

# Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints  
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages  
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## Moses, the Reluctant Servant

*"I will send thee" (Exodus 3:10).*

With good reason, Moses is highly esteemed as the servant of Jehovah. He was the agent God used to free the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. He then led them for forty years in the wilderness. He is called the meekest, or humblest, man in the earth (Numbers 12:3). So it may be of some surprise to find that just before he was sent to Egypt, he was reluctant to carry out God's will and had to be persuaded by God himself!

### THE BURNING BUSH

About one year before Israel left Egypt, Moses led the peaceful life of a shepherd, watching over the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. On one particular day<sup>1</sup> he saw something unusual — a burning bush that was not consumed.

Exodus 3:1-3, "Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."

Jehovah's angel called out to him, commanding that he remove his shoes because he stood on "holy ground." Of course, since this was the "mountain of God" it must be a holy place. Moses obeyed and then God introduced himself to Moses and described his intention to free Israel from the taskmasters of Egypt. Furthermore, God intended to use Moses to do that! Exodus 3:10, "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

Moses' response to this is surprising. Instead of being excited at being chosen for this great task he said: Exodus 3:11, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Moses basically says to God, "you have the **wrong man!**" He doesn't think he is qualified for this job. We cannot get into Moses' mind, but we wonder if his response

contained a bit of fear. As far as he knew, he was wanted for murder and didn't want to leave the peaceful life of a shepherd to face the authorities in Egypt.

But Jehovah was patient and reassured Moses that he himself would be with him and that the people would serve Jehovah upon this very mountain on which he stood.

### THE NAME OF GOD

But Moses pressed the issue and raised a **second problem** with being selected as God's spokesman. He said in verse 13: "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, 'The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?'"

Moses perceived this to be a problem. He felt the people of Israel would not recognize him as God's servant; challenge his claims and reject him.

But God told him what to say if that happens, in verses 14-15: "God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM ... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations."

Then Jehovah gave him even more detailed information intended for the elders of Israel. It is one thing to speak to the people, but something more to speak to the leadership. This was an appeal to higher authorities amongst the

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people. They were told prophetically what would happen to affect their release. Egypt would resist their efforts and Jehovah himself would smite them. However, the Egyptians would eventually plead with Israel to leave and they would be given some of the riches of the nation as a spoil, or payment, for all of the work they had done as slaves and for the houses they could not take with them.

### MIRACULOUS SIGNS

Moses was still unconvinced. For a **third time** he drew back and worried that he would not be believed. Exodus 4:1: “And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, Jehovah hath not appeared unto thee.”

Again, Jehovah showed great patience and gave him some tools to convince the Israelites that God was with him. Three miraculous signs would be unmistakable proof of Moses’ authority as God’s representative.

In Exodus 4:2-9, God provided the proofs for Moses. The first sign was Moses’ rod turning into a serpent. This miracle would certainly capture the attention of the Israelites. The second sign was Moses’ hand becoming leprous and then returning to normal. Again, this would be an unmistakable demonstration of God’s power. And the final sign would be changing water into blood. Clearly, such an exposition of the power of God should sway anyone.

### POOR SPEECH

Moses still tried to get out of this assignment. He offered a **fourth reason** not to carry God’s message to the people. This time his excuse was his poor speech. Verse 10, “Moses said unto Jehovah, Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.”

We may imagine that Jehovah’s patience was starting to wear thin at this point. He made the obvious point that he is the Creator of the mouth and the ears and the eyes. He knows all about the senses and man’s ability to communicate. Jehovah cut it short and said “I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt speak.”

But Moses’ reluctance was still evident yet a fifth time. He said in verses 13,14: “Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Moses.” God had enough of Moses’ equivocation. He engaged Aaron, Moses’ brother, as part of a team and Aaron would speak for him.

Divine providence provided a look into the heart of Moses and has given us a picture of a man whose character grew most wonderfully. At eighty years old, Moses’ tranquil life was turned upside down and he was asked to carry a formidable load of responsibility. It seems he was truly fearful at this prospect and was clearly reluctant to go. But God knew his heart, his potential and his future. And Moses finally accepted the task and demonstrated that he was more than up to it, as time revealed.



