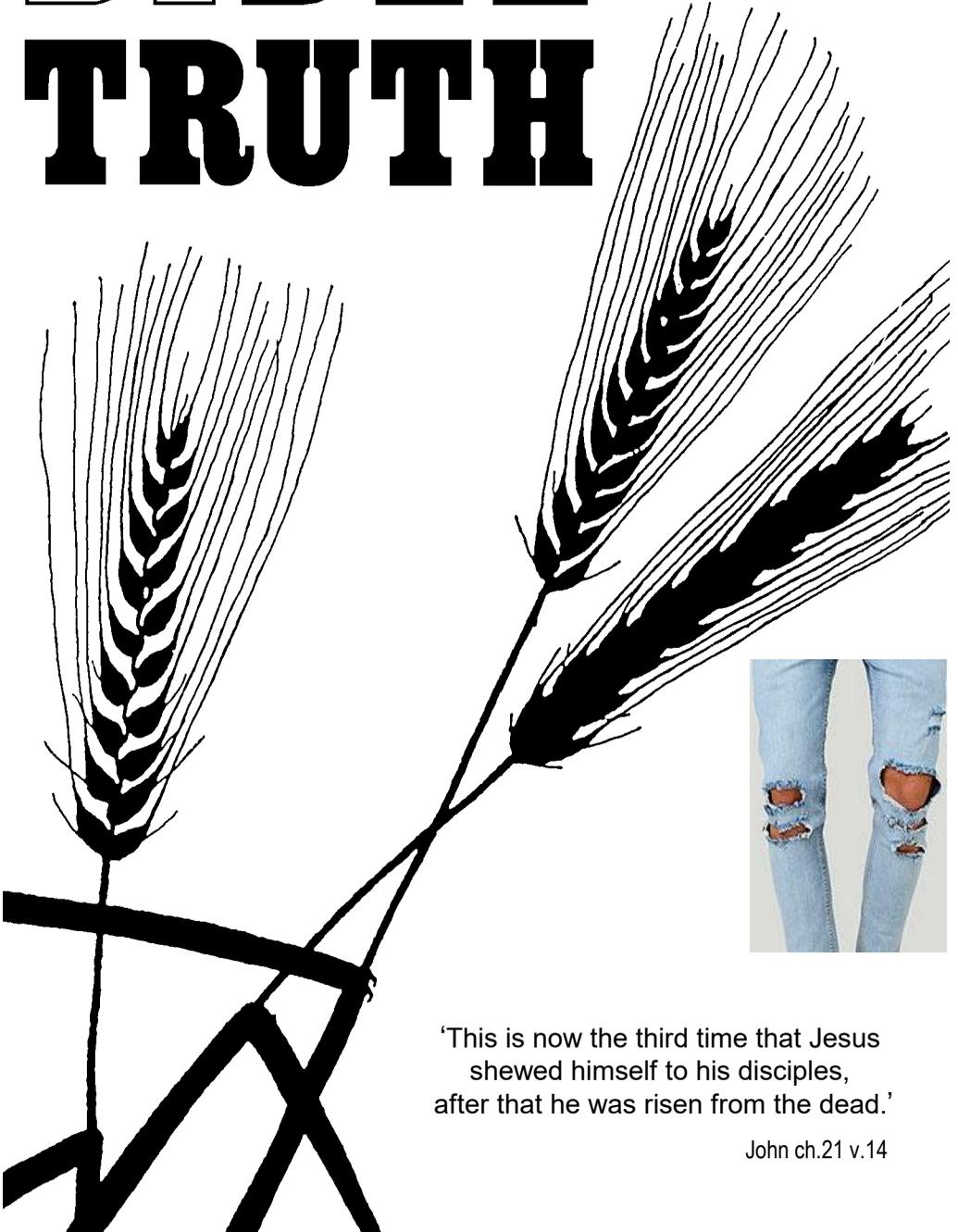


# BIBLE TRUTH

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'This is now the third time that Jesus  
shewed himself to his disciples,  
after that he was risen from the dead.'

John ch.21 v.14

# **RENDING IN THE SCRIPTURES**

by Tamar McKay

**The word rending in the scriptures generally refers to the rending of clothes, but are both men and women supposed to rend their clothes?**

In the Scriptures, there are only two women recorded rending their clothes, Tamar and Athaliah. For the moment we shall just deal with Athaliah.

'And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king. And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the LORD. And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: **and Athaliah rent her clothes**, and cried, Treason, Treason. But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges: and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD. And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain.'

2 Kings ch.11 vv 12-16 (see also vv 1-4,  
2 Chronicles ch.22 vv 10-12, ch.23 vv 1-3 & vv 12-15)

Athaliah, who rent her clothes, was an unrighteous woman and was put to death by the righteous. She did not rend her clothes for the right reasons which brings us on to our next point; unwarranted rending of clothes.

## Unwarranted Rending

Our second example of unwarranted rending of clothes, is recorded in the Book of Acts.

‘And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and **the magistrates rent off their clothes**, and commanded to beat them.’

Acts ch.16 vv 16-22

Paul and Silas had been preaching the gospel and performing acts of righteousness but for the magistrates to rend their clothes was unjust and unrighteous.

A third example of wrong rending of clothes is at the trial of our Saviour.

‘Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then **the high priest rent his clothes**, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.’

