work of the Spirit even though there can be no other explanation of Jesus’ exorcisms than that. For such a sin there is no forgiveness, “either in this age or the age to come” (cf. 13:22; 25:46)—a dramatic way of saying “never” (as in Mark 3:29).

If this interpretation is correct, the distinction between Son of Man and Spirit is relatively incidental. After all, blasphemy against the Spirit is also a rejection of Jesus’ own claims: the christological] implications of the sin are not diminished but increased in moving from “blasphemy against the Son of Man” to “blasphemy against the Spirit.” This provides a clue for understanding how the unforgivable sin of which Jesus here speaks compares with the sins referred to in Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:26–31; and possibly 1 John 5:16. In each instance there is self-conscious perception of where the truth lies and

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the light shines—and a willful turning away from it. This is very different from Paul’s persecution of the church (1 Cor 15:9), which was not unforgivable (1 Tim 1:13).

C.K. Barrett (*The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* [London: SPCK, 1966], pp. 106–7) discusses this matter wisely, except for his assumption that the sin is committed within the church and “because it denies the root and spring of the Church’s life, cannot rediscover the forgiveness by which the sinner first entered the community of the forgiven.” But the biblical texts are more subtle than that. The author of Hebrews says, with a surprising combination of tenses, “We have come [perfect] to share in Christ if we hold firmly [aorist subjunctive] to the end the confidence we had at first” (Heb 3:14). In other words our past participation in the blessings of the gospel is valid only if we continue in it. John presupposes the same thing—that those who leave the church show that they never really belonged in it (1 John 2:19; 2 John 9). Even Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:26–31 shows how much of the truth may be grasped, how much of the life of the age to come may be sampled, without coming to the place from which there is no turning back (cf. Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], in loc.). This is apostasy, and it involves a break with what one has formally adhered to.

The universal witness of the NT is that apostasy if persisted in not only damns but shows that salvation was never real in the first place. The NT reveals how close one may come to the kingdom—tasting, touching, perceiving, understanding. And it also shows that to come this far and reject the truth is unforgivable. So it is here. Jesus charges that those who perceive that his ministry is empowered by the Spirit and then, for whatever reason—whether spite, jealousy, or arrogance—ascribe it to Satan, have put themselves beyond the pale. For them there is no forgiveness, and that is the verdict of the one who has authority to forgive sins (9:5–8).

The significance of the transitional words “And so” now becomes plain. Neutrality to Jesus is actually opposition to him (v. 30); and therefore Jesus gives this warning regarding those who blaspheme against the Spirit, since the self-professedly neutral person may not recognize the inherent danger of his position<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, pp. 290–292). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

**Coffman's Commentaries on the Bible (Matthew 12:31-32)**

**Verse 31**

**Therefore, I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.**

There is an unpardonable transgression, and here is an example of it, "blasphemy against the Spirit." Boles' comments that the passage speaks not of "a sin against,"<sup>[7]</sup> but of "blasphemy against" the Spirit does not exclude a class of sins which are unforgivable and known collectively as "the sin" against the Holy Spirit. From the gospel of Mark comes, "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of **AN ETERNAL SIN**; because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" ([Mark 3:29,30](#)). Significantly, Mark spoke not of "the" but "an" eternal sin, showing that the transgression under consideration in this place is one of a class of sins designated as "eternal."

We shall note the whole class of eternal sins first and then consider the example of it, committed by the Pharisees.

The word of God teaches:

(1) "There is a sin unto death; not concerning this do I say that he should make request" ([1 John 5:16](#)). Note that John spoke not of sin "until," but "unto" death. Such a sin is, therefore, not **UNTIL** physical death, but it is **UNTO** spiritual death.

(2) "For, as touching those who were once enlightened, and tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then fall away, it is impossible to renew them" ([Hebrews 6:4-6](#)).

(3) "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" ([1 Timothy 5:6 KJV](#)).

(4) And regarding certain violations of the Lord's table, Paul declared, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and some sleep" ([1 Corinthians 11:30](#)). "Sleep" in this place is a euphemistic expression for death.

