

BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST

A little over a year ago I sent out a sermon titled “The Four Categories of Sin.” You may or may not remember that, but the four categories are sins of ignorance; impulsive sins; deliberate sins, or presumptuous sin; and finally the unpardonable sin. One can be forgiven the first three, because we serve a loving God, friends, but the last one is irrevocable or unalterable and can never be reversed once committed. And so, you can see how serious it is that we don’t commit that sin, because once a person commits the unpardonable sin, or the sin against the Holy Ghost, it can never be forgiven, and the sad thing is, most people who commit this sin will never know they’ve committed it until they stand before the judgment bar of God after coming up in the second resurrection only to die a second time from which they’ll never wake up. A horrible thing to think about.

But here’s the thing, they don’t have to die the second death, because Jesus already suffered that death for every human being that will accept it. That in itself is a wonderful truth, and one I hope to study with you another time, because it’s important for us to know that “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His.” (DA 25) But we’ll have to delve into that another time.

When we talked before about the various categories of sin, we found that these categories are progressive. For instance, sins of ignorance turn into deliberate sins once a person knows better or becomes aware and continues in it, and then known sin, persistently engaged in, eventually leads to the unpardonable sin. And so, it’s essential that we learn how to have victory over all sin, because the sin we don’t get the victory over will overcome us in the end. And so we must ask ourselves this morning a serious question; are we overcoming or are we being overcome, and if you search your own heart, you should know the answer to this question. And after searching if you find that, yes I’m being overcome, then you are in danger, dear friend, of sinning yourself into a position where you can never escape from.

The unpardonable sin, or the sin against the Holy Ghost, or what Jesus called blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and what the apostle John calls a sin unto death, are all speaking of the same thing. Turn with me please to **Matthew 12**. In this chapter, Jesus, as He had done many times before, left the Pharisees scratching their heads and a little embarrassed because they had no come back to His response to their questions,

comments, and accusations. After healing a man with a withered hand, notice what the Pharisees did in **verse 14**. “Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might **(do what?)** destroy him.”

Since the religious leaders had no answers to convince the people that Jesus was wrong and they were right, the best way for them to take care of their problem was simply to kill Him; to just get rid of Him. And that’s exactly what they set out to do. Now notice what Jesus said to the Pharisees a little farther down in **verses 31, 32**. “Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin **(how much sin?)** all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men **(that means sins of ignorance, impulsive sins, and deliberate sins, as long as they haven’t been persisted in too long, and only God knows where that point is, and that’s why they’re so dangerous)**: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. **(In other words, every single sin can be forgiven except this one)** And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man **(that would be Jesus)**, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”

By the way, this is a good proof text to show that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are two separate beings. I say this because there is a movement within Adventism today that teaches the Holy Spirit is Jesus and Jesus is the Holy Spirit, but how can that be if you can sin against one and be forgiven, but if you sin against the other you won’t be forgiven? Just something for you to think about if you happen to be leaning in that direction, or if you’ve had contact with someone that’s trying to convince you that the Holy Spirit is not one of the heavenly trio; is not the third person of the Godhead; is not just as much a person as God the Father and Jesus are persons. I could go on and on, but we must stick with the subject at hand.

In *The Desire of Ages, page 321* it says, “Whatever the sin, if the soul repents and believes, the guilt is washed away in the blood of Christ **(and that’s good news, friends)**; but he who rejects the work of the Holy Spirit is placing himself where repentance and faith cannot come to him. . . Often the process is gradual, and almost imperceptible. Light comes to the soul through God’s word, through His servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit; but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial numbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned. So the darkness increases, until it is night in the soul.”

After I first read this statement I got to thinking that when it becomes night in the soul, there’s no turning the light back on. It’s like the electricity has been turned off and it’s never going to light the bulb again no matter how many times you flip the switch. The

life line between your soul and Christ has been severed and there's no getting it reconnected again. The sin against the Holy Ghost is final. You may go on living for a time, but there is a void in the soul that can never be filled again, ever!

If you still have **Matthew 12** open, look at what it says in **verse 24**. After Jesus healed the man who was blind and dumb and the people who witnessed it acknowledged Him as the Messiah, notice what happened next, "But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, this fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."

In other words, they said Jesus not only had a devil, but He had the worst of the bunch. Now, it's important for us to understand that this accusation that Jesus cast out devils by the prince of devils was the climax of many years of deliberate sin, or presumptuous sin. This was a long protracted process of rejecting increasingly clear evidence that Jesus was indeed the long looked for Messiah. And do you know when this hatred of Christ began with the religious leaders? From the day He was born as a babe in Bethlehem!