Moses at the burning bush

### ONE MORE ENCOURAGEMENT

It is interesting that Jehovah gave him **one more** encouragement, perhaps indicating the real reason for Moses’ recalcitrance. In Exodus 4:19 we read: “And Jehovah said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead that sought thy life.” This last, unspoken concern of Moses was resolved and he went forth in confidence as the leader of God’s people.

It is always good to review the actions of God’s Ancient Worthies to draw out lessons for ourselves. Perhaps, in considering these early actions of Moses, we learn that when God has something for us to do, we should not be reluctant in doing it. As members of the consecrated body of Christ, we should be excited and zealous to take on what providence brings to us. Please note that this is not a case where we are promoting ourselves. But when providence brings to us privileges of service, we should not be reluctant, looking for reasons to defer to others. Rather, we should remember, as was brought to Moses’ attention, that our God is more than able to make up for any deficiencies we may have. The promise in Psalms 37:5 should be an encouragement for us to accept any task that Jehovah wishes us to do.

“Commit thy way unto Jehovah;  
Trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass.”

— Br. David Stein

(1) Jewish tradition is very definite about this day on Horeb. They believe it was Nisan 15, exactly one year before Israel left Egypt. For example see <https://hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Parashah/Summaries/Terumah/Aliyot/aliyot.html>

## Financial Report

8,699.94	Balance January 1, 2020
8,835.00	Donations
-2,683.14	Expenses
14,851.80	Balance January 1, 2021
534	Mail subscribers, Email subscribers 340

# Resolving Differences at the Garden Tomb

*“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28:6).*

In comparing the Gospel accounts of the Garden Tomb experience some apparent differences appear. For example, the Matthew account says Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” came to the tomb of Jesus to anoint his body (Matthew 28:10). Mark adds Salome (Mark 16:1), Luke includes Joanna and “other women” (Luke 24:1), and John mentions only Mary Magdalene (John 20:1). The following chart illustrates some of the differences.

<b>Testimonies from the Four Gospels</b>			
<b>Matthew (28:1-10)</b>	<b>Mark (16:1-8)</b>	<b>Luke (24:1-12)</b>	<b>John (20:1-18)</b>
Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary”	Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James), and Salome	Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James), Joanna and “other women”	Mary Magdalene
An angel rolls away the stone, earthquake, guards faint	Found stone rolled away	Found stone rolled away	Found stone rolled away, Mary runs to tell Peter and John
One angel invites the women to “see the place ...”	Enter tomb and find one angel sitting inside who speaks	Two angels standing inside tomb speak	Upon return, Mary sees two angels in tomb, seated one at head and one at foot
Women run to tell disciples	Women fled from tomb in fear and determined not to say anything to anyone	Women run to tell the eleven	
Jesus meets them on the way and they worship him			Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene outside tomb

## FIRST VISITORS TO THE TOMB

The first apparent difference involves the number of women who came to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body. The John account presents no conflict since it describes the second visit of Mary Magdalene. It is possible the other women never returned to the tomb since the apostles they informed did not believe their story (see Luke 24:11). Or, if they did return, it was some time after Mary Magdalene had left the first time with the others. Luke includes Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James), Joanna and “other women.” Though not listing Salome, as does the Mark account, by using the phrase, “other women,” Luke indirectly includes her. The phrase is plural. Wilson’s Diaglott simply says, “the others” and seems to be the correct rendering of the Greek. This suggests at least two other women were present at the first visit to the tomb. From such a general description it is clear the accounts are not endeavoring to provide a detailed listing of those present. Matthew only mentions Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary,” likely because these were more well known than the others. However, we can conclude that there were at least five women who first came to the tomb.

## GREAT STONE ROLLED AWAY

Mark describes the women wondering who would roll the stone away for them. But when they arrived, the stone had already been moved. Luke and John both agree on this.

