

Conversations With Jesus *Zacchaeus*

Our conversation today shows us how quickly this new life can begin. Jesus meets yet another unlikely candidate for godly living and yet ... another life is completely transformed. Have you noticed this as a pattern? Life transformation through Jesus is a pattern in the New Testament.

Here's what I want you to see in this conversation:

Life transformation is available through Jesus.
Jesus is a seeking Savior.

There are some who characterize Jesus as going after the poor and oppressed. Zacchaeus is the opposite of that. Zacchaeus is wealthy, AND he is someone who oppresses people. Yet attached to the conversion of Zacchaeus is the statement, the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Jesus came for the poor, the rich, the oppressed and the ones who oppress others. Jesus came for them all.

A chief tax collector was a supervisor of tax collectors. He was a corrupt person overseeing corrupt people. Because Zacchaeus helped Rome, he was seen as aiding and abetting the enemy. He was a traitor. Tax collectors were excluded from all religious activity; could not go into the temple; were not welcome at the home of any Jew; no Jew would want to go into his house; he can't eat a meal with Jews; he was isolated. The only people in his social circle were other outcasts.

Zacchaeus was a nobody to just about everybody, but he was a somebody to Jesus.

In this conversation between Zacchaeus and Jesus, the life transformation is very evident. The taker became a giver. This is a changed life. He went from being selfish to unselfish. Zacchaeus is a new man. You can see this objectively by looking at the numbers.

The numbers are important. The numbers are evidence of transformation.

The Old Testament had clear prescriptions for restitution. Remember, Old Testament Law is summarized by Jesus as love God and love people. The type of restitution promised by Zacchaeus is a demonstration of a love for people which has been produced by a love for God.

- Num 5:6-7 120% Standard for wrongs (Zack didn't say that)
- Ex 22:1-7 200% Ordinary Robbery
- Ex 22:1 400% Robbery with destruction

Zacchaeus announces that he will give AND restore. This is evidence of transformation. Zacchaeus was not required to give half to the poor. On the other hand, perhaps he chose to keep half in order to give back so much. It looks as if Zacchaeus chose the maximum level of obedience.

Question to Ponder: *How long does it take for a person who is saved to change?*

There is a passage of time between verses 7 & 8. Jesus goes to be a guest at the home of Zacchaeus and this is more than a quick snack. Either Jesus enjoyed a lengthy meal, or He spent the night. At the end of the gathering, Zacchaeus makes his announcement.

This transformation of Zacchaeus is stunning, exciting, and immediate.