

The Wednesday Word, April 19, 2023: The Day Zacchaeus Got Saved. Part 1

Luke 19:1-10

The great preacher, Spurgeon, was teaching his students about extemporaneous (*impromptu*) preaching. Without warning he told one of the young men to come up to the podium and preach on Zacchaeus. Here's what the surprised young preacher said for his sermon.

'Zacchaeus was a small man...so am I.

Zacchaeus was very much up a tree ... So am I

Zacchaeus made haste to come down...and so will I.'

He sat down to thunderous applause and cries of 'More, More, More.'

'No' said Spurgeon, no more. He couldn't improve on that if he tried'

The Biblical story of Zacchaeus is the saga of a small man who wanted to see Jesus. He was probably a youngish, physically fit man. I say that because he was fit enough to run and active enough to climb trees. I've rarely seen pensioners running or old men climbing trees.

The story starts with the word "**behold**" (v2). This is a biblical word indicating that something **amazing** and wonderful is about to take place. It is something we should pay close attention to.

Let's then behold the man Zacchaeus.

Where did he work?

Luke tells us he was "a publican" ... that is, he was a tax collector working for the despised Roman government and as the "chief publican" (v2) ...he was at the top of his game. However, to say publicans were not highly regarded socially would be more than a slight understatement. In fact, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* says they were "hated" as instruments through which their bondage to Caesar and his sovereignty was enforced.

They used their position to add even more taxes than Rome required in order to enrich themselves."

Furthermore, "The tax collectors of the New Testament were regarded as traitors and apostates, willing tools of the Roman oppressors." That was why the general public in Israel put them in the same class with "sinners, harlots, and pagans."

Sometimes the publicans purchased the tax rights from Rome for certain areas and then the government forgot about that district since it had all the money they wanted from that location. That left the publican free to impose on the people whatever he wished." This is the kind of man Zacchaeus was.

Next; Did he make money?

Yes indeed, he was "**rich**" (Vs. 2).

There's nothing wrong with being rich. I like the old quip which says, "I've been rich, and I've been poor and rich is better." Unfortunately, however, for those with great wealth, the best things in life ... like salvation ... cannot be purchased.

By the way, the Lord doesn't save poor people!

Nor does the Lord save rich people.!

The only people the Lord saves are sinners.

Let's go back to our story and ask where did Zacchaeus live?

He was a citizen of Jericho, the city that had rested under a curse since the fateful day that General Joshua had leveled its walls. (See Joshua 6:26).

Speaking of the curse it reminds me that *all who are outside of Christ* are under the curse. Galatians 3:10 says, "*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*" Since we have failed to fulfill **all** God's commands, we are under the curse of the broken law.

Thank God, however, the passage goes on to say, "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree'* (Vs. 13). Simply put, Christ was cursed for us at the cross, dying in our place ... the place of the believer.

And that's the Gospel Truth!