Notice what the religious leaders said in *The Desire of Ages, page 62, 63*, "It could not be, they said, that God had passed them by, to communicate with ignorant shepherds or uncircumcised Gentiles. **(When I read this I couldn't help but think that words like this are spoken even today by church leaders about those involved in independent ministries and self supporting work. They think it's utterly preposterous and ridiculous and doing great damage to the cause for anyone who has not been trained in their religious institutions and had hands laid upon them by the leaders in power to be used by God to take the third angel's message to the world. But when you think about it, John the Baptist and Jesus Himself didn't attend the church schools and schools of higher learning in their day, did they? No they didn't, and that's one of the main reasons they were both rejected and finally killed by the very people who could not accept the fact that God had passed them by, and it's undeniable that history is being repeated today)** They determined to show their contempt for the reports that were exciting King Herod and all Jerusalem. They would not even go to Bethlehem to see whether these things were so. And they led the people to regard the interest in Jesus as a fanatical excitement. Here began the rejection of Christ by the priests and rabbis. From this point **(the point of His birth)** their pride and stubbornness grew into a settled hatred of the Saviour. While God was opening the door to the Gentiles, the Jewish leaders were closing the door to themselves." And so, everyone who commits the unpardonable sin will only have themselves to blame.

And so, the very people who were first chosen to take the gospel to the world were in

the process of committing the unpardonable sin and they didn't even know it, and just as the religious leaders did 2000 years ago, unbeknownst to them, many of the religious leaders of today are doing the exact same thing. You would think they would pay more attention to the ancient truth that says, "Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

So, from the time of His birth, the hatred of the religious leaders toward Jesus became more intense as His ministry progressed. The clearer the evidence, the more they opposed Him, and as time went on, each encounter with Jesus served only to reveal their growing hypocrisy. And as a result, they became more and more bitter and outspoken, until finally, they came out openly declaring Jesus to be demon possessed and working in collaboration with Satan himself, and ever afterward they themselves were under the control of the very power they accused Jesus of being subject to. Such is the final result of deliberately sinning one time too many. Somewhere along the way they repeated the same sin one too many times and the Holy Spirit could do no more to bring them to their senses; to bring them to repentance. They lived on, but there was no more hope that they would ever change, and so God had to give them up to continue their evil ways. There came a point when they were eternally lost, and the process had been so gradual they hadn't even noticed that their day of probation had forever passed away, and don't think it can't happen to any one of us if we don't get a handle on the sin that so easily besets us.

In *Review and Herald, January 18, 1898* it says, "They [the Pharisees] attributed to satanic agencies the holy power of God, manifested in the works of Christ. Thus the Pharisees sinned against the Holy Ghost. Stubborn, sullen, ironhearted, they determined to close their eyes to all evidence, and thus they committed the unpardonable sin."

Isaiah describes this terrible condition in **chapter 5 and verse 20** of the book that bears his name. Notice what he wrote there, **Isaiah 5:20**, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."

Those who persistently resist truth will ultimately become so perverted in their thinking that they will no longer be able to distinguish between good and evil. They used to know the difference between right and wrong, but now they honestly think that right is wrong and wrong is right. Really, a person who has committed the unpardonable sin is one who has come to believe a lie, as it says in **2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11**, because people refused to receive the love of the truth; do you love the truth friend? If we truly

love the truth, will it be a hard thing to obey it? And so we've got to love it, and if we don't, we need to ask God for a new heart, because there's something wrong with the one we have. May it never be said of us that we didn't love the truth, because if we don't, God will send us strong delusion, that we should believe a lie. God have mercy!

Now let's review what we've learned so far about the unpardonable sin. First of all, from what we've already read, the unpardonable sin is not something that develops immediately. It does not happen to a person when they commit a certain sin the first time. It happens over a period of time! Usually over a long period of time, because God is not willing that any should perish, so He gives us time. When we sin the Holy Spirit convicts of sin and we are given opportunity to repent, but if we don't and we continue to commit the same act, that's what's dangerous as far as the unpardonable sin is concerned. Now don't get me wrong, because every sin is dangerous, even if you don't commit the unpardonable sin, because your heart can stop beating at any time, and if you have unconfessed sin in your life when that happens you will be eternally lost. So the final result will be the same no matter what kind of sin it is. So it's imperative that we not allow sin to go 'unrepented of and unconfessed, but take care of it the very moment the Holy Spirit brings conviction to your heart. That's something the Pharisees failed to do and it cost them dearly.

