

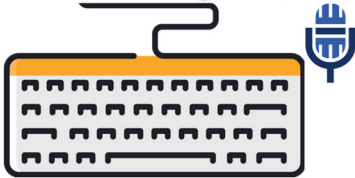
What Sins Can Never Be Forgiven?

Matthew 12:31: (NASB) *Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the spirit shall not be forgiven.*



Everybody sins. We cannot help it because we are imperfect and therefore will inevitably fall. As Christians, we can and should claim the amazing advocacy of Jesus, ask forgiveness, make right what we did wrong and move on. But are there sins that go beyond what Jesus can help us with? Are there sins that, once committed, doom us to eternal death? The Scriptures do say that such sins exist. The good news is that the Bible is specific about what they are and how they work. The difficult news is that some verses are hard to understand, and can lead to confusion. So, what sins go beyond forgiveness, and how can we stay far away from them?

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This is one of the more frequent questions we receive. People ask what sin committed against the holy spirit is “unpardonable,” and what is the *sin unto death*. They ask for reassurance that they did not commit such a sin, either intentionally or subconsciously, either in acts or thoughts. Some are concerned that they were once atheists and might have committed such a sin in their past.

There are three main New Testament scriptures people reference to describe what a *sin unto death* looks like. We will discuss all three by putting them in a larger context.



Here are the three texts:



Matthew 12:32: (NASB) *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.*



Jude 1:12-13: (NASB) ¹²These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; ¹³wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.



Hebrews 6:4-6: (NASB) ⁴For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the holy spirit, ⁵and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the son of God and put him to open shame.

Let's start with Matthew. The strong statement reflected in our theme text was given by Jesus as a response to a very serious accusation that the scribes and Pharisees made against Jesus regarding his God-given healing ability.

While we will primarily use the Matthew account as the basis for our initial discussion, this statement by Jesus is also mentioned in [Mark 3:20-30](#) and [Luke 12:8-12](#).



Matthew 12:22-24: (NASB) ²²Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and he healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. ²³All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, This man cannot be the son of David, can he? ²⁴But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.

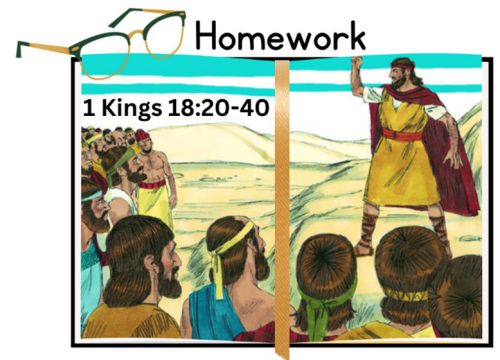


Beelzebul is another name for **Beelzebub**, associated with the Canaanite god called Baal. It is often used synonymously as a name for Satan.

BEELZEBUB

These were dramatically different reactions. The crowd's thoughts went right to Jesus being the Messiah. The Pharisees, being territorial and feeling threatened by the healing abilities of Jesus, went to the other extreme and said his power came from Satan.

We recall Elijah's encounters with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:20-40 and their dramatically dark worship. This is where the Pharisees' accusations were pointing. Elijah defended the worship of Jehovah in a battle against Baal, and Elijah was victorious against the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah.



The accusations of the Pharisees that Jesus was healing through an evil power like Baal rather than God's power needed to be dealt with.

Jesus begins to refute this evil claim by proclaiming its senselessness and logically diffusing the accusation:

Matthew 12:25-27: (NASB) ²⁵And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they (your sons) will be your judges.

By whom do your sons cast them out - who are these sons? Some Bible commentaries state these were students of the Pharisees, and Jesus was chastising the Pharisees for their hypocritical condemnation of his healing while their pupils were doing the same acts. The Pharisees did not chastise their people and say: “You’re doing it by the power of Satan!”

Other commentaries state those casting out demons in Jesus' name were Jews who followed John the Baptist. Apparently, the Pharisees left them alone. The context does seem to lean in that direction.

There is an example of this in Mark:

Mark 9:38-40: (NASB) ³⁸John said to him, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us. ³⁹But Jesus said, Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in my name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰For he who is not against us is for us.

Envy causes persons often to condemn in one, what they approve in another.
— Charles Spurgeon, a Baptist preacher in the 1800's

This accusation was heinous. Jesus did not always respond to the hateful comments thrown at him, but here he is settling in to fight this battle - coming back at them with logical, irrefutable arguments, *If Satan casts out Satan... how then will his kingdom stand?*

Next, Jesus informs them that his actions are evidence of God's kingdom being before them:

Matthew 12:28: (NASB) *But if I cast out demons by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

Jesus is saying: "The Messiah that the nation has been in expectation of is now in your presence; and you're saying that I am of the devil? Really? I am here to fulfill the promises!"

Jesus was very forceful and clear. He was not backing down an inch! The Pharisees had crossed a line they should not have crossed.

In the form of a parable, Jesus then proclaims that God's kingdom is before them because he has come to take Satan's kingdom from him:

Matthew 12:29-30: (NASB) ²⁹*Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house (Satan's invisible realm) and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man (Satan)? And then he (Jesus) will plunder his house.* ³⁰*He who is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather with me scatters.*



The *strong man* is Satan. He had control over the possessed person Jesus healed, but Jesus was stronger and able to subdue him. In the larger sense, the binding of Satan happens at Jesus' second advent, and we are assured he is eventually destroyed (Revelation 20:10).

