

## Jesus on Judgment

In the Greek language, there are different words for "judge," each with a distinct nuance and context, and many of these are translated into the single English word "judge" in our Bible translations. Understanding these Greek words can give us a deeper insight into the meanings of judgment in the New Testament and the specific ways Jesus and others used the term.

Here are the most prominent Greek words that are translated as "**judge**" in the New Testament:

### 1. Κρίνω (Krínō)

- **Meaning:** This is the most common Greek word for "**judge**" and can mean **to decide, to discern, to evaluate, or to condemn**. It involves making a decision based on careful analysis or discernment. It can be used in both positive and negative senses.
- **Context:** Krínō can refer to both **righteous judgment** (deciding justly, discerning truth, making a decision according to God's law) and **condemnatory judgment** (passing a sentence of condemnation or punishment).

#### Example:

- **Matthew 7:1**  
*"Do not judge (krínō), or you too will be judged (krínō)."*
  - **Meaning:** Here, Jesus uses krínō in the sense of evaluating others, possibly with the implication of a **final judgment**, warning against self-righteous or hypocritical judgment.

### 2. Διακρίνω (Diakrínō)

- **Meaning:** This word means **to discern, to judge between, or to separate**. It refers to the act of distinguishing or making a **judgment about something**, often with the idea of making a careful distinction.

It is less about condemnation and more about the process of distinguishing or discerning one thing from another.

- **Context:** It is used when making judgments regarding the **right from the wrong, true from false, or good from evil** in a more nuanced way.

#### **Example:**

- **Matthew 16:3**  
*“And in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret (diakrínō) the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.”*
  - **Meaning:** Here, the word is used in the sense of discerning or distinguishing, rather than condemning.

### **3. Κρίμα (Kríma)**

- **Meaning:** This is the noun form of **krínō** and means **judgment or decision**, often with the idea of **verdict** or **punishment**. It can refer to a **sentence of judgment** or the **outcome** of a judgment, whether positive or negative.
- **Context:** Kríma is used when referring to **the results** of a judgment, particularly in the sense of divine judgment, but it can also be used in a more general legal or moral sense.

#### **Example:**

- **John 12:31**  
*“Now is the time for judgment (kríma) on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”*
  - **Meaning:** This refers to **the judgment** that will be rendered on the world and the **condemnation** of the enemy, the prince of this world (Satan).

#### 4. Ανακρίνω (Anakrínō)

- **Meaning:** This verb means **to examine, to investigate, or to question**. It refers to the process of thoroughly examining a case, especially in a legal or judicial context, to determine what is true or right.
- **Context:** It is often used in contexts of investigation, where someone is being examined or questioned before a judgment is made.

#### Example:

- **1 Corinthians 2:15**  
*“The person with the Spirit makes judgments (anakrínō) about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments.”*
  - **Meaning:** Here, it speaks about someone who is spiritually discerning and able to make judgments about various matters, not based on human understanding but through spiritual insight.

#### 5. Εκδίκηση (Ekdíkēsis)

- **Meaning:** This term refers to **vengeance or revenge**, but it can also be understood in the sense of divine **retribution or just punishment**. While not typically translated as “judge” in most English versions, it is sometimes associated with God's judgment as He brings justice.
- **Context:** It refers more to the **act of judgment** in terms of bringing about justice through punishment or vengeance, particularly when God acts to right wrongs.

#### Example:

- **Romans 12:19**

*“Do not take revenge (ekdikēsis), my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”*

- **Meaning:** This speaks to leaving judgment and retribution to God, as only He can rightly enact justice and vengeance.

### **Summary of Greek Words for "Judge":**

1. **Krínō (Κρίνω):** To judge, decide, discern, or condemn; used most often in Scripture.
2. **Diakrínō (Διακρίνω):** To discern, judge between, or separate.
3. **Kríma (Κρίμα):** Judgment, verdict, or decision; the result of judgment.
4. **Anakrínō (Ανακρίνω):** To examine, investigate, or question.
5. **Ekdíkēsis (Εκδίκηση):** Vengeance or divine retribution.

Each of these words gives a slightly different perspective on judgment, ranging from discerning the truth to the final sentence of justice, and from **examining** a situation to **seeking justice**. Understanding these distinctions helps us better grasp the multifaceted ways in which Jesus and others use the concept of judgment throughout the New Testament.

