

The Blasphemy Against the Holy Ghost

The Setting and Importance in Jesus' Ministry

Jesus' healing ministry was rejected by the Pharisees by their attributing his miracles to the power of Satan. Even though they were his enemies, they couldn't deny the miracles actually happened, like we can today when a supposed faith healer supposedly heals a man who supposedly has one leg longer than the other, or when someone we've never seen before gets up out of a wheelchair; so, they denied the source of the miracles rather than their genuineness. Since Jesus did his miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit, when they attributed his miracles to Satan, they were saying the Holy Spirit is Satan. This was not a one-time accusation, and they didn't have insufficient knowledge, since Jesus did plenty of miracles to clearly prove he was the Messiah. Thus, this sin for them was unforgivable for the rest of their lives, with no possibility to believe the gospel and be saved.

Related to "the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost," was the Pharisees' demand for a sign from heaven. Apparently, they figured Satan could enable him to cast out demons, though Jesus showed how illogical that theory was since no divided kingdom can stand; but they thought Jesus wouldn't be able to do a sign from heaven, since that is God's realm. Jesus said he wouldn't give that generation any signs, except the sign of the prophet Jonah, meaning resurrection after three days in the belly of the earth, for Lazarus and himself. Although there are some exceptions, Jesus stopped healing all, publicly, all the time, without condition; and started healing only some, away in remote or mostly Gentile areas, privately, and often on the condition of faith.

The question is, when did the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost occur chronologically, since the gospel of Matthew is arranged topically? My opinion is Matthew moved a large amount of material forward from the period Luke described as the journey to Jerusalem, to Matthew's section on the rejection, in his chapters 11 and 12. I also assume Mark followed Matthew, possibly indicating Mark is a condensed version of Matthew without the teaching sections, rather than Matthew being an expansion of Mark with the teaching sections added.

Although Luke's language is somewhat general in the journey to Jerusalem section, there seem to be too many similarities in sequence and topic during the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost portion, for the accounts to refer to two separate chronological times: an earlier occurrence as related by Matthew and Mark, and a later referral back to its principles later in Luke. So I think it actually happened on the journey to Jerusalem, as recorded in Luke; and that Matthew moved it to his section on the rejection. The Holy Spirit wanted the mouth of three witnesses for many parts of Messiah's life, but as only John covered the early Jerusalem ministry, God probably reserved the journey to Jerusalem portion for Luke, but Matthew needed some of its material.

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	
<i>JESUS' HEALING BEFORE THE REJECTION</i>		--	--
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION DUMB DEMON 9:32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. ³³ And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.		--	11:14
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION BY BEELZEBUB 9:34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.		--	11:15
<i>THE REJECTION OF JESUS' TEACHING</i>		--	--
12:1 PLUCKED EARS OF CORN AND HEALED WITHERED HAND ON SABBATH	2:23 PLUCKED EARS OF CORN AND HEALED WITHERED HAND ON SABBATH	6:1 PLUCKED EARS OF CORN AND HEALED WITHERED HAND ON SABBATH	
12:14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.	3:6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.	6:11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.	

THE REJECTION OF JESUS' HEALING		--	--
SWITCHED WITH 9:32 HEALING OF DUMB DEMON TO SHOW REJECTION OF MORE SPECTACULAR MIRACLE		--	--
BLIND DUMB DEMON 12:22 Then was <u>brought unto him</u> one possessed with a <u>devil, blind, and dumb</u> ; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. ²³ And all the people were <u>amazed</u> , and said, Is not this the <u>son of David</u> ?		--	--
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION – REPEATED FROM 9:34 BY BEELZEBUB 12:24 But when the <u>Pharisees heard it</u> , they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but <u>by</u> Beelzebub the prince of the devils.	MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION BY BEELZEBUB 3:22 And the <u>scribes</u> which came down from Jerusalem said, He <u>hath</u> Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.		11:15
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION SEEKING A SIGN 2 12:38 Then certain of the <u>scribes</u> and of the <u>Pharisees</u> answered, saying, Master, we would see <u>a sign</u> from thee.		--	11:16
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION DIVIDED KINGDOM 12:25 And Jesus <u>knew their thoughts</u> , and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. ²⁶ And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, <u>by whom do your children cast them out?</u> therefore they shall be your judges. ²⁸ But if I cast out devils <u>by the Spirit of God</u> , then <u>the kingdom of God</u> is come unto you. ²⁹ Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.	MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION DIVIDED KINGDOM 3:23 And <u>he called them unto him</u> , and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. ²⁷ No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.		11:17
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION FOR OR AGAINST 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.		--	11:23
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION WORSE STATE 12:43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he <u>walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none</u> . ⁴⁴ Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he <u>findeth it empty, swept, and garnished</u> . ⁴⁵ Then goeth he, and taketh with himself <u>seven other spirits more wicked than himself</u> , and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.		--	11:24
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION NO SIGN 2 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An <u>evil and adulterous generation</u> seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: ⁴⁰ For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.		--	11:29
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. ³² And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, <u>neither in this world, neither in the world to come</u> .	MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST 3:28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: ²⁹ But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. ³⁰ Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.		12:10
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION WHO ARE MY BRETHREN? 12:46 While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. ⁴⁷ Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. ⁴⁸ But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? ⁴⁹ And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! ⁵⁰ For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.	MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION WHO ARE MY BRETHREN? 3:31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. ³² And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. ³³ And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? ³⁴ And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! ³⁵ For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.		8:19
MOVED FROM AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION NINEVEH, QUEEN OF SHEBA		--	11:31

