

Worth So Much More!

This is the story of two men who grew up in the little country of Israel. They both spoke Hebrew. They even grew up close to one another, although they probably never met. One grew up in the ancient city of Jericho and one grew up near it, across the Jordan River. Jericho didn't look like it had when the walls fell down. By now, in the days when our Master walked the earth, Jericho had been built back up and was a really fancy town. It was at the same time as our Master that this man, whose name was Zaccai, grew up there. Zaccai was kind of short.

Just a little ways away there was a man who grew up in a rich family. He grew up in a very rich family. Their wealth had been handed down for generations and he was a part of a kind of ruling class in that part of Israel.

The other man, Zaccai, who grew up in Jericho, he took a real turn in his life. He became a very bad boy. Very bad. He became a tax collector. It was the worst job you could have in Israel. The tax collectors went to their own brothers and cousins and relatives and made them pay taxes to the Romans and took more than they had to and took extra money for themselves too. And Zaccai became very rich too.

So he was rich like the other man who lived outside of Jericho was rich. The other man became a leader and Zaccai also became a leader. He became a leader of the tax collectors. Zaccai got even wealthier than this other rich man. Zaccai lived inside of Jericho. He got a really big house. He was really rich but everyone hated him. He was really bad. The other man, they said he was one of the best citizens. Zaccai, he was the worst. All they shared in common was their wealth.

The story begins right here. It says our Master was walking along. He was headed for Jericho and after that He was headed for Jerusalem. This was to His last trip there; He would never leave Jerusalem after that. On His trip there, before He got to the Jordan River, He met this good man. Our Master was talking to His disciples around Him, like He usually was.

This man came up to Him and said, “Good Master, good teacher,” he began as he fell down right in front of Yahshua. He heard about Yahshua and he had a feeling that He was the Messiah. He was one who had thought deeply on what was written in the Bible as he was growing up, and he knew the things Yahshua was doing were in the Bible. He wanted to hear what Yahshua had to say.

“Good teacher,” he continued, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

All the disciples looked at one another. They realized this was a really rich man. They saw he really wanted to know the answer to his question. Then Yahshua answered him, “Why do you call Me good? There’s no one good except God Himself.”

The answer did not disturb the rich young ruler. He sensed that this man he was talking to was from God. Yahshua saw this so He said, looking right at him, “You know the commandments.”

Of course he knew them! He was a really, really good man. That’s what he looked like on the outside. Yahshua continued, “Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.”

The rich young ruler nodded his head in agreement the whole time Yahshua was talking. He knew the Ten Commandments. He had confidence now. “Well, Master,” he said, “I have kept all these commandments since I was a young boy.”

THEN Yahshua looked at him. It says Yahshua looked at him, and then it says that Yahshua loved him. So, there is a pause there. The man looked around but Yahshua didn’t look away. He loved him. Can you imagine how that would feel, you’re standing there and Yahshua is just looking at you, loving you? And He said to him, “You need to do one more thing.”

This man felt that look of Yahshua, he felt that love, and he was ready. What was that “just one more thing” he wondered to himself? Surely he would do anything the Master asked...

Yahshua continued speaking, His love never wavering, “Give all your money to the poor and you are going to have a treasure in heaven. And come, follow me!”

The disciples were excited, thinking among themselves, ‘He’s telling him to follow Him. He is going to be with us!’

But then they looked at the rich man and they saw his face just drop. He face dropped when he heard the words of our Master to give all your possessions to the poor. They watched him turn and walk away, shaking his head. They looked at one another as if to say out loud, ‘Why didn’t he come and follow?’ They were shocked.

They knew the man was very rich. Then Yahshua looked around and He said, “How hard it is for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God.”

The disciples all thought that being rich was like a blessing from God. They were kind of astounded at what Yahshua had just said. So then He said, answering their confusion, “How hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God. It is like a camel going through the eye of a needle. That is how hard it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.”

Now the disciples were even more astounded! Like a camel going through the eye of a needle?!? “In that case,” one of them said (probably Kepha, for he was always outspoken, saying what he thought – that was why Yahshua loved him so much), “then who can be saved?”

Yahshua answered them, “With man it is impossible, but for God, everything is possible.”

The disciples knew that made sense, but... Yahshua simply said, “Come on, let’s go.”

And they continued walking down the valley and up to the river. They came to the same place on the river that Joshua had gone down and crossed with the people of Israel. This was where Yahshua crossed with His disciples. On the other side of it was the city of Jericho, just like long ago. He healed some people as He walked along the way. He loved the people so much.