The Matthew account seems to describe the scene differently. “And for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, ‘Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified’” (Matthew 28:4,5). This passage implies the women witnessed the earthquake and removal of the stone. This would contradict Mark and Luke who say the stone was rolled away when they arrived. However, with a careful reading this is easily resolved. Matthew does not specify that the stone was still in place when they arrived. This is incorrectly assumed because in verse 5 the angel is addressing the women, while in just the previous verse the guards shook in fear at the earthquake and sight of the angel. The resolution is simply that there was a brief time lapse between when the angel removed the stone, in verse 4, and when the women arrived, in verse 5. This would harmonize with the other accounts that the women found the stone already moved.

## POSITION OF THE ANGEL

Another apparent discrepancy between the accounts is the location of the angel who addressed the women when they first arrived. Mark says upon seeing the stone rolled away the women simply entered the tomb and saw a young man sitting on the right side (Mark 16:4,5). Luke agrees with this description (Luke 24:3,4).

The Matthew account seems to suggest a problem. “Behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it” (Matthew 28:2). This may suggest the angel was sitting on the rolled away stone when he addressed the women in verse 6. The angel said, “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. ‘Come, see the place where the Lord lay’” (Matthew 28:6). Again, a careful reading of Matthew does not reveal where the angel was when speaking these words. Because of the proximity of the verses in Matthew, some may assume he was still sitting on the stone. But, in piecing the accounts together it appears the angel was likely already inside the tomb and invited them to come closer and see where Jesus’ body had lain. This would accord with Mark and Luke.

The earthquake, the rolling away of the stone, and the majestic appearance of the angel sitting on the stone terrified the guards. Soon after, the women arrived and found the stone removed. They entered the tomb and an angel invited them to come closer. The wording in Mark is strikingly similar to those in Matthew. “Behold the place where they laid him” (Mark 16:6).

Another difference between the accounts is the number of angels that appeared to the women. Mark describes “a young man” (Mark 16:5), while Luke mentions “two men” (Luke 24:4). The solution may simply be that only one of the two angels spoke, while the other remained silent and was not mentioned by Mark.

## REACTION OF THE WOMEN

Of particular interest is the reaction of the women once they saw the angel and heard his message. The Mark account says, “Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid” (Mark 16:8 NIV). What was it that these women feared? Describing the angel who spoke, Matthew says, “His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow” (Matthew 28:3). At the sight, even the Roman guards trembled and “became as dead men” (Matthew 28:4). What they witnessed was truly astonishing. As the women ventured into the tomb, they saw the radiant angels sitting on Jesus’ burial platform. “He is risen,” the angel said, and invited them to see “the place where the Lord lay.” Having their natural senses overwhelmed, fear, confusion, and a reserved joy permeated their minds.

In this confused mental state, they determined not to say anything to anyone they met on their way to the



*Women at the tomb*

apostles (Mark 16:8). Their confusion and fear may be the very reason Jesus appeared to them on the way. “Jesus met them, saying, ‘All hail.’ And they came and held him by the feet and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, ‘Be not afraid: go and tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall see me’” (Matthew 28:10).

There was now no question in their minds regarding what they had witnessed at the tomb. Yes, Jesus was alive, and they were commissioned to spread the word. This personal interaction with Jesus removed their fear and bewilderment, leaving only a great sense of joy. What an honor bestowed upon these thoughtful servants.

## MARY MAGDALENE

It is likely that Mary Magdalene was not present at this wonderful encounter on the road. In the Synoptic Gospels she is listed among those who first came to the tomb. However, John’s account primarily describes Mary’s second visit to the tomb. When she arrived with Peter and John, she was not aware of Jesus’ resurrection. Had she been with the other women as they returned to the apostles, she would have known about it. She went to tell Peter and John simply that the tomb was empty. She came back determined to find Jesus’ body and give it a proper burial. Believing she was speaking to the gardener, she said, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away” (John 20:15).