### **1. Judgment is Certain and Final**

Jesus makes it clear that judgment will come, and it will be **final** — there will be no appeal. His words emphasize the **certainty of judgment** based on how people live.

### **Matthew 12:36-37**

*“But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

- **Key Point:** Judgment will be thorough, and even words spoken will be judged. The way we speak reveals the heart.

### **John 5:22-23**

*“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”*

- **Key Point:** Jesus, as the Son, has been given authority to judge the world. Honor and trust in Him are vital for salvation.

## **2. Judgment Based on Deeds**

Jesus emphasized that people’s **actions and hearts** would be the determining factor in judgment, not just outward appearances.

### **Matthew 7:21-23**

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

- **Key Point:** Simply professing faith or doing works in Jesus' name is not enough. Genuine **obedience** to God's will is what matters for judgment.

### **Matthew 16:27**

*“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.”*

- **Key Point:** Jesus will **reward or judge** people based on their **deeds**. It's not just about faith but also how that faith is **lived out** in actions.

### 3. Warning Against Hypocrisy and Self-Righteousness

Jesus often warned against those who thought they were righteous on their own terms and judged others harshly while failing to examine themselves.

#### Matthew 7:1-5

*“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”*

- **Key Point:** Jesus warns that we should not be quick to judge others, especially with harshness, because we too will be judged by the same standard we use.

#### Luke 18:9-14 (Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector)

*The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

- **Key Point:** Jesus condemns self-righteousness and the judgmental attitude that places oneself above others. Humility and repentance are key for justification.

### 4. The Judgment of Nations and the Final Judgment

Jesus also spoke about the **final judgment** — a time when all nations and individuals will stand before God.

### **Matthew 25:31-46 (The Sheep and the Goats)**

*“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”*

*“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”*

*“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’”*

*“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”*

- **Key Point:** The **final judgment** will be about **compassion and love** for others, especially those in need. How we treat the least among us is how we treat Christ.

### **John 12:48**

*“There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.”*

- **Key Point:** Jesus' **words** will be the standard by which people are judged.

## **5. Judgment is Based on Relationship with Jesus**

Finally, Jesus teaches that **belief in Him** is central to **avoiding condemnation** and receiving eternal life.

### **John 3:16-18**

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

- **Key Point: Faith in Jesus** is the key to escaping condemnation. Those who reject Jesus stand condemned because they reject the one who can save them.

### **Summary of Key Themes in Jesus' Words About Judgment:**

1. **Judgment is Certain:** Everyone will stand before Jesus, and He will judge based on words, deeds, and hearts.
2. **Based on Actions:** Faith in Jesus must be **lived out** through **obedience** and **service to others**, especially the poor and needy.
3. **Warning Against Hypocrisy:** Jesus warns that self-righteousness and judgmental attitudes will not be tolerated.
4. **Final Judgment:** The final separation between the righteous (sheep) and the wicked (goats) will occur based on how we **love and serve** others.
5. **Faith in Jesus is Central:** Believing in Jesus and accepting His **words** leads to **life**; rejecting Him leads to condemnation.

Based on Jesus' teachings and the Greek words used in the New Testament, it seems clear that **human authority is limited** when it comes to judgment. Here's a breakdown of why that is:

## 1. Man's Role in Judgment:

- **Judgment (kríma)**: This is primarily God's authority. God's judgment is final, and it concerns eternal matters like salvation, condemnation, and ultimate righteousness.
- **Discernment (diakrisis, anakrino)**: Humans are instructed to **discern** or make wise decisions in certain matters (like disputes, behavior, and teachings), but this is distinct from the **final judgment** that belongs to God. Jesus taught us to **discern** situations and people's hearts, but we are never told to condemn or issue eternal verdicts.

## 2. Man's Role in Condemnation:

- **Condemnation (katakrima)**: Jesus is clear that **condemnation** (in the sense of issuing a final, eternal sentence) belongs to God alone. Even when Jesus speaks about judging, it is often in terms of discernment, warnings, or teaching, never about condemning a soul permanently.
- Jesus teaches that we should not be quick to **condemn** others (Matthew 7:1-2, Luke 6:37), which aligns with His broader message of mercy, grace, and forgiveness. He emphasizes that God is the ultimate judge (Matthew 25:31-46, John 5:22).

