
Detective Dan's (Shorter/Simpler) Version of Bible Story for Big Question 11, Bible Truth 1

The Case of the Changed Climber *Luke 19:1-9*

(Numbers correspond to Bible story picture pages in Detective Dan's Big Question Box)

1. Zacchaeus was a VERY rich man. He could have lots of fine clothes and a big, big house. He could eat all the yummiest foods and buy all the nice things he wanted. Yes. Zacchaeus could buy anything he wanted. Anything, that is, except God's forgiveness for his sins.
2. Zacchaeus certainly had plenty of sins that needed forgiving. He collected taxes from the people in Jericho for Caesar, the enemy king. He used the king's soldiers to make people pay, even when they couldn't. He took extra money and kept it for himself, even if it hurt others.
3. That's how Zacchaeus got to be so rich. And that's why people thought Zacchaeus ESPECIALLY didn't deserve God's forgiveness. "How could God forgive someone like Zacchaeus," they exclaimed. "He's such a mean, greedy bully. Surely, there is no forgiveness for someone like that!"
4. Zacchaeus may have loved the things his money could buy, but, it wasn't enough. God made us to know, love, and obey Him. He, alone, can make us truly happy. And that's why deep down in his heart Zacchaeus was very UN-happy.
5. What was worse, Zacchaeus knew God's laws, and that he had broken them. A man who had done such bad things wasn't even allowed to go in the worship house to worship God. There seemed to be no way for Zacchaeus to come back to God now.
6. But there WAS a way to be forgiven. God had made a way through His Son, Jesus, as Zacchaeus found out one day.
7. "Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming!" the exciting news spread through Jericho. A crowd of people gathered along the road to see Jesus. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, too, but he was too short to see over the crowd. And he was so hated that no one would let him through.
8. But Zacchaeus didn't give up. He ran down the road and climbed up a big tree. It would have been so easy for Jesus to miss the short, little man hiding up among the leaves. But Jesus didn't miss Zacchaeus. He was LOOKING for him. Jesus had come to bring Zacchaeus God's forgiveness.
9. Jesus looked up at Zacchaeus, and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." Zacchaeus was shocked and so happy. Good teachers like Jesus never asked to stay at the house of bad men like him.
10. Zacchaeus knew what this meant. Jesus wasn't asking to stay at his big house to enjoy his nice things and yummy food. Jesus was asking to stay at his house to welcome him back to God. What wonderful news! How he wanted God to forgive his sins, more than anything in the world!
11. Right then and there, God's Holy Spirit did a wonderful thing in Zacchaeus' heart. He helped Zacchaeus turn away from disobeying God and trust in Jesus as his Savior. Zacchaeus was forgiven by God for all the terrible things he had done. God had saved Zacchaeus through Jesus.
12. The change in Zacchaeus' heart showed in his life. "I'll pay back everyone I've wronged," Zacchaeus told the crowd. He would rather have God's forgiveness than riches. The people were amazed. "Salvation has come to this man today," Jesus told them all. And surely, it had.