

BEHOLD, TAX COLLECTORS  
AND SINNERS  
SITTING AT THE TABLE WITH YAHSHUA



That was a sight to see for those self-righteous! The Pharisees were an exclusive group of people who tried to follow the Law at its letter. They were those who spied on YAHSHUA and tried Him. They were also those who cried from the tops of their lung the words, Crucify Him, crucify Him! However, YAHSHUA called them white tombs because like one, they were filthy inside, while their appearances

were that of a righteous person. YAHSHUA also called them hypocrites, of whom Isaiah had prophesied: These people draw near Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts hold off and are far away from Me. Uselessly do they worship Me, for they teach as doctrines the commands of men (Matt. 15:7-8). They were often rebuked for their hypocrisy, but there was never a change of heart. At the sight of YAHSHUA dining with sinners and tax-collectors, they were the first ones to raise their opinions. YAHSHUA refuted them by saying, Those who are strong and well have no need of a physician, but those who are weak and sick. Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice and sacrificial victims; for I came not to call and invite the righteous, but sinners (Matt. 9:11-13). YAHSHUA was extending His invitation to them also, but even though they were sick and in need of healing, they did not acknowledged it.

YAHSHUA told His disciples a parable of two men who had gone to pray: A Pharisee and a tax collector. The latter, entered the presence of God with such feelings of unworthiness, he wouldn't even look up to heaven. There he whispered a prayer of repentance: "O God, be merciful to me, the especially wicked sinner that I am!" This tax collector came to the temple acknowledging his sinful estate in a contrite spirit. He was forgiven and he left justified, while the Pharisee praying in his self-righteousness did not. He remained the way he entered -unforgiven. He continued playing religion and self-righteousness to satisfy himself, for God was not interested in his religious acts. It was all for show. The Pharisees went as far as to accuse YAHSHUA of healing under the power of Satan. With that, they reached their final condemnation. When they referred to YAHSHUA as driving out demons only by and with the help of Beelzebub, the prince of demons, (Matt. 12:24) that was the sin that closed the doors of heaven to them forever because that was blaspheming against the Holy Spirit of God; according to YAHSHUA there is no forgiveness. He said, and everyone who makes a statement or speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but he who blasphemies against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him (Luke 12:10). Tax collectors and wicked sinners were hungry to hear YAHSHUA'S teachings; in their pursuit to satisfy their spiritual hunger, they found a place near Him so they could hear Him. Amidst accusations against them, they found forgiveness at the feet of the Master, Who even when brought to Him a prostitute, He did not condemn her, instead, said, "Who is without sin throw the first stone." They (the scribes and Pharisees) listened to Him, and then they began going out, conscience-stricken, one by one, from the oldest down to the last one

of them, till YAHSHUA was left alone, with the woman standing there before Him in the center of the court. YAHSHUA then asked her, Woman, where are your accusers? Has no man condemned you? She answered, No Lord! And **YAHSHUA said, I do not condemn you either.** Go on your way and from now on sin no more (John 8: 1-11). YAHSHUA had not come to condemn, but to save those who were lost in sin. He had come to deliver those who were in chains. He came to teach men uprightness through His teachings and through His way of life. He saw the hearts of men, not only their appearances. He well knew the Pharisee's heart and purpose to close the heaven's door to those who desired to enter in.

Zacchaeus was not only a tax collector, but a chief tax collector, who like the others, desired to see YAHSHUA but being short and unable to cut through the crowd, he climbed a tree. He went an extra mile to satisfy his spiritual hunger without being concerned for his reputation. Zacchaeus had no idea that YAHSHUA'S heart had already touched his at the moment he desired to see Him. When YAHSHUA passed by He said to Zacchaeus, Hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today (Luke 19:5). That was an invitation of a life time for the tax collector, Zacchaeus. Being a rich man, he presented YAHSHUA the best meal with a perfect hospitality, for he was ready to receive Him not only in his house, but also in his heart. Indignantly the Pharisees once again, as it were their custom, complained saying, He has gone in to be the guest of and lodge with a man who is devoted to sin and preeminently a sinner (vs7). However, salvation was to come to Zacchaeus's house that day. YAHSHUA said to him, Today salvation comes to this household, since Zacchaeus too is a son of Abraham, for the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost (vs.9,10).

On one day when YAHSHUA had been invited to a Pharisee's house to dine with him, a woman – an especially wicked sinner, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears; and she wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment (Luke 7: 36-38). Here is another situation for the Pharisees to undermine YAHSHUA'S purpose. Try to picture in your mind for a moment, the beauty of this picture. A sinner in need of forgiveness from the only sinless Man, Who alone had the right to reject and condemn her, stood there behind Him washing His feet with her tears, and drying them with her hair, and kissing and anointing them with oil or perfume in a demonstration of her repentance of the wicked life she lived. While the host of the house, a Pharisee,

silently criticized Him, YAHSHUA turned to him, calling his name- Simon saying, said so you see this woman? When I came into your house, you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair; you gave Me no kiss, but she from the moment I came in has not ceased to kiss my feet tenderly and caressingly; you did not anoint My head with oil, but she has anointed My feet with perfume. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, many [as they are], are forgiven her- because she has loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little; and He said to her, Your sins are forgiven (Luke 7:44-48).

Another time when YAHSHUA was teaching in the enclosure of the temple, He was confronted by the chief priests with the question, By what power of authority are you doing these things, and who gave You this power of authority? YAHSHUA then answered them with another question saying, If you give Me the answer, then I also will tell you by what power of authority I do these things. YAHSHUA then asked, the baptism of John- from where was it? From heaven or from men? Of course, they could not answer this tricky question and YAHSHUA did not answer theirs either. He continued talking to them by a parable of two sons. He said, What do you think? There was a man who had two sons, He came to the first and said, Son, go and work today in the vineyard. He answered, I will not; but afterward he changed his mind and went. Then the man came to the second and said the same. And he replied, I will sir; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of the father? They replied, the first one. YAHSHUA said to them, Truly I tell you, the **tax collectors and the harlots** will get into kingdom of heaven before you. For John came to you walking in the way of an upright man and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots did believe him; and you even when you saw that, did not afterward change your minds and believe him (Matt. 21: 23-32). The Pharisees, for the sake of their tradition have set aside the Word of God, confirmed YAHSHUA. Today, they are probably the orthodox and ultra- orthodox Jews. Today, some religious people have the same attitude as the Pharisees. They close the heaven's doors to sinners by their un-biblical traditions, rules and regulations: long dresses, long sleeves, long hair, no slacks, etc. etc. In other words, they concentrate heavily on the outside appearance. They would probably be critical of YAHSHUA in His relationship with sinners if He had come in our day. But the message YAHSHUA gave them yesterday continues for today: the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost; He came for those who are sick. The hypocrites are left out of the list, unless they admit them to be spiritually lost and sick. Let your attitude be that of YAHSHUA,

Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God, did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped, but stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant in that He became like men and was born a human being...He abased and humbled Himself and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:7-8). Without Him our righteousness is like a filthy rag. "The tax collectors and the sinners" were also bought with the precious blood of YAHSHUA. Open your life to them; do not be a Pharisee and left out of the kingdom of God.