Don't you think some of those Pharisees who rejected Christ at His birth, were still alive some 30 years later when they accused Him of being in league with Beelzebub? I bet they were, and yet it wasn't until they knowingly attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil that they had crossed the line. Which brings us to a conclusion: a person can ignorantly or unknowingly attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil and yet not commit the unpardonable sin. They may even do it time and time again without crossing the line, and only God knows where that line is. We must not be like the Pharisees when the Holy Spirit witnessed to their spirit and they came to know that they were wrong, but still deliberately gave credit to the devil for what the Holy Spirit was doing.

The Pharisees knew they were wrong, but pride got in the way and they refused to admit that Jesus was who they knew He was in their heart. Notice what it says in ***Review and Herald, April 30, 1901***, "They (**the Jewish rulers**) must acknowledge that supernatural power attended His work, but this power, they declared, was derived from Satan. Did they really believe this? No; but they were so determined that the truth should not affect their hearts and they be converted, that they charged the work of the Spirit of God to the devil."

Even though we can look back now and see that the Jewish leaders committed the unpardonable sin and how it came about, as finite beings we have no right to pass judgment upon others today, because we can't read the heart. God has not given us that kind of insight and we should never act like He has. Our work is to uplift Christ to the sinner as their only hope and leave the results with God.

There was a time not very long ago when I heard an independent ministry leader say that a certain person had gone too far in sin to be forgiven, and today, a few years later, he himself is in more danger of committing the unpardonable sin than the one he condemned, because he has turned his back upon the truth, and as far as I know he is now living a worldly life. And so we must be very careful not to pass judgment upon anyone, because we just don't know the final outcome, and I hope and pray that this man will yet come to his senses and return to the Lord. You know, there's a principle in **Romans 2:1** that says those who judge and condemn another, are guilty of practicing the same things, and so again, we need to be careful.

Notice what it says in *Review and Herald July 30, 1901*, and if the prophet herself said this, surely we have no more insight than she did. "I have never been given the testimony to bear to anyone, 'you have committed the unpardonable sin.' God never told anyone to say to a fellow being, 'you have committed the unpardonable sin.' . . . God has never empowered one mortal to say to another mortal, 'you are lost.' "

Now, that's not to say that we cannot know that any sin, if persisted in, will result in the unpardonable sin, but we cannot determine when the words "unpardonable" will be written across someone's name in the books of heaven. That's God's prerogative and not ours, and aren't you thankful for that? We have nothing whatsoever to do with determining when a person has gone too far, and we should never forget it.

Have you ever considered the fact that every person who receives the mark of the beast will have committed the unpardonable sin? No one has yet received that mark, but in the end every one of them will have committed the unpardonable sin.

Notice what it says in *The Great Controversy, page 449*, "Christians of past generations observed the Sunday, supposing that in so doing they were keeping the Bible Sabbath; and there are now true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion, who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. **(This would be a sin of ignorance)** God accepts their sincerity of purpose and their integrity before Him. But when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever

shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. **(This would be deliberate or known sin)** He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshipping the beast and his image. As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—The mark of the beast. And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast.” **(Which results in the unpardonable sin, so we see a progression here)**

But did you notice how fair God is! No one will suffer the results of the sin against the Holy Ghost and receive the mark of the beast until they have made a conscious and willful choice to serve and give glory to the prince of darkness rather than God.

Now, there are several examples in the Bible of people who committed the unpardonable sin, but we don't have time to look at all of them. There were the antediluvians, there was the Pharaoh of the exodus, Sodom and Gomorrah, Ananias and Sapphira, Nadab and Abihu, Judas and I'm sure you can think of many more, but the one that stands out above all the rest is the rebellion of Korah. You'll find the story in **Numbers 16**, so you might want to turn there, because in just a minute we're going to look at it in some detail.

The reason this story is the most significant example in the Scriptures of the unpardonable sin is because *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 3, page 355* calls it "The Greatest Rebellion." That means it's the prime example of the sin against the Holy Ghost that took place upon this earth, which excludes the rebellion of Lucifer in heaven, but as we'll see there are many similarities.

The setting of this story is about a year after the golden calf apostasy, and right on the heels of the murmuring that developed because of the evil report the unfaithful spies brought back after searching the land of Canaan. In fact, almost the whole history of Israel was one of complaining about something, wasn't it? But now we begin to see a deep laid plot developing, and not unlike the one that developed in heaven with Lucifer. I'd like to start reading at the beginning of the chapter. **Numbers 16:1-3**, "Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the

assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?”