The ministry of Jesus marks the beginning of his overcoming and taking down Satan. The earliest event after Jesus' baptism was his retreating into the wilderness, Satan tempting him and Jesus decisively overcoming the temptations. Right there we see the pattern begin to unfold as Jesus progresses to beat Satan in bigger and bigger ways. Satan is the *strong man* in the parable - he is the present evil ruler of this world (see John 12:31), but he will be shown to be a "straw man," unable to stand against the influence of God through Jesus.

So far, Jesus stated:

- Satan cannot cast out Satan
- God's kingdom stands before them in Jesus
- He is going to take Satan's kingdom from him

Jesus has drawn a line in the sand with his critics. If they are not with him then they are taking the side of Satan himself! He is making it plain that their very dark accusation will come back on their heads.

Already there is much more to what Jesus is teaching than meets the eye. Accusing God's power of being satanic is not smart.

Jesus has laid the groundwork and will now show them their folly. The question is, what was he really saying?

Now we get to the core of our question. Jesus has bluntly shown the seriousness of accusing him of working amazing miracles by the powers of darkness. His next step will be to honestly and forcefully proclaim to them that such statements made by those with spiritual authority like the Pharisees cannot be inconsequential and go unnoticed. He says that they are responsible for their actions.

Jesus next makes a strong and easily misunderstood statement regarding God’s judgment:

Matthew 12:31: (NASB) *Therefore I say to you, any sin and **blasphemy <988>** shall be **forgiven <863>** people, but **blasphemy <988>** against the spirit shall not be **forgiven<863>**.*

Here is the big question. We all sin. What did he mean by *blasphemy against the spirit*? People want to know if they have committed this special category of sin intentionally or unintentionally by joking around or even by thoughts that pop into their heads.



Let’s define what we are hearing Jesus say:

Blasphemy: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #988 *blasphemia*; vilification (especially against God)

Online Dictionary and Dictionary.com:

vilify: verb

to speak or write about in an abusively disparaging manner
to speak evil of, belittle, malign, debase, degrade

The King James Version translates this word “blasphemy” 16 times, “railing” twice, “evil speaking” once

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon: 1) slander, detraction, speech injurious to another’s good name 2) impious and reproachful speech injurious to divine majesty

Forgiven: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #863 *aphiemi*; (to send; an intensive form of *eimi*, to go); to send forth, in various applications

The King James Version translates this word “leave” 52 times, “forgive” 47 times, “suffer” 14 times, “let” 8 times, “forsake” 6 times, “let alone” 6 times, miscellaneous other definitions 13 times

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to send away

Forgiven is broadly used, covering both godly and human forgiveness. It is this word that most clearly reflects our forgiveness of one another and is often used regarding Jesus forgiving sins.

This example comes from Peter’s question of Jesus:

Matthew 18:21: (NRSV) *Then Peter came and said to him, Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I **forgive <863>**? As many as seven times?*

Forgiveness is one of the more misunderstood concepts taught by the Bible.

For more detail




How our forgiveness from God and for each other works


Blasphemy, vilification, slander, detraction, injurious speech and (sending away) forgiveness are all parts of defining *blasphemy against the holy spirit*. Is this such an unforgivable sin that it will end our life forever?

Jesus is saying that vilifying God's spirit is a sin of the highest level of seriousness, to the point of it not being a sin that can be simply "put away" from the guilty one. This means IT WILL NOT BE PARDONED - it will not be treated as though we never did such a thing. Something else, some CONSEQUENCE or RECOMPENCE, is required.

Jesus continues describing this sin's magnitude:

Matthew 12:32: (NASB) *Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven <863> him; but whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it shall not be forgiven <863> him, either in this age or in the age to come.*

 This seems odd that you can speak badly about Jesus and be forgiven but you cannot speak against the holy spirit. It seems you should do neither, but why is one worse?

 No one should be involved in speaking badly against either! God's spirit is His power. This positive, wholesome, loving, wise and miraculous power was displayed right in front of the Pharisees and the people. If Jesus was walking down the road, someone could say bad things about him because he was a man (we should not do this of course, but they might).

IMPORTANT!
Distinction

The difference is that in one, WE ARE LOOKING AT A PERSON - THE MAN, JESUS. In the other, we are looking at the very REPRESENTATION OF THE POWER OF THE ALMIGHTY GOD HIMSELF. No one can look at that power and call it darkness - it is just not to be done. Jesus said they could say whatever they wanted about him. Even when they said, *Crucify him!*, their sins were forgiven. Their sins were "sent away" by his death. But, the express power of God has this extra line drawn with it.

 Does this mean that this kind of sin always brings eternal destruction?

 No, Jesus' statement applies at two different times:

...but whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it shall not be forgiven <863> him.



Someone blaspheming the holy spirit in this age is met with the consequence of a sin that stays with them. It is not forgiven, not sent away. We believe it primarily applied to those of the Jewish nation who had Jesus with them.



The Pharisees vilified God’s spirit by saying: “This incredible thing you’ve done, Jesus, is of the devil and not by the power of God.” The spiritual leaders, including the Pharisees, eventually led the nation to reject Jesus and have him killed. We see over and over again how influential leadership was - for good and bad - in the example of the kings ruling over Israel and Judah.

Good kings who respected and listened to God brought God’s favor and protection to the people. Bad kings who committed idolatry and caused the people to do the same were rejected by God and the people suffered.