After the first visit to the tomb, Mary ran to Peter and John, who were likely in a different location than the other apostles. This would explain why the other apostles did not return with them. This distinction may take us back to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Upon Jesus’ arrest, nine of the apostles fled while Peter and John followed Jesus to the home of Caiaphas, in Jerusalem (John 18:15). After Peter denied Jesus in the courtyard of the High Priest, he “went out and wept bitterly” (Matthew 26:75). John, who had connections in the palace of the High Priest, went into the palace and likely overheard the interrogation of Jesus. This indicates Peter and John were separated from the other apostles and may have remained in Jerusalem on the night of Jesus’ arrest.

It is reasonable to assume that they were still in the

vicinity of Jerusalem at the time of our Lord's resurrection. They may have gone to the home of another Mary, the mother of John Mark, who lived in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). This would explain why they arrived at the tomb first and why they came running. The other apostles may have gone back to Bethany, some two miles outside of Jerusalem.

## SUMMARY

Putting the accounts together we may draw the following conclusions.

- There was a great earthquake and an angel rolled away the stone of the sepulcher.
- The Roman guards were terrified and went to tell the Chief Priests what they had seen (Matthew 28:4, 11).
- At least five women, including Mary Magdalene, came to Jesus' tomb to anoint his body.
- They entered the open tomb and an angel invited them to see the place where Jesus had laid.
- The women, afraid and bewildered, fled, determined not to say anything to anyone.
- Mary ran to tell Peter and John (possibly somewhere near Jerusalem) that the body of Jesus was gone. The other women sought out the remaining apostles.
- On their way, Jesus met the four women and they fell and worshipped him, finally believing he was alive.
- Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb with Peter and John, still unaware of Jesus' resurrection.
- Mary encountered Jesus and finally understood he had been resurrected.

## CONCLUSION

Though there appear to be some differences between the Gospel accounts, they are easily resolved. Even if a piecing together of the accounts is not exact as presented in this article, we can be sure these are only minor differences, and natural when multiple individuals share their eye-witness testimonies. Skeptics often seek such variations in order to impute contradictions and disparage the Bible. However, the sincere truth seeker will come with a desire to find agreement between the accounts. The harmony and power of these eye-witness statements should strengthen our faith in the reality of our Lord's resurrection. The Apostle Paul provided a sound principle on which to base our faith: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). In the Gospel narratives we have positive eye-witness accounts than can be fully relied upon.

The sequence of events described above reveals that the four women returning to the nine apostles were the first to see Jesus after his resurrection. Mary Magdalene, then, was the fifth to see him. Though Mark 16:9 states that Mary Magdalene was the first to see Jesus, Mark 16:9-20 does not appear in the Sinaitic or Vatican manuscripts and has been determined to be a later addition.

This was an extraordinary experience for these dear women. Their desire to serve our Lord, even while his body laid in the tomb, is a tribute to their devotion and love for him. His personal contact with these quiet, humble supporters is important. It offers a profound message to any sincere believer. Jesus will never forget anyone who loves and serves him, no matter how insignificant they see themselves or their service. He must have known how these unassuming sisters would cherish their special moments with him.

— Br. Tom Ruggirello

# *I Have Sinned*

*"I have sinned ... Jehovah is righteous" (Exodus 9:27)*

This particular declaration, which is a confession of sin, occurs eight times in the Scriptures. We might think that such an expression would be a positive indicator of a new course. But in reviewing the occasions where it occurs, we find a surprising reversal.

## (1) BY PHARAOH

Exodus 9:27 — "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, **I have sinned** this time: Jehovah is righteous, and I and my people are wicked."

This is a confession by a haughty tyrant. Pharaoh had no repentance of heart. He simply wanted the suffering of the moment to end and he would do whatever he could to make it stop. He confessed out of fear, not from a change of heart or desire to do what was good and right. His confession was hollow, devoid of true repentance and understanding. As such, it was of no value. When the crisis of God's judgment passed, he reverted to his previous mindset.

Exodus 9:34, 35 — "And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the children of Israel go, as Jehovah had spoken by Moses."