## 3. Judging vs. Discernment:

- **Judging** (krinō) in the sense of deciding someone's eternal fate or condemning them is reserved for God (Matthew 7:1-2, John 5:22). We're instructed not to judge others with a hypocritical or self-righteous attitude but to leave ultimate judgment to God.
- **Discernment** involves understanding a situation or someone's actions to make wise, just, or loving decisions. This is what Jesus encourages—making wise judgments about behavior (Matthew 18:15-17), teachings (Matthew 7:15-20), and interpersonal conflict (Matthew 5:23-24). Discernment helps guide how we live and interact with others, but it does not grant the authority to render eternal condemnation.

#### 4. Jesus as the Ultimate Judge:

- Jesus makes it clear that He is the **final judge** in matters of eternal life and death (Matthew 25:31-32, John 5:22-23). We are to submit to His judgment, not attempt to take His place by making ultimate decisions about another person's soul.

#### 5. Forgiveness Over Condemnation:

- The theme of **forgiveness** is central to Jesus' teachings on judgment. He teaches us to forgive others (Matthew 6:14-15), not to hold people's sins against them (Luke 6:37). The call to forgive reflects a **restraint from condemning**, recognizing that only God can judge with perfect justice.

#### Conclusion:

**Man has no authority to condemn** others in an eternal sense. Our role is **to discern**, but always with humility and grace, leaving ultimate judgment to God. **Discernment** allows us to navigate situations wisely and make decisions about right and wrong, but **condemnation** of others, especially regarding eternal matters, is not within our purview. Jesus calls us to **forgive, show mercy**, and trust in God's final judgment.

#### Definition of Blaspheme:

**To blaspheme** means:

**To speak or act with contempt, irreverence, or intentional dishonor toward God, sacred things, or what is holy.**

#### In Biblical and Spiritual Contexts, blaspheme can involve:

1. **Speaking evil or falsely about God** – attributing false or wicked qualities to God.

2. **Mocking, cursing, or reviling** what is sacred — including Jesus, Scripture, or the Holy Spirit.
3. **Claiming what is holy is evil** (or vice versa) — as in when the Pharisees said Jesus was casting out demons by Satan's power.
4. **Claiming divine status falsely** (in some uses) — e.g., saying "I am God" falsely was seen as blasphemy.
5. **Deliberate rejection of God's truth** — especially resisting the Holy Spirit's witness, as Jesus warns in the Gospels.

### Greek Origin:

- The word in the New Testament is "**blasphēmēō**" (βλασφημέω).
- It literally means "**to speak harm**" or "**to speak evil of.**"

### Important Note:

- Blasphemy isn't *doubt*, *struggle*, or even *anger at God* in a moment of pain. It is **willful, defiant, and slanderous rejection** of what is sacred — especially when done knowingly and persistently.

### The Holy Spirit: Most Common Definition

**The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity — fully God — who proceeds from the Father (and the Son), and is the personal presence and power of God active in the world, convicting, guiding, empowering, and dwelling within believers.**

### Key Aspects:

1. **Person, not a force**
  - The Holy Spirit is **not** just a feeling, energy, or symbol.

- He is a **conscious, divine person** — with will, intellect, and emotion (Ephesians 4:30, 1 Corinthians 12:11).

## 2. **The Spirit of God and of Christ**

- He is called the **Spirit of God** (Romans 8:14) and the **Spirit of Christ** (Romans 8:9), unifying Father and Son.
- He reveals Christ, glorifies Him, and **testifies to truth** (John 15:26).

## 3. **Convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment**

- John 16:8 – *“When He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”*

## 4. **Dwells within believers**

- 1 Corinthians 3:16 – *“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”*
- He is **our seal and guarantee** of salvation (Ephesians 1:13–14).