Speaking of followers getting you in trouble, there are a bunch of silly TikTok videos going around where people call on the holy spirit, saying, “Holy spirit, activate!” in jest before they do something difficult or that they do not want to do. It started from what someone famous said on a game show and then it got repeated as a “funny” meme. That certainly would qualify as “impious” behavior.

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We had a listener who wrote in and said, “I did this; I said these words; I joked around. Is this referring to participating in something irreverently and blaspheming against the holy spirit?”

This TikTok trend is foolish. Those participating in this are ignorant in that they do not understand God’s holy spirit and its operation. They do not understand what they are talking about - it is a game to them. Even some Christians may get involved in this unfortunate, sad, insulting game.

Is this an example of vilifying the holy spirit? If someone does understand and has been given the holy spirit and still plays a game with it, they are heading towards “vilifying.” But it is still not quite there yet. It is still done in ignorance - they are playing and not deliberately and hatefully vilifying God’s spirit.

Note: If you have participated in this kind of game, remember that with more knowledge comes more responsibility. Stop - do not continue to do this! This is God’s power we are talking about, not something to be made light of, ever, under any circumstance.



Is this blasphemy? We do not believe so because there is an associated ignorance. But now, if you are listening to this, you know to stop!

The Pharisees were vilifying the holy spirit by accusing Jesus of healing by the power of the devil. It is taking the highest, most beautiful power that creation has ever known and saying it is dark and evil. Insulting God’s power is as bad as it can get in terms of insulting God Himself. This is not a sin that can be put away. They were punished and will personally carry this sin into the kingdom where some kind of recompense will be needed when they are resurrected.

Jesus said they would not be forgiven, and he demonstrated this near the end of his ministry:

Matthew 23:37-38: (NASB) ³⁷Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. ³⁸Behold, your house is **being left <863>** to you desolate!



Israel's sins were not forgiven!

The words, *being left* are the same words used for *forgiven* (sent away). These verses come after Jesus lectures the Pharisees and gives them the “woes.”

Woe unto you, you hypocrites! He lists their sins and then pronounces their punishment - their house of favor would be sent away from them.

We know they did indeed lose their national favor. This is an enormous consequence! Israel’s sins were NOT forgiven because as a nation, they rejected Jesus and thereby forfeited their national opportunity to become the exclusive source of the heavenly calling to discipleship and the spiritual seed of Abraham.

However, the nation of Israel will not be lost. We know they will bless all the families of the earth, as the prophecy tells us in Zechariah 8:22,23. We know their judgment was NOT final - they will become the “blesser seed” on earth and spread the good news to everyone in God’s kingdom providing a chance at their recovery.

Behold your house is being left to you desolate - In AD 70, just a few years after Jesus pronounced this judgment, Jerusalem was ransacked, the Temple was destroyed, and the people were scattered as punishment. It was not until 1948 in our modern day when the nation of Israel was regathered, as prophesied. The principle is, it is never appropriate to reject or mock God’s favor. It eventually leads to eternal destruction for some, and we will talk later about who would be subject to such an end.



This was a harsh punishment for the Pharisees and for Israel.

The Mark account of this proclamation verifies this:

Mark 3:28-29: (YLT) ²⁸Verily I say to you, that all the sins shall be **forgiven <863>** to the sons of men, and evil speakings with which they might speak evil, ²⁹but whoever may speak evil in regard to the holy spirit **hath not forgiveness <859>** (meaning pardon) - to the age, but is in danger of age-during judgment (meaning judgment during that time)...

That is exactly what happened to the Pharisees in Israel.

The depth of the consequence is based on the height of their favor.

What does this mean? Israel was incredibly blessed. Not only were they God's chosen people for 1,800 years before Jesus' first advent, but the Messiah walked the earth in their midst. The Pharisees took that blessing and turned it upside down. They called Jesus evil and said he was allied with dark forces.

The verse says they were *in danger of age-during judgment*. Which age? They were literally punished for nearly the entire time/age the gospel has been preached. It is interesting that Israel has been cast off as a nation for nearly 1,900 years now and has only recently come back as a nation. Almost the entire age of the gospel - the Christian era - was the length of their punishment. That was a big punishment and it happened because the sin could not just be wiped away like it had never been.

Jesus verifies that those who were judged and punished with desolation were not condemned to eternal death, as in the following promise:

Matthew 23:39: (NASB) *For I say to you, from now on you will not see me until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*

Who will be saying, *Blessed is he*? The Pharisees! First, they vilified the Lord, but in the future they will praise him when they are resurrected in the day of judgment.

This is who Jesus was talking to. He is telling them that as a nation they will pay dearly for their sin of rejecting him as Messiah.

Jesus continues the thought of the Pharisees being held responsible for their words and actions not only in the present age, but also in the next:

Matthew 12:33-34,36-37: (NASB) 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.* 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.* ³⁶*But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.* ³⁷*For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*



We want to go back to Jesus' promise that the Pharisees will be praising him after they are resurrected in the day of judgment. Their sins not being forgiven did not mean that they were going to miss out in the resurrection in God's kingdom. This is important.



The Pharisees are highlighted as a special example. Although not begotten by the holy spirit (that did not happen until Pentecost according to [Acts 2:1-31](#)), **they were of the chosen people**. They were learned in the Law and the prophecies about Messiah, and most importantly, they actually had Jesus right in front of them. They were direct witnesses to the holy spirit at work through the miracles and ministry of Jesus. Their own pride and desire to preserve their leadership status blinded them from admitting the obvious.

