

THE HOME OF ZACCHAEUS TO SEEK A SOUL
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It is thought-provoking that after three and a half years of the most sensational ministry exercised among people, Zacchaeus sought to see "Jesus. who he was." It might be assumed that every person in the country was aware of the identity of the Savior, if this tax-gatherer was unaware of the Lord's reputation, it must be concluded he had confined himself to a world of seclusion. He was the chief of the custom officers and was detested by his countrymen. The official not only collected taxes, he applied pressure to less enthusiastic officials. The statement that said "he was rich" might imply the Romans paid high wages for his services, but the man supplemented his income by extortion. He possessed a beautiful home, but his outlook on life was biased.

Leaving his office one morning, Zacchaeus was jostled by a large crowd of people who said Jesus of Nazareth was approaching. The information aroused curiosity, and since he was unable to see over the heads of the bystanders, he climbed into a tree where his view would be unobstructed. His amazement increased when the great Physician revealed He was about to make a housecall. The Lord saw the man in the tree and said, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house." The ancient story reveals details which invite attention.

His Startling Wisdom... Christ knew the publican `s name

"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5). It was remarkable that Jesus knew the stranger's name; they had never previously met. It might be suggested that seeing the man in the tree, Jesus asked questions about him and was told he was an official named Zacchaeus. That idea, though possible, would hardly be conclusive. It seems evident the decision to visit that particular home had already been made by the Savior.

It is interesting to compare this fact with the Lord's statement, "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (John 10:3). Expositors do not agree in their interpretation of the moral standards of the publican. Jesus referred to Zacchaeus as being a child of Abraham. and that implied he was a citizen with outstand-

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ing faith. Maybe the publican was a man of integrity, an honest and just official. Perhaps there is a similarity between this incident and the testimony of Job who said, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). The Savior assured His followers that `The very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10:30). That statement suggests God has intimate knowledge of all people whose trust He enjoys. If Christ knew about Zacchaeus, He knows about everybody.

His Sincere Wish... To enter the publican `s home

"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." This was one of the most surprising statements ever made by the Savior. As far as is known, it was the only occasion He invited Himself to supper in another person's home. There were other people in Jericho who had reason to be grateful to the Lord; for He had given sight to the blind, but apparently He was never invited to enter another residence. It would be extremely interesting to know why Christ was anxious to enter the publican's house. Evidently His association with Zacchaeus did not terminate when the little man descended from the branches of the

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sycamore tree. It was never revealed what happened within the home, but it is certain the conversation begun in the street was continued inside the dwelling. Did Christ commend the man for his faith and encourage continuance in dedicated service? Did His actions that day have any connection with John's comprehensive statement which declared, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25).

The critical Pharisees would not have emulated the publican's example. "And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner" (Luke 19:7) Maybe the Lord's action was an indirect comment on the question asked by the patriarch, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Perhaps the outstanding lesson taught in the story is that the Savior desires to become increasingly acquainted with His followers, that a man's conversion should be followed by his consecration and communion. The presence of the Lord can transform any building into a sanctuary.

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His Superb Welcome And... he received him joyfully"

No person ever received the Savior sadly, nevertheless it was remarkable that the taxgatherer who had never before met the Lord, should respond eagerly to the Stranger in the street.

It is not known whether Zacchaeus was a married man. If he was, then his wife was about to have the greatest surprise of her life. She would not only be expected to supply a meal for Jesus but obliged, at a moment's notice, to feed the men who accompanied Him. The wealthy publican would experience no difficulty in obtaining supplies, but the unexpected guests would certainly cause embarrassment. Problems which might have seemed insurmountable to other people did not exist for the delighted host. At that moment he would have gladly fed a multitude. He had found a happiness that money could not buy. No theological doctrines had been mentioned by the Visitor; religion, repentance, morality, and other related matters did not enter into the conversation. The eyes of the taxgatherer were focused upon the Savior, and nothing else was important except to descend the tree immediately.

Blessed is the man who can say:

What matters where on earth we dwell?
On mountain top or in the dell:
In cottage or a mansion fair,
Where Jesus is, `tis heaven there.
C. J. Butler

The outstanding feature about the New Testament church and its members was the centrality of Christ in the message proclaimed and in the hearts of the preachers. Everything uttered related to the Lord Jesus. Unfortunately, that is not true today. Strange doctrines and practices have appeared within denominations, and the Savior is excluded from the comments of some orators. On a fountain in Pontypridd, Wales, is an inscription which reads, "With Christ, we have everything; Without Christ, we have nothing."

His Splendid Work. . . "I give to the poor.. . I restore... forefold"
Throughout the history of the Christian church theologians have debated concerning the interpretation of the testimony of Zacchaeus. He said to 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." The Greek Testament interprets

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the statement as it is found in the King James Version of the Scriptures. The Amplified Bible inserts the word (now) to make the statement, "See, Lord, the half of my goods I (now) give (by way of restoration) to the poor; and if I have cheated anyone out of anything, I (now) restore him four times as much." There is flexibility in this translation, but it is not conclusive that Zacchaeus suddenly amended his ways.

Had he been an extortionist or irreligious he may not have been conversant with the laws of Moses. Three times within the Pentateuch the patriarch gave instructions regarding reparations (see Ex. 22:1, Lev. 6:5, Num. 5:6-7). The publican did not say, "I will restore him fourfold." His words suggest this was his daily practice; that he was an honorable man trying to live an exemplary life in difficult circumstances. Arguments may be advanced in favor of both interpretations, but the impact of the Lord upon the publican was undeniable. Paul wrote to the Corinthians stating, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). When a person looks into the face of Jesus, sermons are unnecessary to accomplish what needs to be done.

His Suggestive Witness He also is a son of Abraham"

It might be affirmed that all Jews were sons of Abraham, but salvation did not come to every Hebrew home. Luke described an incident in the synagogue when Christ referred to "a daughter of Abraham" and where, in all probability, the Lord was emphasizing that any descendant of the Patriarch deserved to be helped (see Luke 13:16). The woman was bowed down with a great infirmity. Zacchaeus, as far as is known, did not suffer from any sickness. He was wealthy and in good health and apparently content with his position in life. He desired to know more of the Man whose ministry had challenged the nation. If, as has been suggested, he was a pious man endeavoring to live according to the laws of the Almighty, then his religion had brought him to the edge of reality. When he discovered all he required was in Christ, happiness overwhelmed his soul.

It may be impossible to decide authoritatively the spiritual state of the publican's soul, but it became evident that Jesus desired to present him a treasure of incalculable worth. It would be informative to know the rest of the story of Zacchaeus. People had seemed

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to be giants when they interfered with his view of the Lord, but actually they were ordinary men and women. The taxgatherer had been so obsessed with his problem, he overlooked the fact that he was small—the trouble was within himself. No tree is too tall to climb when sincere souls are determined to see the Savior. When the great Physician finally terminated that house call, He had ministered to one of His most famous patients.

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