



GOD OF THE
OUTCAST

THE OUTCAST TRAITOR



THE BIBLE LAB

YES, NO & MAYBE

1. I hesitate to say so...But I'm probably more compassionate than most of the people here.
2. There is a celebrity that I would skip work to see, if they came to town.
3. There is a special punishment during the final judgment for those who abuse other people for their own greedy personal gain.
4. Jesus showed us how to live by spending his time with those who had devoted their lives to modeling God's love and obeying his commands.
5. The Messiah came to free Israel from their present oppression and suffering.

DIG DEEPER

A RICH MAN IN A POOR TREE:

• **READ Luke 19:1-10 (NLT):** *Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. 2 There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. 3 He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.*

5 When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today."

6 Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. 7 But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

8 Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

9 Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.

- **(V. 1) Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town.** Jesus is on his way with his disciples to the final Passover, just days before his crucifixion.
- **(V. 2) Zacchaeus.** The Greek form of the Hebrew *Zaccai* which means *Righteous One*.
- **(V. 2) He was the chief tax collector in the region.** The Romans gave the work of collecting taxes in each Roman province to the man who paid the most to get the job. The tax collector received no salary from the Romans; instead, he collected as much money as he could from the people. After paying the Romans the proper amount, he could then keep the excess he had dishonestly collected. Thus almost all tax collectors cheated the people and got rich. As a result, everyone hated them. He is the only chief publican of whom we read in the New Testament, and we are not surprised to find him located in Jericho with its heavy trade in balsam

which was taxed at a high rate. The palm groves and the balsam gardens (now gone) were so valuable that Antony gave them to Cleopatra as a source of revenue, and Herod the Great redeemed them for his own benefit.

» Why do you think Zacchaeus was so interested in seeing Jesus? What might he have heard about him?

(V. 4) So he ran ahead. Such undignified behavior, according to that culture, indicates that more than curiosity was at play here.

(V. 4) Climbed a sycamore-fig tree. From συκῆ, fig-tree, and μόνον, the mulberry. It resembles the fig in its fruit, and the mulberry in its leaves. Some old writers derived it from μωρός, *foolish*, because it produced worthless figs. None but the poorer classes eat them. Hence Amos expresses the fact that he belongs to the humblest class of the community, by calling himself a gatherer of sycamore fruit (Amos 7:14). It grows with its large branches low down and wide open, so that Zacchaeus could easily have climbed into it.

» What typically causes lost people to seek Jesus out? What does Jesus present that the church typically doesn't?

(V. 5) Called him by name...“Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.”

Since the crowds surrounded him, a thousand things should have directed Jesus' eyes elsewhere. It is unwarranted to think that he looked up into this one tree accidentally, or that he always looked up into the trees along the road as he traveled. Jesus came to just this place, then looked up and invited himself to Zacchaeus' house. He knew that his host was in this tree, knew his name, knew his very heart. *Meinai* 'to stay' includes staying overnight.

» What does it tell you about God that Jesus would intentionally seek out this man?

(V. 7) But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled. Jesus was the hero of this crowd from Galilee on their way to the passover. But here he had shocked their sensibilities and those of the people of Jericho by inviting himself to be the guest of this chief publican and notorious sinner who had robbed nearly everybody in the city by exorbitant taxes.

» What does it say about God that he is willing to risk his own reputation like this?

(V. 8) “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!” Half of his wealth would have been quite a large amount to help the poor. The “if” in his next statement is said in the Greek form with an assumption that it was true. There was no question, he had cheated people. It was common for the publicans to put a fictitious value on property or income, or to advance the tax to those unable to pay, and then to charge outrageous interest on the private debt.

Four times: The restoration required of a thief (Exod. 22:1).

» What do you think brought about Zacchaeus' life change? There is no record of Jesus addressing his sin or greed.

(V. 9) “Salvation has come to this home today” Literally: has happened to this *oikos* family.

» What is it that brought salvation to this home? Why does Jesus respond to this?

(V. 10) “For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.” Lost (*to apolōlos*) refers to people who have gone astray; hence *sōsai* means to save them from their predicament and to restore their relationship with God and men.

» What predicaments place us at odds with God's character?



MY PRAYER...

1. How am I at odds with God's character?
2. How willing am I to be undignified in order to see who Jesus really is?
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to understand now?