They chose their blindness over following Jesus. The judgment of desolation on the nation was one thing, but they also had the personal judgment that they will have to answer for during the day of judgment after their resurrection. In their enlightened state, their actions were not forgivable. The moral of this story is that this is not a sin that walks away from us just because Jesus says we are forgiven for those sins we inherited through Adam. Those participating in vilifying the power, the light of God Himself, will need to answer for this in the kingdom.

While this is not forgivable, it is resolvable, though we are not told specifically what will be needed for them to work their way back in the kingdom. We can assume they will need to admit to God they were being evil for their own gain as well as perform some personal atonement.



Jesus spoke VERY firmly to the Pharisees about their utterly godless accusation that he healed by the power of Satan.



The penalty for their willful denial of Jesus and the mighty works he did through the power of God's spirit would lock them out of God's favor for a very long time.



Their vilification of God's spirit not only cost them national favor; it will also weigh them down with responsibility at their resurrection.

The responsibility of this sin had an immediate national effect and a long-term personal effect. We need to listen to this example with great sobriety because what they did was very dark and wrong.

The power of Jesus' words cannot be underestimated. We always need to think about what we are thinking about!

Jesus wasted no words with the Pharisees. What lessons can we learn about unforgivable sins from Jude?

Our review of [Matthew 12:31](#) and its context showed us there is a grave seriousness attached to vilifying God’s spirit. It is described as a sin that can bring us right up to the dangerous door of destruction, and is a dire warning regarding the respect and reverence we need when dealing with God’s spirit in any way. Our next text will take us further and point out sins that bring eternal death.

The Bible describes two kinds of death: the one we all see every day at funerals and in war - people going into the grave, awaiting their promised resurrection. But [Revelation 20:6,14](#) and [21:8](#) tells us there is something called the “second death.” This is the fate of two classes of people:



1. Those during this age of the gospel message going out who were called by God, who dedicated themselves to Him and to whom He gave His holy spirit (His power and influence), but at some point they turn their back on Him.
2. The “everybody else” who, after they are resurrected in the future kingdom and have had ample time to learn and rehabilitate but still reject God.

In other words, we say “sins that bring eternal death,” because [there is no additional ransom sacrifice from Jesus in order to provide a second resurrection.](#)



Clarifying the purpose of the ransom and the process of salvation

**Episode 1086:
Are Jesus' Ransom and Our
Salvation the Same?**

[1 Corinthians 15:22](#): *As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* One for one. There is no second opportunity once we have accepted following Christ as our Savior. These called-out ones have their opportunity now, during this age of the spreading of the gospel. The rest of humanity will have the opportunity in the future during God’s kingdom.



Let’s move on to the Jude texts. Jude says he had intended on writing an uplifting epistle but instead was compelled to write a sober warning to the early church because darkness and deception had worked their way into the flock. Jude used a lot of vivid imagery. We will not be able to get to all of it today, but remember, [Jude 1:13](#) ends with *for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.*



Who goes to that darkness, and is that a reference to the second death described in Revelation?




Yes, it is a reference to second death. Adam died and would have stayed dead for all eternity had not Jesus ransomed him. The second death is a death in which there is no longer a ransom. It is a death that lasts for eternity.

These Jude examples show us sins that are not forgivable and apply to some who deviously lead others astray. Let’s examine the context:

Jude 1:4: (NASB) *For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who **turn <3346>** the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

Licentiousness: adjective
promiscuous, unrestrained, disregarding rules and standards, indecent behavior

 Are these people that *have crept in unnoticed* outsiders who intentionally pose as churchgoers with the intent to deceive the flock?

 We believe that they began as called-out ones who had been blessed with God’s spirit and blessing. We do not think they are “wolves who have infiltrated the flock” but are insiders who have become wolf-like from within.

We have two reasons for saying this.

 First, it says they *turn the grace of God*.

Turn: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #3346 *metatithemi*; to transfer, i.e. (literally) transport, (by implication) exchange (reflexively) change sides, or (figuratively) pervert

You cannot “transport or exchange” something you do not have.


Here are a few other uses of the same word:

Galatians 1:6: (KJV) *I marvel that ye are so soon **removed <3346>** from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.*

In other words, you had it and then walked away from it. The person has to have ownership in order to *turn the grace of God*.

Hebrews 7:12: (KJV) *For the priesthood being **changed <3346>**, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*

The priesthood was one thing but then it became something else.

 The second reason we believe these individuals were granted God’s grace and spirit first is that Jude uses two examples to parallel their experience. Both examples showed God’s favor being unmistakably present before darkness took hold.

Each of these next two examples gives us a pattern that Jude is saying these individuals followed:

Jude 1:5: (NASB) *Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.*

All of Israel had been delivered out of the bondage of slavery by the blood of the lamb.

We recommend listening to Episode 1224 for a refresher on how that reference to being delivered from Egypt pictured the future deliverance of the first faithful Christians and then the entire world from sin and death because of Jesus as the Lamb.



**Episode 1224:
Why Should Christians Care About
Israel's Deliverance From Slavery?**

Absorbing the profound lessons Israel's Passover teaches about Jesus

The Hebrew firstborn in Egypt were delivered from death if the literal Passover lamb's blood was on their doorpost. *Blood of the Lamb* refers to what that original foreshadowed: faithful Christians in this age, whom God has called and accepted are considered by God to be "justified" by Christ's sacrifice. Applying this blood of Jesus allows us to have a relationship with God, with Jesus as our advocate.

