

# What is the Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit According to the Church Fathers?

[www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2009/07/what-is-blasphemy-against-holy-spirit.html](http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2009/07/what-is-blasphemy-against-holy-spirit.html)



By John Sanidopoulos

Three of the four Gospel accounts contain a reference to the statement made by Jesus concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. These three passages read as follows.

*"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:31-32).*

*"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation—because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit'" (Mark 3:28-30).*

*"And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10).*

According to St John Chrysostom in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, the reason blasphemy against the Son of Man is forgiven while that of the Holy Spirit is not is because the Jews knew nothing of the Son of Man, who He might be, but they had ample experience of the Holy Spirit through the words and signs of the Prophets and all in the Old Testament had a high notion of Him. If one is thus at first offended that God has taken on human flesh, then this is pardonable. But throughout the Scriptures the Holy Spirit was amply revealed, and since the Jews of Jesus' time could not discern the same Holy Spirit that the Prophets revealed in the words of Jesus who is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, then they will not be forgiven. On top of that Jesus was casting out devils and working cures among the people in the power of the Holy Spirit and even raising the dead like the Prophets before Him, and they still could not discern that it was the same Holy Spirit doing these things that did them through the Prophets before Him. Instead in their depravity they called the works of the Holy Spirit a product of Satan. This cannot be forgiven. As St. Athanasius the Great says: "The Savior while before He rebuked them for many sins exhorted them to repent; yet when they said, 'He casts out devils by Beelzebub,' He speaks of this no longer as a sin, but as blasphemy so great, that on those who dared this, punishment must come, without escape or pardon." Furthermore, St. Basil the Great explains that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is to attribute His operations to the opposite spirit. He says that this is done by attributing any gifts of the Holy Spirit upon the Saints as being from the devil. And the condemnation of the Jews is worsened over the fact that the Gentiles were able to discern the Holy Spirit through the teaching and miracles of the Apostles while these teachers of the Law could not discern Him.

This also applies today when someone accepts the Old Testament but does not receive the New. It also applies to those who accept both the Old and New Testament but do not accept the Saints or the Holy Mysteries. Thus all heresy is a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. St. Symeon the New Theologian explains this in his sermon titled [Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit](#). He further declares that this condemnation comes upon all those who deny that the gifts of the Holy Spirit continue always within the Church. Yet St. Symeon goes to great lengths, as do all the Fathers, to explain that it is always possible to draw near to God through repentance. For such, no sin is unforgivable nor eternal. Stubbornness in one's heresy is unforgivable.

St. Cyril of Alexandria in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* further says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is blasphemy against the entire Holy Trinity. If one does not acknowledge the entire Holy Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - then he also blasphemes against the Holy Spirit. St. Gregory of Nyssa affirms this also in his treatise *Against the Macedonians*: "Perhaps this is the blasphemy against our Law Giver for which the judgment without remission has been decreed; since in Him the entire Being, blessed and divine, is insulted also. As the devout worshipper of the Spirit sees in Him the glory of the Only-begotten, and in that sight beholds the image of the Infinite God, and by means of that image makes an outline, upon his own cognition, of the Original, so most plainly does this condemner (of the Spirit), whenever he advances any of his bold statements against the glory of the Spirit, extend, by virtue of the same reasoning, his profanity to the Son, and beyond Him to the Father."

St. Barsanuphius of Optina told a disciple that when an Orthodox person falls away from the Orthodox Faith, that is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

When the blessed Elder Paisios of Mount Athos was asked about what the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is, he responded by saying: "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is in general disregard for holy and sacred things, provided of course, the person is sane...it is impossible for blasphemy to exist in a devout person." He further says that those impudent people who justify their fall into sin in turn justify the devil, thus committing a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and opening themselves up to demonic attacks. Such a person never enters into God's peace and rest. Thus he says: "Impudent people are at the first level of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Those who despise and scorn the sacred and holy things are at the second level, and at the third level is the devil himself."

In diagnosing blasphemy, St. John of the Ladder simply writes: "Unspeakable blasphemy is the child of dreadful pride."

St. Kosmas Aitolos warned in a sermon: "And how is it that you dare, O foolish and evil man, to blaspheme and take

God's name in vain? The same with that of the Saints? Aren't you afraid, you most wretched one, that the earth might open up and swallow you? The devil doesn't dare to curse the name of God because he is afraid that lightning might fall and burn him, and you, insignificant man, open your damned mouth and take God's name in vain? Woe to those who curse the name of God, because a river of flaming fire will burn them forever."

With the same love and concern the blessed Elder Philotheos Zervakos counsels one of his spiritual children when he writes: "For you to say that you will not give up blasphemy is to say that you will not obey God, but rather that you wish to obey the devil who rejoices when you blaspheme against God. You will be condemned with the devil to the eternal fire that is prepared for him and his angels and all those who follow him and repeat his blasphemies. Therefore I entreat you, act like a reasonable person and repent. Sing hymns and spiritual songs to the Lord, not blasphemies, before death comes, for in Hades and after death there is no repentance... Do not put it off, for death comes unexpectedly."

From what we read in the Holy Fathers, therefore, blasphemy against God is every bit as grievous as our Lord Jesus makes it out to be.

[Share on Tumblr](#)