Pharaoh's hollowness is further shown when again, in chapter 10, Pharaoh confessed, "**I have sinned**" (verse 16). We can see from these examples of confession that those who merely wish to alleviate their current suffering circumstances are not acting from the heart but from the flesh. Sinners without repentance will express great remorse, but not true conversion.

## (2) BY BALAAM

Numbers 22:34 — "And Balaam said unto the angel of Jehovah, **I have sinned**; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again."

In this second instance of confession, Balaam was face to face with an angel of God. His sinful course was laid open before him. The heart problem of Balaam was that he



*Moses before Pharaoh*

was double-minded. He was indeed a prophet of Jehovah. This speaks of some good thing in him. But he harbored a love of money and this, unfortunately, offset any love of doing God's bidding he might have had.

2 Peter 2:1,15, "false teachers ... Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing."

Reading the words of Balaam, we see in him some desire to do God's will even though it might mean death. Though he was hired to curse Israel, he plainly told the King of Moab that he could not curse what God has not cursed. His oration ends with Numbers 23:10, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

This appears to describe a faithful character. But no, twice more Balaam built altars and sacrificed bullocks in an effort to receive a prophecy from God to curse Israel. However, each time a blessing emerged, and Balaam simply went his way (Numbers 24:25).

But that is not the end of the story. The advice Balaam gave Balak resulted in great sin in Israel. He recognized that as long as Israel stayed obedient to Jehovah, no harm could come to them. But if Israel could be seduced into sin, then the curse of the wrath of God would come upon them. So Balaam instructed Balak to have the women of Moab seduce the men of Israel.

Numbers 31:16, "Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against Jehovah in the matter of Peor, and so the plague was among the congregation of Jehovah."

Revelation 2:14, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication."

This ploy succeeded and 24,000 people died as a result of the plague that God sent upon them (Numbers 25:9).

So what are we to make of Balaam's confession when he said, "**I have sinned?**" It was not built upon a strong foundation of righteousness. Rather, Balaam was a double-minded man. On one hand he had some desire to do right,

but on the other hand, he was driven by the desire for money. Jesus rightly said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

### (3) BY ACHAN

Joshua 7:20, "And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Of a truth **I have sinned** against Jehovah, the God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:"

The background of this confession involves the destruction of Jericho. God's instructions were very clear; everything in the city was to be destroyed and burned with one exception. All of the gold, silver, and vessels of copper and iron were to be spared and brought to Jehovah's treasury. They became God's property (Joshua 6:24).

Achan, however, saw some things he wanted. Joshua 7:21, "When I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

As is usually true, the choices we make affect others. The sin of Achan first became apparent in a failed military mission, which resulted in the loss of 36 lives. Jehovah indicated to Joshua that the failure was a result of some sin of the people. The search came to Achan and he confessed, "**I have sinned.**" However, it was not only Achan that sinned in this regard. The goods stolen from God were hidden in his tent, in "the midst of the tent," in full view of the members of his family and, evidently, with their consent and cooperation. Every one of them should have realized this was a sin, but they all keep silent.

There is reason to doubt the penitence of Achan and his family. It was revealed to Israel that their trouble was because of the sin of the people. But who had committed the sin was unknown, so the guilty ones would be identified by lot. Achan said nothing when his tribe was selected to choose lots. He also said nothing when his family was selected. He was finally exposed when his household was selected. He could have come forward and confessed at any time. But only when he was found out did he speak. There was not a basis for mercy to be shown here. Their sin had resulted in the death of 36 soldiers. And the just penalty for all of them was stoning.<sup>1</sup>

Joshua 22:20, "Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the devoted thing, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity."

### (4) BY SAUL

1 Samuel 15:24, "Saul said unto Samuel, **I have sinned;** for I have transgressed the commandment of Jehovah, and thy words, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice."

The context here demonstrates that King Saul did not consider obedience to God in every particular to be of great importance. He had been instructed to totally destroy the Amalekites, including all their flocks and herds. But Saul decided to keep a spoil of the best animal resources and even spared the life of their King, Agag.