## 5. **Gives spiritual gifts and bears fruit**

- 1 Corinthians 12:7 – spiritual gifts.
- Galatians 5:22–23 – fruit of the Spirit: *love, joy, peace, etc.*

### **Most concise definition in plain terms:**

**The Holy Spirit is God living in us — guiding us to truth, empowering us to live like Christ, and revealing God’s presence and love.**

## Old Testament: Blasphemy in Jewish Law

Under the Law of Moses, blasphemy was seen as a **severe and punishable sin** because it directly violated God's holiness.

### Example: Leviticus 24:10–16

A man blasphemes the Name (YHWH) and curses — and God instructs that he be stoned to death.

- **Key idea:** Speaking against God's Name was **utterly sacred** and any slander was punishable by death.
- **Leviticus 24:16** – *“Anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord is to be put to death.”*

## New Testament: Jesus' Teachings and Encounters with Blasphemy

Jesus is both **accused of blasphemy** and **teaches what true blasphemy is**, often shifting focus from **words alone** to the **heart's intent**.

### Example 1: Jesus Accused of Blasphemy (John 10:33)

*“We are not stoning you for any good work,” they said, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”*

- The religious leaders thought Jesus dishonored God by **equating Himself with the Father**.
- But Jesus was **telling the truth** — showing how blasphemy can be **misused** by the self-righteous.

### Example 2: The “Unforgivable Sin” (Matthew 12:22–32)

The Pharisees say Jesus casts out demons by **Beelzebul** (Satan).

- Jesus warns: **calling the work of the Holy Spirit “demonic” is blasphemy against the Spirit** — and **unforgivable** if done knowingly and maliciously.

### **Example 3: Stephen Accused of Blasphemy (Acts 6:11–13)**

False witnesses accuse Stephen of blaspheming “Moses and God.”

- Like with Jesus, **truth-tellers are falsely accused**, showing that real blasphemy isn’t about speaking *new truth*, but **speaking against God’s truth**.

### **Why Is Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit Unforgivable?**

Jesus says in **Matthew 12:31–32**, **Mark 3:28–30**, and **Luke 12:10**:

*“Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven... but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come.”*

### **So, why is *that* blasphemy unforgivable?**

Here are **5 key insights** that align with Scripture and spiritual understanding:

#### **1. Blasphemy Against the Spirit = Deliberate, Final Rejection of God's Truth**

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit isn’t just saying something irreverent — it’s the **willful, hardened rejection of the Spirit's witness to truth**, particularly regarding Jesus as the Son of God.

- The Pharisees, in context, **saw miracles** done by the Spirit and **claimed they were from Satan**.

- This is a **deliberate denial of the light**, calling good “evil” even when you *know* it’s good.

## 2. The Holy Spirit Is the One Who Brings Conviction and Leads to Repentance

“No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” – 1 Corinthians 12:3

- If someone **rejects or slanders** the very Spirit that is **trying to draw them to repentance**, they cut off the only path to forgiveness.
- It’s like **slandering the only doctor who can save your life** and refusing treatment — not because the doctor is unwilling, but because you’ve denied he’s good.

## 3. Blasphemy Against God and Jesus Can Come from Ignorance — But the Spirit Speaks Directly to the Heart

- Jesus says, “*Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man will be forgiven.*” Why? Because He was **misunderstood**, even crucified in ignorance.
- The Holy Spirit, however, speaks **internally**, not through veil or metaphor.
- Blaspheming the Spirit means resisting truth when it is made **clear to your conscience**.

## 4. It Is Not That God *Won’t* Forgive — It’s That the Person *Refuses* to Receive Forgiveness

- The unforgivable sin is unforgivable **not because God withholds grace**, but because the person **has made themselves unreachable** by grace.

- It is **permanent spiritual rebellion**, a **seared conscience** (1 Tim 4:2), that will not repent.

## 5. It's a Warning, Not a Trap

Jesus didn't say this to scare sincere people who struggle or doubt. He said it to **warn proud, religious hearts** that they were closing their eyes to the Spirit.

- If someone **fears they've committed the unforgivable sin**, that fear is likely **evidence they haven't** — because **the Spirit is still reaching them**.

### Bottom Line:

**To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to willfully, knowingly, and permanently reject God's truth, calling it evil — and thereby refuse the only way by which forgiveness can happen.**

It's not about **saying the wrong words**. It's about a hardened heart that has **so rejected God's Spirit** that it can no longer even want to be forgiven.