(5) That the Holy Spirit in one's heart can be "quenched" is evident from the admonition, "Quench not the Spirit" ([1 Thessalonians 5:19](#)).

(6) Concerning apostates, "The last state is become worse with them than the first" ([2 Peter 2:20,21](#)), indicating a condition worse than being lost, and which is fulfilled only by being lost without possibility of recovery. Now of this general condition, variously described as death while one lives, a sin unto death, the quenching of the Spirit, worse than being an alien sinner, and impossible to renew, and for which there is no need to pray - all such sins qualify for Mark's description, "an eternal sin."

What, then, is **THE** sin that does all this? It may be any sin, hence the deadly and dangerous nature of all sin. In the physical world, what is **THE** fatal disease? It is the one the doctor writes on the death certificate, and may be any one of a countless number of

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maladies. The analogy holds in the spiritual realm; and the eternal sin is the one that destroys the soul of the sinner. That such may occur even while physical life is extended appears certain from all of the references noted above.

Now, with reference to blasphemy against the Spirit, Christ named it as "an eternal sin," making it unforgivable. It was not the only sin that could have destroyed the Pharisees, but it is the one that did. The peculiar aggravation of their wickedness springs from their reviling Christ although they knew him to be righteous. Contrary to what they **KNEW**, they said he had an unclean spirit. They put falsehood for truth, darkness for light, evil for righteousness, and shut their eyes and hearts against the Lord. Their blasphemy was of a kind that blotted out the hope of heaven; and there can be little doubt that the same type of blind, senseless opposition to the Lord today would have the very same consequences.

Acknowledgment of the influence of the highly-esteemed Grover Cleveland Brewer in the understanding of this difficult question, is hereby registered. His convincing sermons on this subject are reflected in the above comments.

Seven different sins against the Holy Spirit may be noted in these references: (1) lusting against ([Galatians 5:16](#));(2) resisting ([Acts 7:51](#)), (3) grieving ([Ephesians 4:30](#)); (4) lying to ([Acts 5:3](#)); (5) insulting ([Hebrews 10:24](#)); (6) blaspheming against ([Mark 3:29](#)); and (7) quenching ([1 Thessalonians 5:19](#)). It might be assumed that Ananias and Sapphira ([Acts 5:3](#)) committed an eternal sin, but it is not so stated in the word of God. It is implicit, however, in the very nature of all sin that **ANY SIN**, persisted in, can result in quenching the sacred fire within the soul and issue at last in eternal death.

### **Verse 32**

**And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.**

Many did speak against Christ, but when the Spirit of God came of Pentecost, they obeyed the gospel message and were saved. Those who spoke against the Spirit, rejecting the gospel which he delivered through the apostles, were not saved. No other means of redemption was given. Those who rejected the Spirit received no forgiveness then, or ever. One should avoid reading into this passage any hope that some sins will be forgiven in the world to come which remain unforgiven now. We agree with Boles. "No sin, unforgiven here, or in this world, will be pardoned or forgiven hereafter."<sup>[8]<sup>4</sup></sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on [Matthew 12:4](#)". "Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament". "www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/matthew-12.html". Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.