This was a direct violation of Jehovah's command. Sparing the life of King Agag had dire consequences for Israel many generations later in the time of Esther. Curiously, when Samuel afterward traveled to meet Saul, he was greeted by Saul with the words, "Blessed be thou of Jehovah: I have performed the commandment of Jehovah" (verse 13)! In fact, he had not performed the commandment of Jehovah. So headstrong was Saul that he considered his modification of what God commanded to be obedience!

At that point Samuel plainly declared God's message of reproof to Saul and Saul responded with "**I have sinned.**" But then he made the excuse that he did it because he feared the people and obeyed them. In other words, "it was the people's fault." He also explained that he spared the best animals in order to be sacrificed to Jehovah. So, his confession was insincere.

Insincerity turns out to be one of the major flaws in Saul's character. He adapted to whatever circumstance he was in and did what was right in his own eyes. He thought he had all the right reasons to be disobedient to God, never considering that there are no acceptable reasons to disobey. As soon as the tears of confession were dry, the intents of his heart and purposes of his mind were the same as before, as shown by Saul's remaining life.

Saul confessed, "**I have sinned**" again at a later time when he was hunting David. In Chapter 26 of 1 Samuel, Saul realized that David had the King's life in his hands but refused to slay the anointed of Jehovah. This realization moved him to the confession. But again, it resulted in no real change of direction in his life.

#### (5) BY SHIMEI

2 Samuel 19:20, "Thy servant doth know that **I have sinned**: therefore ... I am come this day the first of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king."

Shimei was a man from the family of Saul. He was quite angry with the fall of King Saul and the ascendancy of David to kingship. At an earlier occasion, recorded in 2 Samuel 16, Shimei cursed David and threw stones and dust at him as David fled from the city and from his son Absalom. Clearly Shimei had a lot of anger toward David and thought his flight from Jerusalem was a good thing. David could have had Shimei executed for such nasty treatment, since it was against Mosaic Law to curse a ruler (Exodus 22:28). But David chose to excuse it, taking the experience as from God.

After the death of Absalom, David returned to Jerusalem and was met along the way by Shimei. It was at this point Shimei confessed his sin to David and asked for clemency.

Although David's general Abishai said Shimei should be executed, David promised not to kill him.

From the scant information provided, we cannot be sure of the sincerity of Shimei's repentance. On one hand he did come to David and confessed his sin and asked forgiveness. On the other hand, now that David was back in power — his desire to live may have played a part.

But while David did promise not to kill him, he did not forget his atrocious treatment at Shimei's hands. In fact, he later told Solomon to remember what Shimei had done.

1 Kings 2:8,9, "And, behold, there is with thee Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite, of Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by Jehovah, saying, 'I will not put thee to death with the sword.' Now therefore hold him not guiltless, for thou art a wise man; and thou wilt know what thou oughtest to do unto him, and thou shalt bring his hoar head down to Sheol with blood."

King David's assessment of Shimei was that he was "not guiltless." Solomon did indeed wisely handle him later. Shimei had disobeyed a command of the king that he had agreed to obey and was executed for it. We conclude that Shimei is another example of a confession made without true heart repentance.

#### (6) BY KING DAVID

2 Samuel 12:13, "David said unto Nathan, **I have sinned** against Jehovah." This is one of the most well known confessions in scripture. King David's list of sins began with his adultery with Bathsheba. It was compounded by deception and, ultimately, murder.

David was blinded by his sin. Not until the wise and courageous action of the prophet Nathan did David have his eyes opened to the egregious nature of his behavior. But when he heard the words of Nathan, he was cut to the heart. His confession was spontaneous. Jehovah, who knew David's heart, immediately accepted his confession. Nathan informed David, "Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." But though he had been forgiven,



David and Nathan

David did not escape the consequences of his sin. It plagued him and his family the rest of his life.

David had one more occasion to say, **“I have sinned.”** 2 Samuel 24:10, “David’s heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto Jehovah, **I have sinned** greatly in that which I have done: but now, O Jehovah, put away, I beseech thee, the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.”

