

Commentary for Lesson 9

August 2, 2020

A Life-Changing Encounter

Focal Passage: Luke 19:1-10

Background Text: Same

Note: For those readers who use supplementary commentaries to prepare for each week's lesson, we will post downloadable commentary on AdultBibleStudies.com through the summer quarter. We will publish an annual commentary for purchase for Fall 2020–Summer 2021.

The Visit in Jericho

Jericho was a city 17 miles east of Jerusalem near where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea. It was located 820 feet below sea level. *Jericho* means “place of fragrance,” perhaps because of the tropical growth there.

“Son of David” (verse 38) referred to Jesus being in the line of David (2:4), which was the line of messianic promise. The blind man calling Jesus by this title must have been Jewish and familiar with the tradition of the messiah. The response of the people (verse 43) indicated that the popularity of Jesus had not waned. This is in contrast to the account in the Fourth Gospel where there is a growing disenchantment with Jesus.

Zacchaeus (19:2) is identified as a “chief tax collector.” This meant that he had administrative oversight over other tax collectors in the region. Because the collectors were known to retain part of the taxes they collected, Zacchaeus may well have accumulated for himself a portion of the collections of all the tax collectors under his jurisdiction. Thus, he was rich. This was the second occasion when Jesus dined at the home of a tax collector, to the consternation of many onlookers (5:29-32).

Many tax collectors were drawn to Jesus for some unexplained reason. It may be that the word of his meal at Levi's house spread. Zacchaeus was obviously another one of them who was attracted by curiosity, and perhaps admiration, to hear Jesus. The strength of that interest is indicated by his climbing a tree to see Jesus (verse 4). The strong impression that Jesus made upon him is indicated by his profession of a changed lifestyle reflected in a generous sharing of possessions (verse 8).

“Son of Abraham” (verse 9) refers to his Jewish ancestry and his sharing that in common with Jesus. He had received the “salvation” promised to the Jews.

The supposition that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately may have been based upon the statements of Jesus recorded in 17:21 and 18:17. Another explanation would be that his audience presumed that Jesus would enter triumphantly into Jerusalem, demonstrate his messiahship, and claim the Kingdom for himself.

Some commentators maintain that the parable in verses 12-27 is based partly on an historical event. At the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC, he left his kingdom divided between Herod Antipas, Herod Philip, and Archelaus, subject to Roman ratification. Archelaus, who inherited power over Judea, went to Rome to persuade Augustus to approve his rule over Judea. The Jews sent an embassy of fifty men to Rome to inform Augustus that they did not desire his kingship. However, Augustus did confirm him, but not with the title of king.

The coin referred to as a “pound” (verse 13, NRSV) was a Greek “mina” (NIV), worth about 20 dollars. In Matthew’s account of this parable, the amounts entrusted to the servants are much larger (Matthew 25:14-20).

The parable suggested to the disciples of Jesus their responsibility to make the most of what they have had the privilege to receive through Jesus. They had a stewardship and faithfulness to render. Jesus challenged them with this awareness as he moved toward the last week of his life.

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