<p>12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.⁴² The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.</p>			
<p>JESUS' HEALING AFTER THE REJECTION</p>			
<p>PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM 13:1-53</p>	<p>PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM 4:1-33</p>	<p>PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM 8:4-18</p>	
<p>MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 12:46</p>	<p>MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 3:31</p>	<p>WHO ARE MY BRETHREN? 8:19 Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.²⁰ And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.²¹ And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.</p>	
<p>COULDN'T HEAL MANY IN NAZARETH 13:54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?⁵⁶ And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?⁵⁷ And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.⁵⁸ And he <u>did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.</u></p>	<p>COULDN'T HEAL MANY IN NAZARETH 6:1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.² And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.⁴ But Jesus, said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.⁵ And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.⁶ And he marvelled because of their unbelief.</p>		--
<p>FED 4000 15:38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.^{39a} And he sent away the multitude</p>	<p>FED 4000 8:9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.</p>		--
<p>SEEKING A SIGN 1 TOOK SHIP INTO THE COASTS OF MAGDALA 15:39b and took ship, and came into the coasts of <u>Magdala</u>. 16:1 The Pharisees also <u>with the Sadducees came</u>, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a <u>sign from heaven</u>.</p>	<p>SEEKING A SIGN 1 BY SHIP INTO THE PARTS OF DALMANUTHA 8:10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of <u>Dalmanutha</u>.¹¹ And the <u>Pharisees came</u> forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a <u>sign from heaven</u>, tempting him.</p>		--
<p>MOVED FORWARD FROM LATER IN AFTER THE REJECTION SECTION CAN DISCERN SKY 16:2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.³ And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?</p>			--
<p>NO SIGN 1 16:4 A <u>wicked and adulterous generation</u> seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the <u>sign of the prophet Jonas</u>.</p> <p>And he left them, and departed.</p>	<p>NO SIGN 1 8:12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.</p>		--
<p>MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION 17:1</p>	<p>MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION 9:2</p>	<p>MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION 9:28</p>	
<p>GOSPEL OF MESSIAH 17:22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:²³ And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.</p>	<p>GOSPEL OF MESSIAH 9:30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.³¹ For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.³² But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.</p>	<p>GOSPEL OF MESSIAH 9:43b But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples,⁴⁴ Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.⁴⁵ But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.</p>	
<p>JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM</p>			
--	--	<p>BEGAN JOURNEY TOWARDS JERUSALEM 9:51a And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,⁵² And sent messengers before his face.</p>	
<p>MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 12:22</p>	--	<p>DUMB DEMON 11:14 And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.</p>	

MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 12:24	MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 3:22	BY BEELZEBUB 11:15 But <u>some of them</u> said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.
MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 12:38	--	SEEKING A SIGN 2 11:16 And <u>others</u> , tempting him, sought of him a sign <u>from heaven</u> .
MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 12:25	MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 3:23	DIVIDED KINGDOM 11:17 But he, <u>knowing their thoughts</u> , said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. ¹⁸ If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. ¹⁹ And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. ²⁰ But if I <u>with the finger of God</u> cast out devils, no doubt the <u>kingdom of God</u> is come upon you. ²¹ When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: ²² But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.
MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 12:30	--	FOR OR AGAINST 11:23 He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.
MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 12:43	--	WORSE STATE 11:24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he <u>walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none</u> , he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. ²⁵ And when he cometh, he <u>findeth it swept and garnished</u> . ²⁶ Then goeth he, and taketh to him <u>seven other spirits more wicked than himself</u> ; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.
MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 12:39	--	NO SIGN 2 11:29 And <u>when the people were gathered thick together</u> , he began to say, This is an <u>evil</u> generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but <u>the sign of Jonas</u> the prophet. ³⁰ For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.
MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 12:41	--	NINEVEH, QUEEN OF SHEBA 11:31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. ³² The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.
MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 12:31	MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 3:28	BLASPHEMY 12:10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.
MOVED TO THE REJECTION SECTION 16:2	--	CAN DISCERN SKY 12:54 And he said also to the people, When ye see a <u>cloud</u> rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a <u>shower</u> ; and so it is. ⁵⁵ And when ye see the <u>south wind</u> blow, ye say, There will be <u>heat</u> ; and it cometh to pass. ⁵⁶ Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? ⁵⁷ Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

