

'He came to where they were' (6) - Zacchaeus

The psalmist has said Ps 34 v 6 "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." We have noted in our studies the interest and concern the Lord Jesus had for those in trouble and that 'He came to where they were'. In study 6 we will consider the story of Zacchaeus. This incident is recorded by Luke alone.

Read – Luke 18 v 31 – 35 and 19 v 1 – 10

19 v 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 today I must abide at thy house.*" Consider also 19 v 10 "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*"

Background:

The background to the Lord Jesus' meeting with Zacchaeus is found in 18 v 31 – 34 "*Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.*" The Lord Jesus had left Galilee for the last time and was heading for Jerusalem. In Luke 9 we read of the time he left Galilee, "*when the time was come...he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*". In the verses we read in Luke 18 the Lord Jesus takes his disciples aside and explains their destination and the events that will take place there. "*The time was come*" and the Lord Jesus headed for Jerusalem fully aware of all that awaited him at Jerusalem. The apostle Paul in Acts 20 determined to go to Jerusalem "*And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there*". However, the Lord Jesus knew all that would befall him and still "*stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*"

As the disciples heard the words of the Lord Jesus 18 v 34 "*they understood none of these things*". What is our response on hearing the word of God? Can it be said of us "*they understood none of these things*"? At the end of Luke's gospel the situation was different 24 v 45 "*Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.*" This should be our prayer and desire as we read the bible.

This background makes the meeting with Zacchaeus and the interest the Lord Jesus had in him all the more remarkable. On the final journey to the cross still 'he came to where they were'.

Bartimaeus:

The Lord Jesus not only came to where Zacchaeus was in Jericho that day, he also met a blind man. The story of Bartimaeus is also found in Matthew and Mark. Matthew 20 records that there were 2 blind men sitting by the wayside, both received their sight and followed Him. Mark 10 concentrates on one of these men and records who he was "*blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus*". It has been suggested that Bartimaeus, or his father, was well known in Jericho. Whoever he was he recognised Jesus of Nazareth as the true "*Son of David*", the one who could save.

As the Lord Jesus draws near to Jericho, Jerusalem and the cross before him, he passes the spot where 2 blind men are begging. Matthew and Mark report that the healing of Bartimaeus took place as he departed from Jericho. Is this a contradiction? The word of God is true, historically accurate and reliable. One explanation is that the Lord Jesus first met Bartimaeus as he entered Jericho, but the healing did not take place until he was leaving the city. Whatever the explanation we can be assured that the words recorded are true and contain a message for us today for "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable*".

Bartimaeus was told that *“Jesus of Nazareth passeth by”* and unlike the majority of the crowd recognised him for who he was. As we have seen in previous studies the Lord Jesus will never ignore, or fail to respond to a cry for help v38 *“have mercy on me”*. There is an amazing verse at v40 *“And Jesus stood”*. On the way to the cross the Lord Jesus stood and had time for a blind beggar. He had come to where he was and now *“commanded him to be brought”* and *“he received his sight”*.

Zacchaeus:

19 v 1 *“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.”* Never again would the Lord Jesus be in Jericho, the cross was only a matter of days away, but within the city there was another man who wanted *“to see Jesus who he was”*. Zacchaeus was a different man from Bartimaeus, yet in the most important way just the same ‘lost and needing a Saviour’. Bartimaeus was one of the poorest men in Jericho, but Zacchaeus was one of the richest; a man of influence and authority. The two men lived different lives; they lived in different social circles, but both had an interest in Jesus of Nazareth.

Luke says of Zacchaeus *“he sought to see Jesus who he was”*. However, there was a problem; the crowd. The crowd had been a hindrance to Bartimaeus meeting the Saviour and as Zacchaeus *“sought to see Jesus...he could not for the press”*. The crowd is still a hindrance, an obstacle to a sinner coming to the Saviour. It is sad that Christians at times can be a hindrance to spiritual progress. It is not easy to be different, to stand out from the crowd.

Like Bartimaeus, Zacchaeus was determined to *“see Jesus who he was”*. v4 tells what this little man did *“he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree”*. How good it is when individuals have an interest, a desire to *“see Jesus”*. This was Zacchaeus, Head of Taxes in Jericho, perched in a tree. In v5 ‘Jesus came to where he was’. The Lord Jesus would soon, Luke 23, come to another place, Golgotha. Despite this, when the Lord Jesus *“came to the place”* in v5 he had an interest in Zacchaeus, a lost sinner. No one knew that Zacchaeus was there, but *“when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him Zacchaeus, make haste and come down”*. The Lord Jesus not only knew he was there, but he knew his name and his need. Zacchaeus did not miss the opportunity *“he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.”* Never again would the Lord Jesus pass through Jericho, this was the opportunity and Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus responded 11 Cor 6 v 2 *“behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.”*

There is a difference in the crowd’s response when these two men came to the Lord Jesus. When Bartimaeus was blessed 18 v 43 *“all the people when they saw it, gave praise unto God”*, but in the story of Zacchaeus 19 v 7 *“they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.”* The crowd did not think that Zacchaeus deserved the blessing of God. When the blessing of God is seen in an individual’s life and a soul is saved heaven rejoices Luke 15 v 7 *“joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth”*; this should be our response, not showing James 2 *“respect of persons”*.

Salvation changes things; you can never be the same having met the Saviour 11 Cor 5 v 17 *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* In the experience of Bartimaeus at the beginning of the story *“a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging”*, but having met the Lord Jesus *“he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God”*. The day salvation came to the house of Zacchaeus, things were different now, never to be the same again v8 *“half of my goods I give to the poor”*. What about us? Is it true of us *“old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”*? James taught that *“faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone.”*

The section ends with the lovely verse that explains why ‘he came to where they were’, *“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