Matthew ch.26 vv 64-65

‘And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then **the high priest rent his clothes**, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?’

Mark ch.14 vv 62-63

When the Saviour declared that He was the Almighty, the high priest rent his clothes, believing this declaration to be blasphemy. The high priest was wrong to rend his clothes as the priesthood were not intended to rend the priestly garments,

‘And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, **that it be not rent**’.

Exodus ch.28 v.32 (see also Exodus ch.39 v.23 & Leviticus ch.10 v.6)

If a mere man had declared to be the I AM, the high priest rending the priestly garments would have shown clear and strong recognition of the evil that was being spoken.

### **Rending as a Sign of Evil**

This brings us to the next point. Rending of clothes was to be a recognition of some evil or sin that had either been committed or that had befallen someone or a people.

In Joshua’s time, thirty-six men of Israel were slain by the men of Ai. YAHUWEH’s plan for His covenant people was that as long as they followed Him and obeyed His commandments, when in battle they would not lose any men (the same applies today).

‘But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: ... And **Joshua rent his clothes**, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.’

Joshua ch.7 vv 1a & 6 (see also ch.7 vv 1-6)

Joshua rent his clothes as recognition that something evil had befallen Israel.

1 Samuel ch.4 vv 10-12, tells of the ark of God being taken and the man who came to Shiloh with his cloths rent, because evil had come upon Israel in battle.

2 Samuel ch.1 vv 1-12, tells of David rending his clothes when he hears that Saul and Jonathan are slain and that the people of Israel are defeated. He recognised the evil that had befallen Israel.

In 2 Samuel ch.3 vv 27-32, is the account of Joab murdering Abner. Following this, David commands Joab and all the people with him to rend their clothes. He wanted the people to recognise that evil had been committed.

‘And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, **Rend your clothes**, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier.’

2 Samuel ch.3 v.31

Thus, we come to our second, and only other woman to be recorded as rending her clothes in the Scriptures. The king's daughters who were virgins were apparelled with a garment of divers colours. For Tamar to rend, it was a recognition of the evil which had befallen her as well as being symbolic of the fact that her virginity had been taken from her. 2 Samuel ch.13 vv 10-19 is the story of Amnon forcing Tamar to lie with him and Tamar rends her garment of divers colours.

‘And Tamar put ashes on her head, and **rent her garment** of divers colours that was on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying.’

2 Samuel ch.13 v.19

Other examples of those who recognised when evil had been committed or that evil had befallen someone or a people can be found in the following passages.

### **Rending and the Future**

How does rending of clothes, this recognition of sin or some evil, affect the future? The best examples can be found in the Books of Kings.

In 1 Kings ch.21 vv 20-29, judgement is pronounced on Ahab and his house. When Ahab hears this judgement, he rends his clothes and humbles himself. By so doing, the Almighty has mercy and does not bring the evil in Ahab's days. If Ahab had not recognised the evil and humbled himself, he may very well have seen the judgement in his days.

‘And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. ... And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he **rent his clothes.**’

2 Kings ch.22 vv 8 & 10-11

In 2 Kings ch.22 vv 11-20, when Josiah hears the words of the book, he rends his clothes, recognising that because of Israel's sins they will be judged. For this act of recognition, the Almighty sends word to Josiah, telling him that because he rent his clothes, he would not see all the evil in his days.

We see that recognising evil by rending of clothes, brings mercy, but what about when evil is not recognised? There is an example of what happens when clothes are not rent in recognition and repentance of evil. In Jeremiah ch.36 vv 20-31, on hearing that the Almighty had pronounced anger on His people, King Jehoiakim burnt the roll. In verse 24 it says, 'Yet they were not afraid, **nor rent their garments ...**' For not recognising and not repenting of their sin, YAHUWEH pronounced judgement on Jehoiakim, his children, and his servants, and the judgement that was pronounced earlier in the chapter would come to pass.

The other way the word, 'rend' is used comes when judgement is pronounced. In 1 Samuel ch.15, Saul was commanded to destroy the Amalekites completely, but he disobeyed and judgement was pronounced. It is interesting that in verse 28 the phrase 'YAHUWEH hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day' is used. Likewise, in other Scripture passages such as 1 Kings ch.11 vv 11-13 & 31; Ezekiel ch.13 vv 11-13 & Ezekiel ch.30 v.16, where judgement is being pronounced, the idea of something being rent is quite clear.

'Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: **but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom;** but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.'

1 Kings ch.11 vv 12-13

Perhaps the idea of something being rent when judgement is pronounced is because the people or person who are being judged, are being reminded that they should have rent their garments in recognition and repentance of their sin.

## Conclusion

I would like to point out something important. While the act of rending clothes to recognise and repent from sin is right, there is a verse in the Scriptures which makes it clear that outward practice is not enough.

In Joel ch.2 vv 12-13, we read '... rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto YAHUWEH your Elohim ...'. While the outward practice is right, the Most High wants us to recognise and repent of our sin in our hearts as well. To adapt a Scripture verse, 'to rend your heart and turn to YAHUWEH, is better than rending your garments'.

We must recognise and confess our sin in our hearts as well as confessing outwardly. We must also repent (turn away) from our sin in the inward man as well as the outward man. Let us each one rend our hearts, turn to YAHUWEH, repent of our sin, and escape the judgement.

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