As we see from this reading: Korah was the leader of this rebellion, and he was a Levite. And if you’ll study into it, you’ll find that he was a cousin to Moses and Aaron. Now let me back up a minute and give you a little more history about why Korah and his cohorts felt the way they did, and you can find many of these details in ***Patriarchs and Prophets starting at page 395.***

Before God appointed Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, the firstborn son of every family held that sacred position, and this was one of the main things that gave rise to the jealousy and dissatisfaction of Korah. After all, it was probably less than a year since his position as priest of his family was replaced by Aaron. And so, these feelings of discontent had been smoldering for some months until finally they developed into open rebellion. Just being a Levite, which was also a sacred position, wasn’t good enough for Korah. He not only wanted his position as priest of his family back, but he wanted to be priest of the whole congregation. Well, as the story continues, he didn’t fail to find sympathizers. Close to the tribe of Levi on the south side of the tabernacle were the Reubenites; of which Dathan, and Abiram, were a part. And since Reuben was the first born son of Jacob, they claimed that the authority belonged to them. And so, they made a deal with Korah to divide the high honors of leadership once they succeeded in ousting Moses as the leader and Aaron as High Priest. And the thing was, most of the people were on their side, because they were not willing to submit to the sentence that they must die in the wilderness for believing the evil report of those 10 spies. Just like Lucifer, Korah carried on his rebellious work secretly for a time, but as soon as he figured the movement had sufficient strength, he publicly accused Moses and Aaron of seizing the power upon their own authority, which he and his partners in crime believed they were equally entitled to share.

All the congregation are as holy as you are, Moses, why do you lift yourself up above them? And you can tell by his response that Moses was totally unaware of this plot against God’s established government, and when the terrible significance of it burst upon him, what did he do? **Verse 4**, “And when Moses heard it he fell upon his face.” We’re not told how long Moses lay prostrate before the Lord, but when he got up **verses 5-7** says, “And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.

This do; take you censers, Korah, and all his company; and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.”

And they were taking too much upon them, because they had not been chosen and ordained to minister in the sanctuary as priests. And you know, I hate to say it, but we have the same problem today in the independent movement! We have too many people self-proclaiming themselves ministers when God has not called them to that position. And this is one of the reasons why there are so many problems, and fanaticisms, and extremes, and division, and error within the home churches! There have been too many people aspiring to a leadership position when they have no more idea than Korah did of the sacredness and awesome responsibility of the office.

Verses 8-11, “And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?”

Doesn't it seem odd to you, that the Levites would be the ones to rebel like this? Especially when you recall their faithfulness in the golden calf apostasy? Not only were Korah and the rest of the Levites on the Lord's side during the golden calf apostasy, but some of them along with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were also in the company of the 70 elders who went up into the mount and beheld the glory of God! And so, it just goes to show you that we can't live on yesterday's experience. Our connection with the Lord has to be renewed every morning when we wake up, and every night before we go to sleep. That was the reason for the morning and evening sacrifice. Somewhere between the golden calf apostasy and Korah's rebellion, the Levites forgot to do that; and they lost their way and became totally befuddled by Satan.

Verses 12-16, “And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, we will not come up: is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up. And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them,

neither have I hurt one of them. And Moses said unto Korah, be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow.”

You may not have noticed, but God was still gracious enough to give these rebels an opportunity to repent—did you notice? That’s why Moses said “to morrow.” “Sleep on it! Reflect overnight and consider what you’re doing! This is a serious step you’re taking—think about it!” You can’t help but see in this story God’s mercy and longsuffering toward sinners. But instead of taking this time to search their hearts, they hardened their hearts and were just hours away from suffering the results of committing the unpardonable sin and they didn’t know it. Their night of probation was not spent in repentance and confession, but in devising some way to resist the overwhelming evidence that they were wrong.

Verses 17-40, “And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer. And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron. And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation? And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. **(Now God is giving the congregation an opportunity to repent)** And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. **(And praise God they decided to obey)** So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. **(It seems it’s too late at this point for these three men and the children of Dathan and Abiram, wouldn’t you say?)** And Moses said, hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking

all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense. **(Why? Because they had also committed the unpardonable sin)** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed. The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the LORD, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel. And Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar: To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses.”

Now comes the big BUT. Even though Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and Dathan and Abiram’s families were swallowed up by the earth, and even though the 250 princes were all burned up: notice what the children of Israel did and said. **Verse 41**, “But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.”

What were the people doing? They were accusing Moses and Aaron, who they believed to be led by Satan, of killing the people that God Himself killed. Let me read it to you from inspiration.

