

CAPITOL STUDIES

JANUARY 14, 2026 • WEEK 1



LUKE FOR LEGISLATORS SECOND SESSION

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Theme Verse

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man has come to **seek** and to **save** that which was **lost**.



Short Taxman Gets Converted



A JAPANESE FIGHTER PILOT IS CONVERTED TO CHRIST, from “The Power of the Gospel” by John Barrett: “We’ve all read of the ‘Day of Infamy’ when America was attacked at Pearl Harbor. In less than two hours, 2,403 American soldiers, sailors, and civilians were killed, and another 1,178 wounded. Aircraft losses totaled 188 planes, and much of the United States Pacific Fleet was destroyed or damaged. The bombing raid was led by a brilliant thirty-nine-year-old Japanese Navy pilot named Mitsuo Fuchida, whose idol was Adolf Hitler. The attack led to the United States’ entry into World War II, and ultimately to the devastation of his Japanese homeland by American bombs.

“Haunted by memories of all the death he had witnessed, Fuchida decided to write a book, *No More Pearl Harbors*. He struggled in vain, however, to find a principle upon which peace could be based. Fuchida began looking for stories about prisoners of war that seemed to illustrate the principle for which he was searching. In a list of POWs returning to Japan, Fuchida recognized a friend who had been captured by the Americans and incarcerated in a prisoner of war camp. He reached out to the friend and asked, ‘How did they treat you?’...

Pastor Arin Hess
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“His friend said they were treated fairly well, although they suffered much mentally and spiritually. But then he told Fuchida a story. ‘Something happened where I was interred, which has made it possible for us in that camp to forego all our resentment and hatred and to return with a forgiving spirit and a feeling of lightheartedness instead.’

“There was a young American girl, named Margaret ‘Peggy’ Covell, about twenty, who came to the camp on a regular basis. She brought things for their enjoyment, looked after the sick, and constantly sought for ways to help them. When they asked her why she was so concerned, she answered, ‘Because my parents were killed by the Japanese Army!’ This was incomprehensible to the Japanese. In their society, no offense could be greater than the murder of one’s parents.

“Peggy’s parents were missionaries to Japanese families in the Philippines. When Japan invaded the islands, they fled to the mountains. Ultimately they were found, charged with being spies and put to death. When the report of their death reached Peggy, she reacted with intense anger, bitter hatred, and grief. Over and over, she envisioned their execution. Then she began to consider her parents’ selfless love for the Japanese people. Gradually, she became convinced that they had forgiven the people God had called them to love and serve. Then it occurred to her that if her parents had died without bitterness or rancor toward their executioners, why should her attitude be different? Therefore, she chose the path of love and forgiveness. She decided to minister to the Japanese prisoners in the nearby POW camp as a proof of her sincerity.

“Fuchida was touched by this story, but he was especially impressed with the possibility that it was exactly what he had been searching for: a principle sufficient to be a basis for peace. Could it be that the answer for which he was seeking was a forgiving love, flowing from God to man, and then from man to man? He obtained a copy of the New Testament in Japanese and began reading two or three chapters a day in the Scriptures. Then in September 1949, Fuchida read Luke 23. For the first time he read the story of the crucifixion. The Calvary scene pierced Fuchida’s spirit. In the midst of the horror of His death, Christ said, ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.’ Tears sprang to Fuchida’s eyes; he had reached the end of his ‘long, long wondering.’ By the time Fuchida finished reading Luke, he had received the Lord Jesus Christ. He did write his book, but entitled it *From Pearl Harbor to Golgotha*. His life verse, which he signed under his every signature, was Luke 23:34: ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.’

“Christ’s offer of forgiveness has a tremendous power to affect the world. The Holy Spirit knew that all men and women need to know it, and that’s why the Gospel by Luke is included in Scripture. May we take its message to heart.”¹





INTRODUCTION

The new birth or conversion is clearly illustrated in the story of Zaccheus. The fact that man can be converted—turned around from sin to the Savior—provides hope for every seeking heart. **Why Jesus came: to seek and to save that one who is lost.**

I. JESUS CAME TO MEET A SINGLE SOUL IN NEED

Luke 19:1-2

He entered Jericho and was passing through. ²And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich.²

Jesus chose this route through Jericho for a definite purpose. Jericho's mild climate allowed it to become the most fruitful countryside in Judea. It lay on the busy trade route between northern Israel and Egypt. This combination made it the perfect retreat for the wealthy. "Wherever you find vast amounts of wealth and large numbers of politicians, you inevitably find a funnel for taxes."³

Zaccheus was a *very* rich man. This is the only time the title "chief" is used with a tax collector. It probably refers to the head of the local taxation office; therefore, Zaccheus would be responsible to the Roman government for the employment and management of the local tax collectors and their monies.

This means that **Zaccheus had all the pleasures** and comforts of life which money could buy. **Zaccheus also had power** over ordinary citizens and direct access to the power of Rome. He had abused that power, overcharging the people for taxes, and pocketing the excess. And **Zaccheus had a problem**. He would find it very difficult to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Ironically, Zaccheus' name means "innocent." Certainly, something he was not. His money and power were a serious threat to his salvation, as they are with most men. It would be difficult to give up all he had to follow Christ.

II. JESUS MADE TIME FOR A SEEKING SOUL

Luke 19:3-4

Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. ⁴So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.

A. Zaccheus Was Denied Passage Through the Crowd

Despite his wealth and the pleasures and comfort it brought, Zaccheus was apparently empty and lonely within his heart. This can be imagined because tax collectors were bitterly hated by the people. Zaccheus was also small of stature, which means that he was probably self-conscious, felt inferior, and had a low self-image. Being so little in stature, it was dangerous for him to be out in the midst of a crowd that despised him.





