

Luke is continuing to describe Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem. On the way, Jesus passes through Jericho and meets a publican named Zacchaeus, who repents of his sins and comes to faith. Later, as He is approaching Jerusalem, Jesus stops to weep over the city because He knows the death and destruction that will come to the inhabitants because of their rejection of Him.

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2 And, behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho” – Jericho was about 6 miles from the Jordan river and 18 miles northeast of Jerusalem. It is stated that Jesus was passing through Jericho, so it seems that He had no plans on spending the night there but was only passing through. The likely reason that Jesus was passing through the city was so that Zacchaeus could be saved.

“And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich” – Luke calls our attention to a man named Zacchaeus, who was a chief of the tax collectors. He likely had become rich by extorting more tax money than the Roman government required, making him among the most hated people in Judea. He may have had a sort of pyramid scheme running with the other publicans that worked under him, making a percentage of the taxes that they collected.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. 4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

“And he sought to see Jesus who he was” – Apparently Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus and the things that He did and taught and had become intrigued. God must have already been working on his heart because he had an intense desire to see Jesus and learn more.

“and could not for the press [crowd], because he was little of stature” – Jesus was surrounded by a crowd of people as He came down the street and Zacchaeus' view of Jesus was blocked by the crowd because he was too short to see over them.

“And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way” – Zacchaeus realized that his only opportunity to see Jesus was to run ahead and climb a tree that was next to the street. He obviously hoped that that he would be able to catch a brief glimpse of Jesus from that vantage point as He passed by.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. 6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him” – It might have been easy for Jesus, being distracted by the crowd surrounding Him, to walk on past the sycamore tree without seeing Zacchaeus. However, Jesus was God and knew where Zacchaeus was and why he was there.

“and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must [necessary] abide [stay; tarry] at thy house” – Zacchaeus was hoping for a brief glimpse of Jesus at best but he got more than he hoped for. Though they had never met, Jesus knew who Zacchaeus was and had already made plans to spend time at his house. Even though Jesus was passing through Jericho, Jesus saw the necessity of spending some time (perhaps to eat a meal) at Zacchaeus' home. The salvation of Zacchaeus was at stake.

“And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully” – We can only imagine the joy and excitement that Zacchaeus felt when he heard that Jesus wanted to stay at his home. He had wanted to know more about Jesus and now he would have ample opportunity to talk with Him face to face.

7 And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

“And when they saw *it*” – The “they” refers to the crowd of Jews that were surrounding Jesus. They were all witness to the fact that Jesus stopped underneath the sycamore tree and declared to Zacchaeus, the infamous chief tax collector, that He was to spend some time at his house.

“they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner” – The Greek word for “murmur” means “to grumble or complain.” This crowd of Jews could not believe that Jesus, Who was not only a Jew but Someone Who purported to speak for God, would go to be the guest of such a man as Zacchaeus. So they began to grumble and criticize Jesus.

8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold.

“And Zacchaeus stood” – Some commentators believe that Zacchaeus stood up later at his house to make his statement, perhaps during a meal. However, the comments that Jesus makes (v. 9-10) and His subsequent parable (v. 11-27) imply that v. 8 may have happened there in the street when Zacchaeus had climbed down out of the tree and was standing before the Lord.

“and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor” – If Zacchaeus is saying this underneath the sycamore tree, then it demonstrates the change that had already happened in this man's heart and how quickly he had repented. His priorities had changed from gaining money to pleasing God, evidenced by the fact that he was ready to give away half of his wealth to help the poor. He was also proclaiming this in front of the crowd of witnesses, making it difficult for him to renege on his promises.

“and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold” – Tax collectors gained their wealth by collecting more money than the Roman government required and they often would compel their fellow countrymen to pay the exaggerated tax by falsely accusing them of a crime against Rome. Zacchaeus was likely guilty of this, so his “if” did not mean that he “might” have done it but that in the cases where he had done it, then he would refund the person four times what he was overcharged. The Mosaic Law required restitution plus 20%, so Zacchaeus was promising far above what was required.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house” – Jesus recognized the repentance of Zacchaeus and his confession of sin and acknowledged that salvation had come to Zacchaeus and his household (through his leadership). Jesus likely made this statement as much for the benefit of the crowd as for Zacchaeus.

“forsomuch [because; for this reason] as he also is a son of Abraham” – In the eyes of the Jews, tax collectors were contemptible and beyond forgiveness, but Jesus declared that since Zacchaeus was also a descendant of Abraham, he was just as deserving of forgiveness as the Jews in the crowd because of his repentance. He was also one of God’s chosen people.

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” – The Jews were ready to dismiss Zacchaeus as a lost cause, undeserving of salvation, but Jesus stated that seeking and saving the lost was the reason that He came into this world. There is no one who is beyond God’s ability to redeem.

Verses 11-34: Jesus speaks a parable to the crowd to dispel assumption that that reason He was heading to Jerusalem was to establish His kingdom at that time (vs. 11-27). There would be an indefinite span of time before He did that. As Jesus continued toward Jerusalem and reached the Mount of Olives (a short distance from Jerusalem) He sent two of His disciples into a nearby village to borrow a young colt (vs. 28-24).

35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36 And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

“And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon” – Bringing the colt to Jesus, they put some of their own outer garments on the colt to act as a saddle on the colt’s bare back before setting Jesus on it. Using their garments in this way was an act of honoring His royalty.

“And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way” – These clothes apparently belonged to the multitude of disciples that had been following Jesus to Jerusalem and were using them to honor Jesus as royalty. Matthew and Mark also record that people also cut off branches from nearby trees and put them in the path as a way to honor Jesus (Matt. 21:8; Mark 11:8).

37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; 38 Saying, Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

John mentions that Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem was fulfilling an OT Messianic prophecy (John 12:14-15; **Zech. 9:9** “*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass*”). These people, despite the parable that Jesus spoke earlier (vs. 11-27), may still have believed that Jesus was arriving to take His place on the throne. They are quoting from Psalm 118:26, which welcomes the Messiah into Jerusalem.

39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

The Pharisees believed that Jesus was just a man and certainly not the Messiah, and so they felt He did not deserve the praise that the crowd was giving to Him. They urged Him to tell these people to stop glorifying Him.

40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Critics claim that Jesus never claimed to be God, but this is another example of Jesus claiming His deity. Scripture talks of inanimate objects praising God, such as in **Psa. 96:11** (“*Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof*”). Here, Jesus is declaring that the occasion of Him entering Jerusalem and being proclaimed as King was such a momentous event deserving of praise that even inanimate stones would have to cry out in praise if the people were to become silent.

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, He wept because He knew in the years ahead the death and destruction that lay ahead for the city because of their rejection of Him and refusal to repent. The city was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Roman general Titus, which could have been avoided if they had only recognized and welcomed their Messiah’s arrival. Instead, the Jewish leaders were either oblivious to the gravity of this event or outright rejected it. Daniel also had predicted that Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem would happen 483 years after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem that was later given in Nehemiah’s day (Dan. 9:25).

43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Jesus is describing the destruction in A.D. 70 by the Romans. Jerusalem would be surrounded and besieged, and once the city was taken, it would be leveled to the ground and the people killed or captured. Jesus again states the reason this judgment was coming: they did not recognize and embrace the arrival of their Messiah.