

# Luke 19:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

## Analysis

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**And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.** Luke's *idou* (ἰδοὺ, "behold") draws attention to this unlikely character. The name Zacchaeus (Ζακχαῖος, Zakchaios) derives from Hebrew Zakkai, meaning "pure" or "righteous"—deeply ironic given his profession. He was *architelōnēs* (ἀρχιτελώνης, "chief tax collector"), a term appearing only here in Scripture. This wasn't a common tax collector but the overseer of multiple collectors, making him doubly despised—both a Roman collaborator and an exploiter of fellow Jews.

The detail "he was rich" (*kai autos ēn plousios*, καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν πλούσιος) explains how he obtained his wealth: through systematic extortion. Roman taxation was farmed out to the highest bidder, who then extracted as much as possible to profit beyond the required amount. Zacchaeus's riches came from oppressing his own people. Yet Luke presents him as the unlikely recipient of grace, following Jesus's recent teaching that what is impossible with men is possible with God (Luke 18:27)—even a rich man entering God's kingdom.

## Historical Context

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Tax collectors (*publicani*) were among the most hated figures in first-century Judea. They collaborated with Rome's occupation forces and enriched themselves through oppression. A chief tax collector in Jericho would oversee a lucrative operation, collecting customs on balsam, dates, and other goods passing through

this major trade route. Jewish religious law grouped tax collectors with prostitutes and Gentiles as those ritually unclean and outside covenant faithfulness. To dine with such a person was to incur ceremonial defilement and social disgrace.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. What is the significance of the name 'Zacchaeus' (meaning 'pure') given his profession as a chief tax collector?
2. How does Zacchaeus embody Jesus's teaching about the difficulty of rich people entering God's kingdom (Luke 18:24-25)?
3. Why would a chief tax collector risk public humiliation to see Jesus?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ	ἰδοὺ,	ἄνθρω	ὀνόματι	καλούμενος	Ζακχαῖος	καὶ	
And	behold	there was a man	named	G2564	Zacchaeus	And	
G2532	G2400	G435	G3686		G2195	G2532	
αὐτὸς	ἦν	ἀρχιτελώνης		καὶ	οὗτος	ἦν	πλούσιος·
G846	was	the chief among the publicans		And	he	was	rich
	G2258	G754		G2532	G3778	G2258	G4145