B. Zaccheus Disregarded His Own Reputation to See Jesus

He had to humble himself. Imagine a man of position and wealth, running and climbing a tree just to see an important person pass.

C. Zaccheus Was Determined in His Attempt to See Jesus

He wanted to see Jesus so badly he forgot everyone around. He was determined to see the Lord, and nothing was going to stop him (see Isaiah 55:6; Hosea 10:12). “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

Zacchaeus had most likely experienced the stirring of faith within his heart for some time. He had heard reports about Jesus being the Messiah and perhaps had heard about Jesus saving and calling Matthew, another tax collector, to be one of His apostles. Zaccheus had begun to believe the reports or, at least, wonder and hope that the reports were true. His efforts to see Jesus and then receive Him are evidence of some stirring, of some hope that drove him to seek Jesus in the first place. (see Hebrews 4:15-16). “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

III. JESUS SAW A SOUL THAT WAS SINCERE

Luke 19:5-6

When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” “And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly.

A. Jesus Came to Zaccheus Right Where He Was

Jesus “looked up, and saw him.” Jesus sees every man, no matter where he is: in the dark places of his sin and shame, in his home, work, and play. He sees the heart of man and knows its condition. There is no place we can hide from Jesus’ eyes.

Zacchaeus is an example. He was up in a tree. Perhaps he was trying somewhat to hide, but Jesus saw him and walked right up to him. Jesus knew Zaccheus was seeking Him, so He came to meet Zaccheus.

B. Jesus Knew Zaccheus and Called Him by Name

Zaccheus had never met Jesus before, yet Jesus knew his name. When a person, especially a stranger, calls us by name, we tend to perk up and listen. Jesus knows everything about a man. He knows if that man is seeking the truth. Jesus knew that Zaccheus was *not* “innocent.” He knew that he was a cheat and a liar, but Jesus wanted to cover Zaccheus’ sin with His righteousness, so he could truly be “innocent” in God’s eyes. Jesus knew Zaccheus’ need, and He knew how to meet that need (see Isaiah 1:18).

When we do as Zacchaeus did, seek to see Jesus, Jesus will come to us and call us by name (see John 10:3, 14). “Do not fear: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name; you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1).



C. Jesus Asked Zacchaeus to Receive Him Immediately

Jesus was set for the cross at Jerusalem and could not delay long. There was no time to waste. Jesus wanted to be welcomed and received by Zacchaeus, but Zacchaeus had to act. The moment of opportunity was then and there, that day. The next day it would be gone. There would be no pull, no struggle, no seeking spirit within Zacchaeus' heart (see Revelation 3:20; Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 55:6). "Behold, now is 'the acceptable time,' behold, now is 'the day of salvation'" (2 Corinthians 6:2b).

D. Zacchaeus Obeyed Jesus with Haste and Received Christ Joyfully

Undoubtedly, Zacchaeus was thrilled and honored by Jesus' request. He hurriedly obeyed (see John 1:12).

IV. JESUS CHANGED A SOUL THAT REPENTED OF SIN

Luke 19:7-8

When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

A. Zacchaeus Was a Wicked Man Who Came to Jesus

"Ancient Near Eastern culture counted it a privilege to provide shelter, food, protection, and comfort to travelers, especially persons of high social rank. Everyone with a home in Jericho hoped to host the Messiah on His journey. Surprisingly, He gave that distinction to the city's most notorious sinner.... If calling Zacchaeus 'rich' was an understatement so was calling him a sinner! This turn of events must have shocked the citizens of Jericho."⁴ But they were probably even more shocked and what happened thereafter.

B. Zacchaeus Was a Wicked Man Who Was Changed by Jesus

The phrase "if I have defrauded," would better be translated, "In every instance in which I have defrauded anyone....' Because his crimes were financial, he undoubtedly had detailed records of each sin. Without hesitation, the notorious tax collector promised to make things right."⁵ He would repay those he had cheated four times the amount he had taken and give half of what he owned to the poor, exactly what the rich young ruler had refused to do (Luke 18). Zacchaeus repented and changed his whole life; he completely turned from his sinful life to God and His righteousness. He did a one-eighty! (see Acts 8:22). "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19, KJV).





V. JESUS SAVED A SOUL THAT WAS LOST IN SIN

Luke 19:9-10

And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Zaccheus showed outward evidence of an inward change. Jesus pointed to him as an example of the reason Jesus had come to earth—to seek and to save the lost. Zaccheus would show forth God’s salvation to all those around him.

CONCLUSION

Zaccheus was truly converted. He showed outward evidence of an inward change.

1. He sought Jesus.
2. He received Jesus into his life (home).
3. He repented of his sin, made restitution, and turned completely around to the Savior.

Does your life show evidence of an inward change? Has there been an inward change? Can others see Jesus in you? If not, today is the day to turn to Jesus from your sin.

Our opening story of the Japanese fighter pilot, Mitsuo Fuchida, is a modern example of a life converted by the Gospel.

In Acts 3, Peter appeals to the people in Jerusalem. Luke records this for us: “Therefore repent and return [be converted, KJV], so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”

Chaplain Arin Hess

FOOTNOTES

1. John Barnett, “The Power of the Gospel,” 2001, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermons/21609152591>.
2. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
3. Charles Swindoll, *Insights on Luke*, Zondervan, 2012, pg. 435.
4. *Ibid*, pg. 436.
5. *Ibid*, pg. 437.

Personal Study Notes

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Meeting during the 109th Legislature's Second Session

SENATORS

6:45 – 7:45 A.M.

Wednesdays

Capitol Office #1004

STAFF

12:00 – 1:00 P.M.

Wednesdays

*NE State Office Building
Morrill Room*



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