## Jesus on Forgiveness

there are a few Greek words that are translated as "**forgiveness**" in the New Testament, each with slightly different nuances. Let's break them down:

### 1. ἄφεσις (áphesis)

- **Meaning:** This word is often translated as "**forgiveness**," "**pardon**," or "**release**." It refers to the **removal** or **letting go** of something, such as a debt or offense. It's the most common term for forgiveness

in the New Testament and emphasizes the **release** or **remission** of guilt, sin, or debt.

- **Usage:**
  - **Matthew 26:28:** *"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness (áphesis) of sins."*
  - **Mark 1:4:** *"And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness (áphesis) of sins."*
  - **Acts 5:31:** *"God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive (áphesis) their sins."*
- **Concept: Áphesis** is about **release** from something that was owed, like a debt being canceled or a penalty being lifted. It emphasizes **freedom** from the burden of sin and its consequences.

## 2. απόλυσις (apólusis)

- **Meaning:** This word means "**release**" or "**liberation**." It can also be used in the sense of a **release from bondage** or **the remission of guilt**, though it is less commonly used than **áphesis** in reference to forgiveness.
- **Usage:**
  - **Luke 4:18:** *"He has sent me to proclaim freedom (apólusis) for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free."*
- **Concept: Apólusis** focuses more on **liberation** or **freedom** rather than just the **cancellation** of guilt or debt. It can be understood as the release from spiritual imprisonment or oppression.

## 3. χάρισμα (chárisma)

- **Meaning:** This word means "**grace**" or "**gift.**" While it doesn't always translate directly to "forgiveness," it can have implications of forgiveness because it refers to the **free gift** given by God, which includes the gift of grace and forgiveness.
- **Usage:**
  - **Romans 5:15:** *"But the gift (chárisma) is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift (chárisma) that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!"*
  - **Romans 11:29:** *"For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable."*
- **Concept: Chárisma** refers to God's grace and **unearned favor**, which often includes **forgiveness** as a part of that grace. It's the **gift** of forgiveness extended to humanity, but it is broader in scope as it refers to God's gifts and favor in general.

#### 4. χαρίζομαι (charízomai)

- **Meaning:** This verb is derived from the noun **chárisma** and means "**to forgive**" or "**to grant forgiveness**" or "**to show favor.**" It carries the sense of **graciously** forgiving someone, often implying that the forgiveness is **freely given** and **undeserved**.
- **Usage:**
  - **Matthew 18:27:** *"The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go (charízomai)."*
  - **Ephesians 4:32:** *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving (charízomai) each other, just as in Christ God forgave (charízomai) you."*
  - **Colossians 3:13:** *"Bear with each other and forgive (charízomai) one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive (charízomai) as the Lord forgave you."*

- **Concept: Charízomai** emphasizes the **gracious and free nature of forgiveness**. It involves a **decision to forgive** someone out of **grace** rather than obligation or law. It's a deeply relational word, emphasizing the **act of showing mercy** and **granting pardon**.

## 5. ἰλάσκομαι (hiláskomai)

- **Meaning:** This verb means "**to appease**," "**to propitiate**," or "**to make reconciliation**". It is used in the context of **appeasing** or **atoning for sin**. In the New Testament, it often refers to the work of Jesus in appeasing God's wrath on behalf of humanity.
- **Usage:**
  - **1 John 2:2:** *"He is the atoning sacrifice (hiláskomai) for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."*
  - **1 John 4:10:** *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice (hiláskomai) for our sins."*
- **Concept: Hiláskomai** is more about the **appeasing or propitiating act** that makes forgiveness possible. Jesus is the **atoning sacrifice**, satisfying the wrath of God on behalf of humanity so that **forgiveness** can be extended.

## Summary of Key Greek Words for Forgiveness:

1. **ἄφεσις (áphesis)** – **Release** or **cancellation of debt** (most common word for forgiveness).
2. **ἀπόλυσις (apólusis)** – **Liberation** or **freedom**, often used in the context of spiritual release.
3. **χάρισμα (chárisma)** – **Grace** or **gift**; includes forgiveness as part of God's grace.
4. **χαρίζομαι (charízomai)** – **To forgive** or **to grant favor** graciously.