Remember that Jericho was the town of the other rich man, the bad rich man. You remember what happened with that really good one? Well, here was the town of the bad rich man. So Zaccai is going to meet Yahshua today too. He heard the noise of the crowd. “Who is it?” He asked someone.

“Yahshua the Messiah. He’s coming into Jericho today,” they answered him.

Zaccai’s heart started to pound. He had this great desire to see Yahshua. He heard the sound of the crowd coming. He would NEVER have had the NERVE to run up to him like the rich man did and bow down at his feet, never! He never would have had the nerve. He would have expected to get a kick if he bowed down at his feet. He thought he would have deserved a kick if he had bowed down because he was such a bad guy. He certainly was not proud of his behavior.

Zaccai, thought, ‘I know which way He’s going to walk.’ He climbed up a tree and thought, ‘I’ll climb up in the tree and then at least when He goes by I can see Him.’

He was right above where He would go by. There was a lot of noise and somebody in the back was jumping around. People were just rejoicing! And then the crowd was right down below where he was up above. Here comes the crowd. HE SAW HIM. He saw Yahshua really clear!!! Then the crowd stopped right under his tree!!! Then Zaccai received the same look from our Master as the other rich man. Yahshua looked right at him with that same look. Yahshua seemed to know him. Yahshua called to him. He said, “Zaccai.”

Zaccai was overjoyed; Yahshua had called him! “Zaccai,” our Master said, “come down from there, because I’m going to stay at your house tonight.”

Zaccai thought, “MY HOUSE!!! This is amazing that He’s going to stay in MY house! NO body comes to my house because EVERYONE hates me. I’m a bad guy. This man is the Messiah. And He knows my name and He’s going to come to my house.”

Well, he pushed the leaves aside and got down and got on his feet. He started rejoicing. He said, “COME ON. Come to my house. He was jumping for joy.” He was so excited.

Now this was a different response than that rich man had in the other town. Zaccai had a different RESPONSE. Zaccai knew exactly what he was going to do. He felt so bad about his condition. But he didn’t go into condemnation about it. YAHSHUA was going to come. They got to the gate. “Come in!!!” He said. He was so happy.

This was totally different than the scene before with the rich man walking away with a long face. But Zaccai was a rich man too. The other rich man had looked so sad, but not this one! “Sit down,” he said to everyone.

The disciples felt sick. They were in the house of a tax collector. The disciples weren't excited at all like they were about the other rich man. Now they were in an even richer house than that of the other man.

But the tax collector was so happy. He was jumping around everywhere.

At the edge of the gate over there were all the people. The people were asking one another, “How can the Messiah go into the house of a rich tax collector?”

They were all at the gate complaining about this. They were saying, “This is horrible. He is visiting a tax collector's house.”

While inside, Zaccai said, “I WANT TO SAY SOMETHING.”

He got up from where he was and said, “I want to make this very clear. Listen to me,” he said, “listen to me. I'm going to give away half of my possessions to the poor people.”

“Hmmm...” people said, “half? But Yahshua said how much? How much did Yahshua ask from the other man? Everything. He asked that other rich man everything.”

Zaccai had said, “I'm going to give up half.”

Half! That was a lot of money for such a rich man as he. But Zaccai was guilty. He had done really bad things. He had to make up for all the bad things he did. So he went on, “I'm not finished. I'M NOT FINISHED. And for the REST,” he went on to say, “if I cheated anybody, I am going to pay that person back four times as much as I cheated them.”

There was a roar from the crowd. That man had cheated so many people! He was cheating people all day long. So, he was going to need the other half of his money to pay back all the people four times as much. They were the ones he had cheated!

There went all Zaccai's money. It was finished. Why? Because Yahshua had come right to his house. Yahshua was going to forgive him and give him a new life. He was going to give

him just what the other man had asked for. That other man had asked, “What can I do to have eternal life?”

Yahshua had told him, “Give up all your possessions and follow Me.”

Zaccai was not sad like the other rich man. Zaccai was happy to get rid of all his things. All his things hadn't brought him happiness... Zaccai was just giving away everything.

This was a story of two people and their two responses. Yahshua came to the men and He wanted a response. It is hard for a rich man to be saved. But it was not hard for Zaccai, because he thought forgiveness. **WAS WORTH SO MUCH MORE!** He gave up everything for Yahshua. Now Zaccai was a happy man. He had eternal life. That other man seemed like he had it all...

That's the story of two men and two responses. What kind of response do you have to Yahshua?