Romans 5:9: (KJV) *...being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

1 John 2:1: (ASV) *My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

EXAMPLE

Israel is the first example of those who lost God's grace. We see all of Israel had the grace of the *blood of the lamb* that opened the door to freedom, to the delivery from slavery. All of them had God's grace in their lives.

The second example of those who have lost God's grace:

Jude 1:6: (NASB) *And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, he has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day...*

EXAMPLE

Every single angelic being was created in the perfection and harmony of God's spiritual family. Those who fell chose to follow Satan instead of their Creator. They made that choice. **THEY KNEW GOD** but walked away.

In both examples, grace was present first and then there was a change of heart. They chose something different.

Next, Jude shows the dark consequences of willfully walking away from the blood of the lamb and the favor of God's presence and into a wanton and immoral life:

Jude 1:7: (NASB) *just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.*

Punishment of eternal fire - we have said repeatedly on Christian Questions that there is no such thing as hell fire being a place of eternal torture for punishment and yet here it is. What does this mean?

Matthew 10:15 gives us more background on this.

The first point in this verse is that Sodom and Gomorrah will have the ability to repent and be forgiven during the judgment. The Greek word *eternal* means "age-lasting" and *fire* means "destruction."

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, but the people who lived there will have a chance to repent once this age is complete and they are resurrected. The *punishment* was not eternal as we think of it, but as long as the Gospel Age lasted.

Full repentance is proved by living in righteousness. If there is no repentance or turning away from sin, then second death (destruction, not torture) will be the final penalty. We will be looking at a verse soon that refers to eternal darkness. We cannot have eternal fire and eternal darkness at the same time if they are both literal. Fire produces destruction which equals eternal darkness. Adam would have stayed in eternal darkness had it not been for Jesus.



The sin unto death

1 John 5:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶*If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.* ¹⁷*All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.*

There are various types of relationships people can have with God. This is similar in some ways to our own relationships. We can have distant acquaintances, friends, and close family. In order to be considered sons of God (i.e. close family members) an individual must have devoted his or her life to Him. This is described in Romans 12:1 as presenting our bodies as *a living sacrifice* to God. Once this is done, that person is generally baptized as a symbol of their devotion. If God accepts this decision, then the individual is “justified” by Christ’s blood. This is described in Romans 5:9: *Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath of God through him.* This justification means the individual is considered righteous in God’s eyes and a personal relationship is established. After justification, the individual then receives a measure of the holy spirit - God’s power and influence - and is considered a *son of God*.

At this time, the *sin unto death* referenced in several scriptures is only applicable to those who have followed these important steps and are now under the blood. If they should completely turn their backs on what they professed, go into unbelief and “trample the blood of Christ,” there is no longer any blood available to justify them. However, most are not even aware of the process and have not dedicated their lives to God and been justified, so we understand this to apply to very few in this age.

Some believe the expression *sin unto death* means God will literally strike down and physically kill those who deliberately disobey Him, using the example of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-10. We only have to look around at the headlines and see there are many people, even those who profess to be Christian, deliberately disobeying God who are walking around just fine.

The Bible is a big book. It is unwise to take a phrase out of context and build a doctrine around that phrase. That is what is happening here. If it was true that God would destroy everybody who vilified His spirit, guess who would have died first? Satan! But yet he lives on! We cannot make this phrase mean literal, immediate destruction in the context of Scripture. This is not at all what the phrase *sin unto death* is talking about. We will look at its specific application soon.



Sin unto death symptom: It is a gross immorality to shun God’s grace and presence in your life and replace them with the idolatry of self:

Jude 1:8-9: (NASB) ⁸Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. ⁹But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke you!



Sin unto death symptom: Willfully defiling the flesh, in spite of being “bought with a price.”

1 Corinthians 6:20: (AMP) You were bought with a price [you were actually purchased with the precious blood of Jesus and made his own]. So then, honor and glorify God with your body.

This is directly defying being *bought with a price*.



Sin unto death symptom: Willfully rejecting authority and speaking evil of things higher than themselves. Peter also had words about these types of fallen beings:

2 Peter 2:10: (WEY) and especially those who are abandoned to sensuality—craving, as they do, for polluted things, and scorning control (meaning rewriting the rules to where it is all about me). Fool-hardy and self-willed, they do not tremble when speaking evil of glorious beings:

Self-will is a huge part of this; not just acting out of ignorance, not just making a mistake. This is purposely imposing self-will.

Despite such vile descriptions, Jude does not call anyone out by name. He calls out the actions and leaves the judgment to God Himself:

Jude 1:10: (NASB) But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.



Sin unto death symptom: Willfully being subject to fleshly ways and shunning their transformation by the holy spirit into a new creation.

They willfully shun (turn away, repel, revile) the holy spirit in their lives and cling to fleshly things.



Sin unto death symptoms:

Jude 1:11: (NASB) ¹¹Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain (willful jealous pride), and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam (willful selfish greed), and perished in the rebellion of Korah (willful open defiance).

Willful jealous pride, willful selfish greed, willful open defiance, willingly subjecting oneself to fleshly ways, willingly rejecting spiritual authority, willingly defiling one’s flesh in spite of once being bought with a price, shunning God’s grace in one’s life. This is what brings that eternal death!



Sin unto death dangers:

¹²These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; ¹³wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

Let's look at this verse in pieces:

Men who are hidden reefs in your love feast - allowing disruptive leaders in our fellowship means allowing destruction to be in our presence. Their influence can shipwreck others when their opinions are not challenged.