**Gospel Advocate: A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew**  
**(H Leo Boles) – Matthew 12:31-32**

31, 32 **Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy.** —This is Jesus' conclusion and application of his teaching. "Blasphemy" is injurious and malicious speaking against God or his attributes; to blaspheme in the scripture sense denotes improper and unworthy speeches against God, his attributes, works, or temple; it means to ascribe to God the weaknesses of men, or to attribute to men the perfections and works of God. Here Jesus fixes a limit of divine mercy. What is "the blasphemy against the Spirit"? Mark 3:30 tells us that the Pharisees had been guilty of blasphemy "because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." This sin was maliciously ascribing a miracle of divine power to the power of Beelzebub. It is not said here "a sin against," but "blasphemy against," which is explained by "speak against the Holy Spirit." The "blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven," but "every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men" but the one "against the Holy Spirit." Man may speak "a word against the Son of man" and "it shall be forgiven him," but "whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." There has been much speculation about "the unpardonable sin" and "the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit." Jesus came in the flesh, dwelt among men, and revealed the will of God to man. God the Father revealed his will to the Jews through Moses, and Jesus revealed the will of God to us. The Holy Spirit was to come in person and complete the work of Jesus. He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you. And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (John 16:7, 8.) Many misunderstood Jesus, his teachings, and his kingdom while he was on earth, and even denied him as being the Messiah, who afterwards repented and were pardoned, and became Christians. (Acts 2:37, 38; Acts 9:1, 17.) Many could and did reject Jesus while he was on earth, but when the Holy Spirit came and testified of him, they accepted Christ. But when the Holy Spirit came and gave the complete will of God, if men rejected this, there was no other evidence to be furnished, no other divine agency to be given, and if they finally rejected the Holy Spirit, there was no forgiveness for them. There was no forgiveness "neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." Mark says "hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." (Mark 3:29.) No sin unforgiven here or in this world will be pardoned or forgiven hereafter.

[God bore testimony to men through the Old Testament scriptures; Jesus Christ bore testimony in person, given in the New Testament; and he stated that his testimony was incomplete, and he would send the Holy Spirit to complete or perfect that testimony. (John 16:7, 8, 13, 14.) (Read also John 14:14, 20-27; 15:26; 16:8.) They all teach that neither the revelations of the Father nor the Son were complete to guide into life eternal, save as people received the teachings of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would come, perfect the testimony, and guide into all truth. Without this guidance being followed, they could not know the full faith of God. It is in perfect harmony with all these scriptures and with all the facts recorded in the Bible for Jesus, when they charged him

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with acting by the power of the devil, to warn them that they might do this now to him and find forgiveness; but if they so rejected and treated the Holy Spirit when he came, there would be no forgiveness, for there would be no more testimony and no more opportunity to repent. It refers, of course, to the final rejection of the will of God. To reject the will of God was to sin against God, to reject the words of Jesus was to sin against him, and to reject the teachings of the Holy Spirit was to sin against the Holy Spirit.

To blaspheme is to oppose and speak against. Many construe this to mean that Jesus defined the attributing the works of Jesus to the evil power as the sin against the Holy Spirit; but the Bible does not say so, nor anything that implies this. Read Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10. All classes and kinds of men, those that maligned, persecuted, and abused Jesus in every form and manner were warned and exhorted by the Holy Spirit to turn to Jesus and live. Paul was a persecutor and blasphemer of the Lord Jesus and sought the destruction of the whole church of God. Jesus did not mean to say that those who blasphemed and rejected Christ Jesus and regarded him as a servant of Satan might not turn to God when the Holy Spirit brought its message of love and power. He only meant to tell them: "You may reject my teachings, malign and abuse me as you are now doing; but when the Holy Spirit is come and bears his testimony, if you reject that, there will be no further offices of love and mercy, either in this world or the world to come." To disobey and reject God was to blaspheme him; to reject and disobey Jesus was to blaspheme him; to reject and disobey the teachings of the Holy Spirit was to blaspheme him; and when the Holy Spirit performed his work to teach and save men, God's provisions of mercy were exhausted.]<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gospel Advocate Commentaries - New Testament Commentary – A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew.

### **Illustration from Agriculture**

#### **Matthew 13:1–8 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup> And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup> And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, <sup>6</sup> but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

#### **Matthew 13:18–23 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> “Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

### **His confidence is based on God being just:**

#### **Deuteronomy 32:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> “The Rock, his work is perfect,  
for all his ways are justice.  
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,  
just and upright is he.

#### **Isaiah 45:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> Declare and present your case;  
let them take counsel together!  
Who told this long ago?  
Who declared it of old?  
Was it not I, the LORD?  
And there is no other god besides me,  
a righteous God and a Savior;  
there is none besides me.

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**Psalm 11:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> For the LORD is righteous;  
he loves righteous deeds;  
the upright shall behold his face.

**Psalm 116:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;  
our God is merciful.

**Psalm 145:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> The LORD is righteous in all his ways  
and kind in all his works.

**Ezra 9:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> O LORD, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this.”

**Nehemiah 9:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.