

The Publican

Question:

According to Luke 5:27 (KJV), Matthew was a publican prior to his call to be an apostle. What was a publican?

Our Answer:

A publican was a customs officer or tax collector, one who bought from the Roman authorities the privilege of collecting taxes. He made his profit by charging the people above what the Roman government charged him for the privilege of collecting taxes.

Note: Publicans were held in very low esteem by the Jewish community. Many Jews viewed tax collectors as traitors. (Mt 9:10-11; see also: Mt 18:17; Mk 2:16-17; Lk 5:30)