Clouds without water - they do not do any good. There is no water - truth - in them.

Carried along by winds - they are pushed around with every wind of doctrine, having no doctrinal foundation.



Autumn trees without fruit - they are worthless at this point. They lost the *fruit of the spirit*. There is no fruit in them to sustain the flock through winter.

Wild waves of the sea - symbolic of restlessness - wild and out of control.



Black darkness...reserved forever - it is a dangerous situation to allow the influence of darkness to be in our midst.

How sobering! Think about it - knowing the truth, staying with the truth, living up to the truth, having an environment that is scripturally sound, morally sound and doctrinally sound is so important. Protect the flock!

Back to our earlier questions:



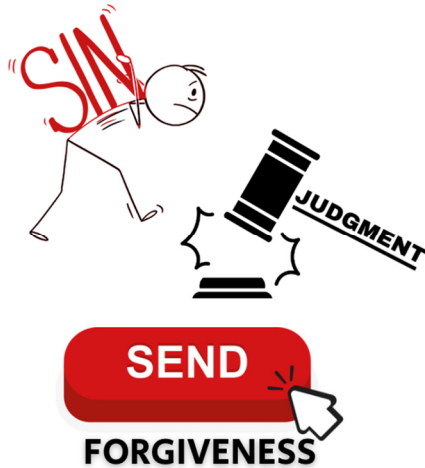
Who goes to that darkness, and is that a reference to the second death described in Revelation?



Those who fit this description - someone who once received the spirit of God and in effect wasted it. Yes, this is the second death.

A reminder from Romans 6:23 that *the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life*. These have shunned the gift of God. God through Jesus ransomed them and they threw it away on purpose. Not by accident, or through ignorance, but they threw it away on purpose. Here in Jude, leadership is described as gone awry. This is not a good situation!





Jude is disturbingly blunt about the kinds of things we MUST avoid in those who would be influential in the body of Christ.

It is one thing to fall into sins and fully repent, but it is another thing entirely to willfully walk into such sins with the pride of a seared conscience.


The willfulness herein displayed is not only a personal way of life, it seeks to derail others as well.


This flawed leadership leads to very dark results, especially to the leaders. We must watch and not allow them to be influential in our midst.

It is hard to fathom such moral and spiritual degradation in someone who had previously been called and begotten of Christ.

**With that depressing warning, here's the next question:
Are all sins unto death as blatant and obvious as what we have just seen?**

The answer here is both yes and no. Yes, any sin that leads to the second death will be obvious, but it does not necessarily have to be so blatant. The key to all of this for each of us is to know from the inside out whom we serve. Has MY way or MAN'S way drawn my attention and loyalty away from GOD'S way?






 Often with this topic people want to know about suicide. Has the person who takes their own life committed this *sin unto death*? Are they automatically lost to second death and will not receive a resurrection in the kingdom?

 No, they are not automatically lost. We cannot read the heart. We do not know what kind of damage that person was dealing with in their lives. We do not know the trauma they have gone through, what kind of things caused them to lose hope. They may very well not have forcefully rejected God but have been totally overcome with grief. The human condition and experience hits everyone differently. We cannot know. However, God knows and He will not accidentally put someone into that second death category that does not belong there. His mercy, love and justice are far above our human comprehension. They work together to do what is best and necessary for each of us.

In Hebrews, the Apostle Paul is very specific as to what things one walks away from to forfeit God's grace and lose all hope for life:

Hebrews 6:4-5: (NASB) *For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the holy spirit, ⁵and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.*

SIN UNTO DEATH CONDITIONS

-  *Have once been enlightened:* Someone who has been taught the gospel.
-  *Have tasted of the heavenly gift:* Someone who has been bought by Jesus' blood, and who has been justified.
-  *Been made partakers of the holy spirit:* Someone who has benefitted by the begetting of God's power and influence.
-  *Tasted the good word of God:* Someone who has been a partaker of God's plan and promises, understanding the "good word."
-  *Tasted the powers of the age to come:* Someone who has been regenerated as a new creature in Christ.



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The phrase *new creature* comes from 2 Corinthians 5:17: (KJV) *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* There is a new life, a spiritual life within us. It is a special privilege, allowing us to have a relationship with God through Christ.

For such a person who sins willfully against light and knowledge, there is no more sacrifice for his sins; he has had his share of Christ's sacrifice and has misused it and there is none remaining for him. He has chosen to walk away from all the blessings we listed above. What is the result?



Hebrews 6:6: (NASB) *and then have fallen away, it is impossible <102> to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the son of God and put him to open shame.*

Impossible: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #102 *adunatos*; unable, i.e. weak (literally or figuratively); passively, impossible

King James Version translates this word as: could not do, impossible, impotent, not possible, weak

Some argue that this word for impossible can mean weak. While the definition says it can, Paul's use of the word in Hebrews is clear:

Hebrews 6:18: (KJV) *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible <102> for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

Hebrews 10:4: (KJV) *For it is not possible <102> that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*



Hebrews 11:6: (KJV) *But without faith it is impossible <102> to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

In all cases “weak” does not fit. Paul is consistent. Words often have multiple definitions, so it helps to see how a writer consistently uses them. This helps us to better understand their intent in using a particular word. After looking at these other three Hebrews scriptures, impossible means impossible. *It is impossible to renew them again* because they would need a new ransom and they have already used up their only ransom.