5. **ἰλάσκομαι (hiláskomai) – To appease or to make atonement,** relating to the act of reconciliation through Christ.

So, each word brings a unique aspect of **forgiveness** to the table, whether it's the **release of a debt** (áphesis), the **gracious act of forgiving** (charízomai), or the **atoning work of Christ** (hiláskomai). Together, they help form a rich and multifaceted understanding of forgiveness in the New Testament!

Defining **forgiveness** based on the words of Jesus offers a rich and deep understanding of what it truly means in His teachings. Jesus emphasized forgiveness not just as an act, but as an ongoing and foundational attitude that reflects God's nature and love. Here's a synthesis of His teachings on **forgiveness**:

**1. Forgiveness as a Release and Letting Go:**

- **Matthew 6:12:** *"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."*
- **Matthew 18:27:** *"The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go."*

**Jesus' Teachings:** Forgiveness is the act of **releasing others** from the debt they owe us, whether it be emotional, relational, or even physical. Just as we ask God to release us from our debts, we are called to **let go** of the debts others owe us. It is about not holding onto the **offense** but allowing **freedom** to both the forgiver and the forgiven.

**Definition:** **Forgiveness is the release of another person from the debt of their offense, setting them free from the burden of guilt and consequences.**

**2. Forgiveness as a Gracious Act of Mercy:**

- **Luke 6:37:** *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."*
- **Matthew 18:33:** *"Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?"*

**Jesus' Teachings:** Forgiveness is a **gracious act** that does not depend on the worthiness of the person being forgiven, but rather on the **mercy and grace** of the one who forgives. We forgive because we have been shown mercy, and in turn, we show mercy to others. It is an **act of love, compassion, and mercy**, even when the person has wronged us.

**Definition: Forgiveness is extending mercy to others, giving them what they don't deserve—just as God gives us mercy.**

### **3. Forgiveness as Reconciliation and Healing:**

- **Matthew 5:23-24:** *"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."*
- **Luke 15:20** (Parable of the Prodigal Son): *"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."*

**Jesus' Teachings:** Forgiveness isn't just about letting go of offense; it is also about **restoring relationships**. Jesus emphasizes that reconciliation is an important part of forgiveness. In the **Parable of the Prodigal Son**, the father's forgiveness wasn't just a release of his son's wrongdoing—it was a **restoration of their relationship**. Jesus also teaches that if there is division between us and others, **reconciliation** should take priority even over worship.

**Definition: Forgiveness is the act of restoring relationships and healing emotional or spiritual wounds caused by offenses.**

#### 4. Forgiveness as Requiring a Heart of Humility and Repentance:

- **Luke 17:3-4:** *"If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."*

**Rebuke** (Greek: *epitimaō*, ἐπιτιμάω) means to **correct, warn, or restrain** someone with the aim of **bringing truth, protecting from harm, or calling to repentance**. It is not harsh condemnation, but a **firm and loving confrontation** meant to restore, not to shame.

#### What Rebuke Is Not:

- It is **not condemnation** (which belongs to God alone).
- It is **not venting anger** or seeking revenge.
- It is **not self-righteous finger-pointing**.
- It is **not about winning arguments** but winning hearts back to truth.

The cornerstone of Rebuke is love because It seeks restoration, not humiliation (see Galatians 6:1), and it comes from someone who is also aware of their own need for grace.

- **Matthew 18:21-22:** *"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'"*

**Jesus' Teachings:** Our forgiveness does not require **repentance** on the part of the person who wronged us, though we must forgive if they honestly ask. Jesus teaches that forgiveness should be **unlimited**, even if the offense is repeated many times. The **heart of forgiveness** is not about the offense itself, but about the **attitude** we carry towards others. It is a call to **humility**, choosing not to hold grudges or keep a record of wrongs.

**Definition:** Forgiveness is an act of the will and heart, often requiring a spirit of humility and a willingness to forgive as many times as needed.

## 5. Forgiveness as Reflecting God's Character:

- **Matthew 6:14-15:** *"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*
- **Luke 23:34:** *"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'"*

**Jesus' Teachings:** Forgiveness is rooted in the **character of God**. As God has forgiven us, so we are to forgive others. Jesus, even on the cross, exemplifies this when He prays for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him. **Forgiveness** is not just a moral duty; it reflects the very **nature** and **heart** of God. The way we forgive others reveals how deeply we understand God's forgiveness toward us.

