

The Answerer

Answering children's questions

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Zacchaeus Gets a New Life

(Luke 19:1-10)

In this story about a much despised, very rich man, who has his life turned 180 degrees (totally turned around) and became a 'New' person ... and a happy one too.

Zacchaeus loved money so much that he had decided, years before, to side with the Romans & collect taxes from his own people - his neighbours, for Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor. What a job! Naturally they all hated him & called him a 'Publican' which was a shameful term, because he was working for Rome - the occupiers - the enemy.

Jews are often noted for their love of business and making money. Only here, as a tax collector, Zacchaeus could get a 'bit on the side' by charging more than the Romans required, and putting the extra in his pocket. He was rich - but unhappy, and his only friends were other tax collectors.

Well he must have been thinking about this man Jesus, who he had heard was doing things nobody had ever seen before - like making the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the lame to walk. "Well I have got to see this guy," he must have said to himself. One day Zaccheaus heard that he, this Jesus, was coming near his place that day.

Now, Zaccheaus was not a tall man, in fact he was a little man. But he decided that because he was short he would go early and climb up a Sycamore Tree next to the road where Jesus was going to pass by and wait till he came past.

At last Jesus was coming and Zaccheaus could see him – surrounded by people as usual. Zaccheaus was pleased that Jesus would pass by quite near the tree and he could get a good look at him. Jesus did come by and Zaccheaus got a big surprise! Jesus stopped next to the tree and looked up at Zaccheaus and said: *"Zacchaeus! Quick, come on down for I am going to be a guest at your house today."* Wow!!

In that land and culture then, guests were welcome and given food ... but to have this Jesus spend time in his house caused Zacchaeus to be very excited indeed.

While at the house of Zacchaeus the crowd were angry that Jesus would go to the home of this traitor, this cheat and helper of our enemy - Rome!

BUT ... shortly after Jesus arrived at his house, Zacchaeus stood up and said to Jesus: "Sir, from now on I will give half of my wealth to the poor ... and pay back four times whatever I have cheated from anyone."

Jesus said: "This shows that salvation has come to this house ... that is what I came to earth for." (V. 9-10) (Jesus is quick to forgive and slow to condemn)

With Jesus, there is hope for *EVERYONE!* Love and forgiveness is the Jesus way.