The Apostle Paul continues with a description of the end result of denying what one once accepted and embraced:

Hebrews 6:7-8: (NASB) *⁷For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; ⁸but if it (that same tilled ground) yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.*

Impossible to renew them again in Hebrews 6 is only applicable to those who have been called, chosen and received the holy spirit. It is a sin against clear knowledge. If these should completely turn their backs on what they professed and no longer believe, they have essentially rejected the blood of Christ. There is no additional sacrifice of Jesus to justify them once more. But this does not apply to most people or even most Christians.

It is not only a sin against clear knowledge, but also a sin against clear grace and clear favor. It is a sin against being called and acceptable to God to the point where He gives them His spirit. That is a big sin.

DANGER ZONE

We can look at this and think, *Whew, I do not have to worry about this... I have not done this*. But we cannot think this way! If we hear this information, we now have a greater responsibility for honoring and reverencing God Almighty and His plans than we did before. We cannot take the position that we are free of this condemnation - we will carry our sins against knowledge and be accountable for them in the next age (as Jesus said in Matthew 12). We do not want to take anything for granted. No matter who we are, we need to live at the highest level of righteousness that we can.

The whole second death experience IS A CHOICE.

While we can be deceived into sinning, we cannot be deceived into choosing to live by denying our Lord. It all comes down to willful choice:

Hebrews 10:26-29: (NASB) *²⁶For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. ²⁸Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the spirit of grace?*

To have insulted or vilified the spirit of grace along with these other things is a deadly combination. It is like mixing bleach and ammonia. Though both are cleaning elements, the mix creates a deadly gas. We cannot turn away from God's spirit because there is no way to come back from this.

SIN UNTO DEATH RESULTS

- *trampled underfoot the son of God*
- *regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified*
- *insulted the spirit of grace*

There is NO recovery if you have had the goodness of God and voluntarily elect to reject Him.

This is a blatant choice. No one falls into second death by accident.

If we are worried about something we have done, we need to take our worry and go before the throne of grace and pray. At that point, our conscience has demonstrated that we have not willfully walked away from God's grace but have sought Him out in prayer. We need to use that grace, make good whatever we did, and stand up and continue our walk with God.



We want to protect ourselves from even considering the thoughts that open the door to considering such actions. STOP long before we get to that point! How?

Examine our thoughts and actions:

2 Corinthians 13:5: (NASB) *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?*

Stop anything and everything that is ungodly:

Proverbs 24:16: (KJV) *For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.*

Get help from those who are spiritual:

Galatians 6:2: (NASB) *Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*

Pray:

Hebrews 4:15-16: (NASB) ¹⁵*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.* ¹⁶*Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

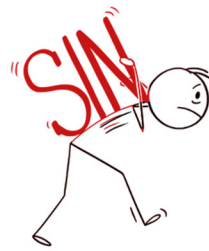
Be humble:

1 Corinthians 3:18: (NASB) *Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise.*

After we have done all of the previous, repeat!

Romans 12:2: (NASB) *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Our focus should not be on wondering if we did these deadly things. Our focus needs to be on how much more can we be doing righteous things, godly things. That is what we want in our minds. Forgiveness is powerful. It is powerful when we ask for it and when we repent and live that forgiveness.



If we love God and really try to follow Jesus, then we are not in any danger of the willful sins that bring second death.



However, this does not mean we will have a free ride. Our life as a Christian will be full of trials and hard experiences.



Let's see those experiences through God's eyes and live in His love for us through Christ!

FINAL QUESTIONS:

Q What sins can never be forgiven? What sins are considered “unforgiveable”/ “unpardonable”?



Unforgiveable/unpardonable sin requires vilifying God's spirit. To do this, someone would have had an understanding of God's spirit, a reverence for it first and then turn from it, accusing it, looking at His spirit as being evil and dark.

Q Do “unforgivable sins” and “sins unto death” have the same punishment? Are these synonymous?



Unforgivable sins can bring us to the door of the *sin unto death*. But they can also bring us to door of repentance and rebuilding our characters. That is a choice. An unforgivable sin is not one which is removed through Jesus' ransom. It is a sin we carry with us into the next age and for which we must bear a consequence. A *sin unto death* means we have gone past all of that. It means that God is no longer important to us, the blood of Jesus is worthless, one feels God's spirit is a piece of darkness and this person would then trample on his whole relationship with God and Jesus.

This is a difficult subject. The average person does not have liability here. However, we all have responsibility for what we know. Let us honor God with reverence in all circumstances. Do not play silly games mocking this or that. It will not bring to us anything of value.

Look up and praise God. Live the best way you know how, ask for forgiveness when you fail, and move on.

*So, what sins can never be forgiven?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on January 30, 2023
Ep. 1266: Why Doesn't God Just Destroy Satan?

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

Bonus Material and Study Questions

The other two accounts that correspond with Matthew 12:22-37:

Mark 3:20-30: (NASB) ²⁰And he came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. ²¹When his own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of him; for they were saying, He has lost his senses. ²²The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, He is possessed by Beelzebul, and he casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons. ²³And he called them to himself and began speaking to them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! ²⁷But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house. ²⁸Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the holy spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin— ³⁰because they were saying, He has an unclean spirit.