This sin was taking a census of the Israelites. It appears to be a sin of pride, to show how great a King he was. But again, David came to his senses. His “heart smote him” and he repented. Again, there was a penalty for the sin that involved the death of others in Israel.

In the case of David, his confessions, **“I have sinned,”** were sincere and heartfelt. And although there were two occasions, the sins were different and full repentance followed. Neither sin was ever repeated.

### (7) BY JUDAS

Matthew 27:3,4, “Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, **I have sinned** in that I betrayed innocent blood. But they said, what is that to us? see thou to it.”

That Judas turned out to be a bad man is well documented in scripture. His betrayal of Jesus made him the best-known betrayer in history. His words **“I have sinned”** are a confession — a confession of despair.

Judas is another example of the corrupting influence of loving money. He sold his Master and Teacher for 30 pieces of silver. We cannot know what he thought would be the outcome, but he must have understood that the clerics of the time wanted Jesus dead. When the awful reality of Jesus’ imminent torture and death hit him, there was some remorse of conscience. We cannot describe this as a repentance in the true and full sense of the word. True repentance is followed by words and deeds to counteract the sin and its effects. True repentance is followed by praise for God. Judas’ repentance of despair drove him to suicide. He was a man who had lost all hope.

### (8) BY THE PRODIGAL SON

Luke 15:17, “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, **I have sinned** against heaven, and in thy sight.”

The Prodigal son is only parabolic, but it illustrates a proper confession. He had left the home of his father and lived a profligate life, exhausting his inheritance and debauching his character. At the bottom of this doleful experience, he recognized his poor judgment and current situation and resolved to return home.

That this confession came from a repentant heart is shown in several details. First, he recognized his sin “against heaven.” It was not simply the disappointment his father would feel toward him, but that he sinned

against God himself. This indicates his acceptance of accountability to Jehovah. Second, he no longer expected the advantages of being a son. That was lost in his sin and he knew things could not return to the former situation. Third, he would accept the position of a servant in the house and be content. This shows true humility.

In sum, all of the characteristics of the Prodigal Son’s confession and repentance stand in stark contrast to most of the previous examples. Jesus’ gave us this template by which to judge ourselves and others.

### LESSONS

In looking at Pharaoh, Balaam, Achan, Saul, Shimei and Judas, we see that merely stating, **“I have sinned”** as a confession is not sufficient. The confession must come from the heart out of a real sorrow over the wrong done. And it must be accompanied with authentic repentance. John the Baptist taught this clearly in Luke 3:8: “Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.”

In these six cases we did not see the fruits of repentance. In some cases, the sin was repeated! To say, **“I have sinned,”** in an unmeaning manner, is worse than worthless, for it is a mockery of God thus to confess with insincerity of heart.

By contrast, the confessions by David and the Prodigal Son were meaningful, heartfelt expressions by those that really despised the sins they had committed. They evidenced a true repentance and willingly bore the consequences of their sin with nobility. It is instructive to note an important principle. While our heavenly Father will forgive sin that is properly confessed and repented of, he does not always remove the negative consequences our sins may bring.

Providence gave us six examples of hollow and insincere confessions, and just one case of a proper confession and repentance (ignoring the parable). Perhaps this indicates that real, heartfelt confession is rare. But this should also reveal how precious and grand are those confessions with repentance, which are truly a praise to God.

Luke 15:7 — “I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.”

— *Br. David Stein*

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(1) Regarding the penalty that Achan and his household suffered, it is interesting to note a Jewish opinion giving a future hope for them. Footnote #30 from the RVIC on Joshua 7:25: “Tractate Sanhedrin, Ch. 6 [43b] Mishnah, shows by this incident that people will come back to life in the world to come. ‘Joshua said unto him, My son, give I pray thee, glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and make confession unto him. And Achan answered Joshua and said, Of a truth, **I have sinned** against the LORD, the God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done.’ And whence do we know that his confessions made atonement for him? — From the words, ‘And Joshua said: Why hast thou troubled us? The LORD shall trouble thee this day. I.e., this day art thou to be troubled, but thou shalt not be troubled in the next world.’”