**Definition:** Forgiveness is a reflection of God's grace and character, as we forgive others the way God forgives us.

## 6. Forgiveness as Releasing Judgment and Condemnation:

- **Matthew 7:1-2:** *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*
- **Luke 6:37:** *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."*

**Jesus' Teachings:** Forgiveness involves **letting go of judgment** and **condemnation**. When we forgive, we are choosing not to judge others harshly, understanding that God is the final judge. In doing so, we also open ourselves to **God's mercy** and forgiveness.

**Definition: Forgiveness is releasing judgment and condemnation, allowing God to handle the justice while we focus on mercy and grace.**

### **Summary Definition of Forgiveness Based on Jesus' Words:**

Forgiveness, according to Jesus, is the **gracious and merciful release of others** from their offenses, modeled after God's forgiveness of us. It involves **restoring relationships**, offering **compassion**, and **choosing not to hold on to bitterness or judgment**. Forgiveness is not limited to a one-time act, but is **unlimited** and reflects a **heart of humility, mercy, and reconciliation**. It is central to the life of a disciple, showing the world the character of God.

### **Recap:**

Both **judgment** and **forgiveness**, as Jesus taught them, are **primarily spiritual matters**, not merely external or fleshly actions.

### **Judgment (Discernment) — Spiritual Emphasis**

- Jesus warned against **hypocritical judgment** (Matthew 7:1–5) — the kind that flows from pride or self-righteousness.
- He emphasized **righteous judgment** (John 7:24), which is about **discerning truth** with mercy, humility, and alignment with God's will — not condemning others.
- In Greek, *krinō* (judge) and *anakrinō* (discern) point to **spiritual evaluation**, not legal or flesh-based sentencing.

### **Spiritual Insight:**

True judgment (as permitted to man) is a spiritual discernment — seeing things clearly through God's wisdom, not through our wounded egos or societal filters.

## **Forgiveness – A Matter of the Heart and Spirit**

- Jesus taught forgiveness as an **act of release**, both spiritually and relationally (Matthew 6:14–15; Luke 23:34).
- The Greek word *aphēsis* literally means “release” or “letting go” — a spiritual unbinding.
- Forgiveness isn’t about forgetting or approving wrongdoing; it's about **choosing mercy**, just as God has shown us.

### **Spiritual Insight:**

Forgiveness removes spiritual barriers — between you and others, and between you and God. It's a decision of the heart that aligns your spirit with the character of Christ.

### **Conclusion:**

Both **judgment** and **forgiveness** are **expressions of the spirit**, not the flesh. They reflect **who you are becoming in Christ** more than what you do externally. The flesh often seeks revenge or self-righteous control. The Spirit seeks restoration, truth, humility, and peace.

### **Summary of Forgiveness Across the Gospels:**

- **Matthew** – 9 instances
- **Mark** – 5 instances
- **Luke** – 7 instances
- **John** – 3 instances

**Grand Total: ~24 distinct mentions/teachings** where Jesus explicitly speaks or acts in relation to forgiveness.

### **Jesus on Forgiveness in the Gospel of Matthew**

## 1. Matthew 5:7

*“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”*

**Context:** From the Sermon on the Mount — the Beatitudes. While the word “*forgiveness*” isn't used, mercy here includes forgiveness, especially in interpersonal relationships.

## 2. Matthew 5:23–24

*“First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”*

**Context:** Teaching about anger. Jesus tells followers to reconcile with others before offering worship — reconciliation implies forgiveness.

## 3. Matthew 6:12

*“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”*

**Context:** From the Lord's Prayer. This is a central teaching on daily dependence on God's forgiveness, connected to forgiving others.

## 4. Matthew 6:14–15

*“For if you forgive other people... your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”*

**Context:** Immediately following the Lord's Prayer, Jesus elaborates on the importance of forgiving others as a condition for receiving God's forgiveness.

## 5. Matthew 9:2–6

*“Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”*

**Context:** Jesus heals a paralyzed man and first forgives his sins. This is also a bold statement of divine authority to forgive.