Luke 12:8-12: (NASB) ⁸And I say to you, everyone who confesses me before men, the son of man will confess him also before the angels of God; ⁹but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. ¹⁰And everyone who speaks a word against the son of man, it will be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the holy spirit, it will not be forgiven him. ¹¹When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; ¹²for the holy spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

Word study on turn in Jude 1:4:



Turn: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #3346 *metatithemi*; to transfer, i.e. (literally) transport, (by implication) exchange (reflexively) change sides, or (figuratively) pervert – carry over, change, remove, translate, turn

King James Version translates this word as “translate” twice, “carry over” once, “remove” once, “change” once, “turn” once

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to transpose (two things, one of which is put in place of the other) 1a) to transfer 1b) to change 1c) to transfer one’s self or suffer one’s self to be transferred 1c1) to go or pass over 1c2) to fall away or desert from one person or thing to another

All uses:

Acts 7:16: (KJV) *And were carried **over** <3346> into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.*

Galatians 1:6: (KJV) *I marvel that ye are so soon **removed** <3346> from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel...*

Hebrews 7:12: (KJV) *For the priesthood being **changed** <3346>, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*

Hebrews 11:5: (KJV) *By faith Enoch was **translated** <3346> that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had **translated** <3346> him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

Jude 1:4: (KJV) *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, **turning** <3346> the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Impossible: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #102 *adunatos*; from 1 (as a negative particle) and 1415; unable, i.e. weak (literally or figuratively); passively, impossible

King James Version translates this word as “could not do,” “impossible,” “impotent,” “not possible,” “weak”

Exhaustive review of the word for *impossible* used in Hebrews 6:4.

All uses:

Matthew 19:26: (KJV) *But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is **impossible** <102>; but with God all things are possible.*

Mark 10:27: (KJV) *And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is **impossible** <102>, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*

Luke 18:27: (KJV) *And he said, The things which are **impossible** <102> with men are possible with God.*

Acts 14:8: (KJV) *And there sat a certain man at Lystra, **impotent** <102> in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked:*

Romans 8:3: (KJV) *For what the law **could not do** <102>, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

Romans 15:1: (KJV) *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the **weak** <102>, and not to please ourselves.*

Hebrews 6:4: (KJV) *For it is **impossible** <102> for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy ghost (spirit).*



Hebrews 6:18: (KJV) *That by two immutable things, in which it was **impossible <102>** for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

Hebrews 10:4: (KJV) *For it is **not possible <102>** that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

Hebrews 11:6: (KJV) *But without faith it is **impossible <102>** to please Him: for He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*

John seems to indicate that there can be some subtlety in turning towards second death sins:

1 John 5:16-17: (NASB) *¹⁶If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. ¹⁷All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.*

This is a relief! We need reminding of the power of repenting, asking for forgiveness and then living righteously to the best of our ability.

Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

CQ Rewind Show Notes and Study Questions

Text
CQREWIND
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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1265: What Sins Can Never Be Forgiven?

See:  CQ Rewind
SHOW NOTES

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1265-unforgiveable-sins/>

1. What did Jesus do to the demon-possessed man? From where did the Pharisees say Jesus' power originated? What did Jesus say about their actions? Who is Beelzebub? How did the Pharisee's reactions differ from the reactions of the crowd? (See Matthew 12:22-24,32)
2. How did Jesus logically refute the Pharisee's evil claim? (See Matthew 12:25-30)
 - a. First: lay out Jesus' logical argument: vs. 25-27
Second: Jesus' actions prove what? vs. 28
Third: What was Jesus telling them using a parable? vs. 29-30 (See John 12:31)
3. What are the definitions of "blasphemy" and "forgiven"? What is Jesus saying in Matthew 12:31?
 - a. How did the Pharisees negatively influence the people of Israel?
What is their responsibility in this?
 - b. Why is vilifying the holy spirit so much worse than vilifying Jesus?
 - c. What was Israel's and the Pharisees' punishment for this action? Will they have to answer for any of this in the future? How do we know that while their actions were not "forgivable," Jesus' judgment on them was not final? (See Matthew 23:33-39, Zechariah 8:22-23, Mark 3:28-29)
4. What are the two kinds of death described in the Bible? Who is subject to the common type of death we see around us? Who is subject to the "second death"? What is different about the second death? (See Revelation 20:6,14, 21:8, 1 Corinthians 15:2)
5. What is the unforgivable sin in Jude 1:4? How do we know these people were most likely insiders in the church? Give two examples of those who have lost God's grace. (See Galatians 1:6, Hebrews 7:12, Jude 1:5-6)
6. What is the consequence of walking away from the blood of the Lamb and God's grace? Will this punishment be eternal? Explain. How do we demonstrate full repentance? (See Jude 1:7, Matthew 10:15)
7. Who is subject in this age to the "sin unto death"? What are the symptoms of someone who qualifies for this final punishment? Describe the influencers in Jude 1:12. Who are those that fit all these descriptions? (See 1 John 5:16-17, Jude 1:8-12, 1 Corinthians 6:20, 2 Peter 2:10, Romans 6:23)
8. What are the conditions the Apostle Paul gives in Hebrews 6:4-5 for someone to lose all hope for life? Why is it impossible to renew them again? What three things have these done? What six actions can we take if we are worried about something we have done? (See 1 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Corinthians 5:17,13:5, Hebrews 4:15-16, 6:6, 10:26-29, Proverbs 24:16, Galatians 6:2, Romans 12:2)
9. What is the difference between "unforgivable/unpardonable sins" and "sins unto death"? What are the consequences for each? Do you find comfort in seeing all the provisions God has for you to ensure that you have every chance for eternal life? Explain.