Patriarchs and Prophets, pages 404, 405, “Korah would not have taken the course he did had he known that all the directions and reproofs communicated to Israel were from God. But he might have known this. God had given overwhelming evidence that He was leading Israel. But Korah and his companions rejected light until they became so blinded that the most striking manifestations of His power were not sufficient to convince them; they attributed them all to human or satanic agency. The same thing was done by the people, who the day after the destruction of Korah and his company came to Moses and Aaron, saying, ‘Ye have killed the people of the Lord.’ Notwithstanding they had had the most convincing evidence of God’s displeasure at their course, in the destruction of the men who had deceived them, they dared to

attribute His judgments to Satan, declaring that through the power of the evil one, Moses and Aaron had caused the death of good and holy men. It was this act that sealed their doom. They had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit.”

Verse 42, “And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.”

The glory of God is what arrested the people in their wicked course; because they were just about to kill Moses and Aaron. Now notice what happened next.

Verses 43-48, “And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces. And Moses said unto Aaron, take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.”

Evidently those who had gone too far in their rebellion died, but those who didn't were given another chance by Aaron making an atonement, because there was still hope for the rest. There are always leaders in rebellion who are more guilty than the rest, and that's what was going on here.

Now let me ask you something: who did Aaron represent as High Priest? Jesus! And what does the incense represent? Christ's righteousness! Notice: the plague was stopped only after the righteousness of Christ was applied. That means that atonement for sin can only find a remedy through Christ. And this is what all the people who died rejected. They were really rejecting Christ, weren't they?

Verses 49, 50, “Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah. And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.”

What a house cleaning the children of Israel had to go through to achieve peace in the camp. And the story doesn't end here! It continues on in Chapter 17, but we don't have

time to go any further today. But let me leave you with this thought: the greatest deception in the world is for a person to think that they are all right, when they are all wrong. Lucifer and one third of the angels who were cast out of heaven thought they were right. Eve thought she was right when she ate of the forbidden fruit. Cain thought he was right when he brought fruit and veggies as an offering. The Jews thought they were right when they crucified Jesus. The papacy thought it was right when they martyred millions of God's saints. Most of the Millerites thought they were right when they went back to their Sunday churches after the great disappointment.

All through history people thought they were right when they were wrong. And just like Korah and his company, they would not have taken the course they did had they known that God was leading them. But as we read a few moments ago, "they might have known." They had the opportunity to know; they had plenty of evidence all along that they were heading in the wrong direction, and several times the Holy Spirit gave them opportunity to see that they were wrong, but here's where they failed: they didn't want to entertain the idea, or even the possibility that they could be wrong! They didn't like the thought of humbling themselves before God and their brethren. And in their pride, because that's really what it was, they refused to be brought to repentance. Instead of acknowledging their error when the Holy Spirit was speaking to their hearts, they did everything in their power to convince themselves and others, that the Holy Spirit was leading them and teaching them, when all the while it was that of another power, thereby giving credit to the devil for what the Holy Spirit had been for some time trying to accomplish in their lives.

You see, it doesn't matter whether you attribute the things of the Holy Spirit to the devil, or the things of the devil to the Holy Spirit: the result is the same; the loss of eternal life. So here's the question, how can we know whether or not we're deceived, or how do we keep from becoming deceived? The answer is very simple; David answers it in just fourteen words.

Psalm 119; 105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." We must study God's word with a teachable spirit and with a heart to obey, and if you continue to do that, "you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Free from deception and free from the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. If you want more detailed information about this, I invite you to read the chapter in ***The Great Controversy*** titled "The Scriptures a Safeguard." The Bible, as it's impressed upon our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, is our only safeguard against the sin against the Holy Ghost.

I'll close by reading two short statements from the pen of inspiration. The first is from ***The Faith I Live By, page 58***, "No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent. . . The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not lie in any sudden word or deed; it is the firm, determined resistance of truth and evidence."

And then the last one from ***The Desire of Ages, page 324***, "In rejecting Christ the Jewish people committed the unpardonable sin; and by refusing the invitation of mercy, we may commit the same error. We offer insult to the Prince of life, and put Him to shame before the synagogue of Satan and before the heavenly universe when we refuse to listen to His delegated messengers, and instead listen to the agents of Satan, who would draw the soul away from Christ. So long as one does this, he can find no hope or pardon, and he will finally lose all desire to be reconciled to God."

Very important, the only way for you to determine if you are listening to a delegated messenger of God or one of Satan's agents is to know what the Bible says. In other words, if we don't know for ourselves what the Bible teaches, we will end up committing the unpardonable sin. That's the take away from what we just read. And so, please, take the time to become acquainted with the word and obey what it says and repent when conviction comes and you will be safe.