## 6. Matthew 12:31–32

*“Every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.”*

**Context:** A serious teaching on the unforgivable sin—blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Still, it acknowledges the broad reach of God's forgiveness.

## **7. Matthew 18:21–22**

*“How many times shall I forgive my brother or sister...? Up to seventy times seven.”*

**Context:** Peter asks how often to forgive. Jesus responds with hyperbole to stress limitless forgiveness.

## **8. Matthew 18:23–35 — Parable of the Unforgiving Servant**

### **Key Verse (v. 35):**

*“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”*

**Context:** A powerful parable that illustrates how receiving forgiveness from God means we must forgive others.

## **9. Matthew 26:28**

*“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”*

**Context:** During the Last Supper, Jesus reveals that His death is the means by which forgiveness will be made available.

## **Jesus on Forgiveness in the Gospel of Mark**

### **1. Mark 2:5–12 — Healing of the Paralytic**

*“Son, your sins are forgiven.”*

**Context:** Jesus forgives the paralytic's sins before healing his body. The

Pharisees accuse Him of blasphemy because only God can forgive sins — Jesus then heals the man to prove His authority to forgive.

## 2. Mark 3:28–29

*“Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven...”*

**Context:** Similar to Matthew 12, Jesus warns about the unforgivable sin — blasphemy against the Holy Spirit — in contrast with God's abundant mercy toward all other sins.

## 3. Mark 4:12 (*quoted from Isaiah, but spoken by Jesus*)

*“...they may be ever seeing but never perceiving... otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”*

**Context:** Jesus explains why He speaks in parables. This refers to the heart condition required for receiving forgiveness.

## 4. Mark 11:25–26 (*verse 26 not in all manuscripts*)

*“When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”*

**Context:** A direct command from Jesus to forgive others as a condition for receiving divine forgiveness — echoes Matthew 6.

## 5. Mark 14:24

*“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,”*

**Context:** During the Last Supper. While the word *forgiveness* isn't directly used in Mark's version, it's understood in light of the covenant for the remission of sins (clearly stated in Matthew 26:28).

## Jesus on Forgiveness in the Gospel of Luke

### 1. Luke 5:20–24 — Healing of the Paralytic

*“Friend, your sins are forgiven.”*

**Context:** Same event as in Matthew and Mark. Jesus forgives the man's sins first, then heals his body, demonstrating His authority to forgive.

### 2. Luke 6:37

*“Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”*

**Context:** Part of the Sermon on the Plain. A concise and powerful principle of reciprocal mercy — links judgment and forgiveness directly.

### 3. Luke 7:41–50 — The Sinful Woman and the Two Debtors

*“Her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown.”*

**Context:** A woman anoints Jesus' feet with tears. He teaches that those who are forgiven much, love much. He then explicitly tells her, *“Your sins are forgiven.”*

### 4. Luke 11:4

*“Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”*

**Context:** The Lord's Prayer in Luke — reinforces the mutual nature of forgiveness.

### 5. Luke 12:10

*“Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.”*

**Context:** Another version of the teaching on the unforgivable sin.

## 6. Luke 17:3–4

*“If they sin against you seven times in a day... you must forgive them.”*

**Context:** Jesus teaches about rebuking and forgiving a repentant brother — again emphasizing limitless forgiveness.

## 7. Luke 23:34

*“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”*

**Context:** From the cross. Jesus prays for His executioners — the ultimate example of divine mercy and forgiveness.

## Jesus on Forgiveness in the Gospel of John

### 1. John 5:14

*“See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”*

**Context:** After healing a man at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus hints that his healing is connected to a deeper moral or spiritual restoration — though the word *forgiveness* isn't used, it's strongly implied.

### 2. John 8:1–11 — The Woman Caught in Adultery

*“Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.”*

**Context:** A powerful, iconic moment of Jesus forgiving someone caught in sin. He doesn't condone the sin but offers grace instead of judgment.

### 3. John 20:21–23

*“If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”*

**Context:** After the resurrection, Jesus breathes on the disciples and gives

them authority tied to the Holy Spirit — connecting the ministry of forgiveness directly to His followers.

John is more subtle about *explicit* mentions, but those it includes are deeply intimate, especially the post-resurrection commissioning.