Some Similarities and Differences Between the Gospel Accounts

The Casting Out of the Dumb Demon and the Beelzebub Accusation. Matthew looks like he switched the healing of a blind, dumb demon-possessed man, for the exorcism of the non-blind, dumb demon-possessed man, that he moved forward from the journey to Jerusalem period, to make it a more serious rejection. In Matthew's flow, the rejection of a triple miracle – blind, dumb, demon possessed – followed immediately by the Beelzebub accusation and a request for a sign, shows the extreme wickedness of the religious leaders. Matthew says they were Pharisees, Mark says the scribes, and Luke implies it's some of the people that asked for a sign, as if to show humanity's guilt, rather than just the national leaders' guilt. Only in Matthew, do the people who witness the triple miracle consider, however shallowly, Jesus might be the Son of David, the Messiah of Israel. It's interesting Mark never even mentions the casting out of any dumb demon, blind or otherwise; but the scribes that came from Jerusalem to Galilee seem to be characterize all his exorcism as being empowered by Satan.

A Divided Kingdom Cannot Stand. In both the Matthew and Luke accounts, when Jesus is asked for a sign, it's said he "knew their thoughts," and talked about how Satan would not cast out Satan, so the request for a sign from heaven (Luke 11:16) is probably being contrasted with merely the earthly casting out of demons. As many have observed, it's interesting that Matthew is the one that has "if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God," whereas Luke says "with the finger of God," when Luke's account is often focused on the Holy Spirit. Of course, the Messiah of Matthew is also empowered by the Holy Spirit, and miraculously born of the Holy Spirit.

The Worse State of that Generation. This passage is very similar between Matthew and Luke, and not found in Mark. In both cases a cast out demon walks through dry places seeking rest and finding none; returns to find his previous host swept and garnished; and moves back in with seven other spirits more wicked than himself. Matthew, though, explicitly states that he finds the man empty when he returns. Israel did not accept the Messiah despite John and Jesus' cleansing ministries, so there was no Messiah within to keep the 'evil spirit' from returning. Matthew also makes it clear, the judgment is only upon "this generation," of Israel, not future generations of Israel.

The Men of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba. Mark doesn't mention this part, and doesn't mention Jonah when he says no sign will be given. Jonah's representation of Jesus and Lazarus' resurrections relate to the national signs of resurrection to be given after the rejection of Jesus healing ministry. The men of Nineveh will condemn Jesus' generation because they had an organized, national repentance, like John and Jesus required per their preaching ministries. "The people of Nineveh ... put on sackcloth; ... for word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he ... covered him with sackcloth," Jonah 3:5-6. Also like the organized, national repentance a future generation of Israel will perform. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, ... and the land shall mourn, ... the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart" (Zech. 12:10-12), etc. The Queen of Sheba will condemn that generation of Israel because she accepted Solomon's teaching ministry even though she had to travel a great distance; whereas that generation rejected the Holy Messiah and eternal Son of God's teaching ministry in their own towns.

Some Practical Applications for Today

The main importance of these passages for us today is probably that we can be sure God offered a physical kingdom to that generation of Israel, and he will establish the physical kingdom for a future generation of Israel. Paul said salvation is comprised of our past spiritual justification, our present practical sanctification, and our future physical glorification. To spiritualize everything away, as Covenant Theologians do when they replace physical Israel with the spiritual church, is to lose the New Testament teaching on one third of our salvation, since our future bodily glorification is inexorably linked to Israel's national glorification.

It's also to lose the meaning of most of the Old Testament scriptures, since the prophets spend so much of their content about the details of the coming, physical, Messianic kingdom. We not only need justification and sanctification, but we need a sure future hope. God gave us the last 9 chapters of Ezekiel, for example, so we can even be very familiar with an actual building we will one day see, the future temple in Jerusalem. Paul was brave enough to fight wild beasts at Ephesus because he knew his physical body would be resurrected. Who knows all the loss Christians suffer when this aspect of our salvation God provided instruction about in his word is spiritualized away.

Another thing these passages demonstrate is how natural, unregenerate men think and respond to God's revelation: even Messianic miracles were denied. Salvation through hearing the gospel is the only hope for men. We have to spread the gospel, not try to logically convince unregenerate men of spiritual things.

Finally, we can praise Messiah for his power and wisdom, since we see how even a nation of opponents were not able to thwart his goals and purposes.