

BLASPHEMOUS ACCUSATION AGAINST JESUS

Matthew 12:22-37; Mark 3:22-30

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus and the Pharisees

Key-location: The region of Capernaum

Key-repetitions:

- Beelzebub/Satan/demons (Mat 12:22, 24, 26, 27, 28; Mk 3:30).
- Blasphemy (Mat 12:31 – two times).
- Jesus defended why he did not drive demons out by Beelzebub: divided country, town, or family would fall (Mat 12:25); if Satan drove out Satan, he would be divided (Mat 12:26); if Jesus used Beelzebub's power to drive out Satan, whose power did Pharisees use to drive out demons (Mat 12:27); a thief could not enter a strong man's house and steal his possessions without first binding the strong man (Mat 12:29).

Key-attitudes:

- People's astonishment at Jesus' healing the demon-possessed man.
- Pharisees' bickering that Jesus' power came from Beelzebub.
- Hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees.
- Jesus' sternness when he defended himself and instructed the Pharisees.

Initial-situation:

John the Baptist was imprisoned at the beginning of Jesus' second year of ministry. The multitudes that once followed John the Baptist began following Jesus. During the second year of Jesus' ministry, his popularity with the people grew; however, religious leaders began their opposition. Jesus selected twelve disciples to be with him. Jesus made his residence in the city of Capernaum, in Galilee.

Initial-problem:

Some people brought a demon-possessed man to Jesus. Jesus healed him. The people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

Final-situation:

Jesus declared that everyone will give an account for every careless word they have spoken. Their words can declare them innocent; their words can declare them guilty.

BIBLE STORY

Some people brought to Jesus a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. The people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

The Pharisees heard this; they bickered, “It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons” (Mat 12:22-25). The religious leaders were saying, “Jesus has an evil spirit in him” (Mk 3:30).

Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to them, “Every country that divides itself into groups which oppose each other will fall; every city or family that divides against itself into groups that fight each other will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can Satan’s kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then God’s Kingdom has come upon you.

“How can a thief enter a strong man’s house and steal his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder the strong man’s house (Mat 12:26-29).

“There is no neutral ground. If you are not with me, you are against me. If you do not help me, you are making things worse. I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit won’t be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit won’t be forgiven, neither in this age nor in the age to come (Mat 12:30-33).

“I tell you that on judgment day, everyone will give an account for every careless word they have spoken. Your words can declare you innocent; your words can declare you guilty” (Mat 12:34-37).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were the two main reactions to Jesus’ healing the blind and mute man?
2. What accusation did the Pharisees make against Jesus when he healed the demon-possessed man?
3. What defenses does Jesus give in answer to the Pharisees’ accusations?
4. What is the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?
5. According to Jesus, why is it impossible to be neutral toward him?
6. Why would Jesus judge the Pharisees by their words?
7. How should we relate to the fact that we will be judged by our words?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **The unpardonable sin is committed by a person who experiences proof that God is active and argues that such action was done by the devil.** This is the sin of attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to an evil spirit. Such a person has a heart that is so hardened that he can't distinguish between the divine and diabolic. Jesus healed a demon-possessed man and the Pharisees argued that Jesus drove out demons by being on the same team with the prince of demons (Mat 12:22-25). Jesus warned them of the danger of blasphemy against the Spirit, an unforgivable sin (Mat 12:30-33). (See Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31.) The Pharisees could not deny that Jesus' miracle was supernatural. They had no other way to avoid the conclusion that Jesus was doing God's work than to suggest that Christ cast out devils by Beelzebub, and that there was a pact between Christ and the devil.
2. **Those who seek the praise and applause of people feel threatened when they hear another person praised.** The Pharisees pursued praise for themselves and felt threatened when the people asked if Jesus could be the Son of David. They attacked Jesus with the accusation that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils (Mat 12:24).
3. **Jesus is strong enough to overpower Satan.** Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute (Mat 12:29). Jesus' birth disrupted Satan's power. Jesus resisted Satan's temptations in the desert. Jesus overpowered Satan every time he cast out demons. Jesus took the power of death from Satan at his resurrection. Eventually, Jesus will restrain Satan forever. (See Revelation 20:10.)
4. **People who do not have facts to support their arguments often turn to emotional arguments.** The Jewish religious leaders called Jesus a glutton, a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Mat 11:19). When the Pharisees could not disprove the facts that Jesus healed the demon-possessed man, they argued that Jesus was on the same team with demons (Mat 12:24).
5. **A person cannot be neutral about Jesus.** The war, which Christ is fighting against the devil and his kingdom, does not allow neutrality. Each person is either with Jesus or against him (Mat 12:30).
6. **Each person will give an account to God for his sinful speech.** Every person will give an account for every careless word they have spoken. Words can declare a person innocent or guilty (Mat 12:34-37). God takes notice of every word people say (Psa 139:4). Foolish talking and jesting are forbidden (Eph 5:4).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Role-playing Drama:

Pick volunteers to tell the story from the viewpoint of participants in the story:

- A witness to Jesus healing the demon-possessed man who asked the question, "Could this be the Son of David?"
- A Pharisee who accused Jesus of driving out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons.
- A disciple who observed the miracle, the reactions of the people and the Pharisees, and who heard Jesus' defense.