**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 20** Luke 21 The Widow’s Offering/Signs of the End of the Age!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture, and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe pages 111-120.

What is some encouragements Jesus gives in Luke 21 to those who suffer persecution? From whom should Christians expect to experience opposition? When enduring suffering, why should Christians never despair?

1. Read Luke 21:1-4 along with the article below entitled, “What does Jesus want us to learn from what He said about the widow’s mite?”

The Gospels of Mark and Luke both relay an incident involving a widow’s gift to God. She didn’t give much—just two mites—or did she?

The story is often called the story of the widow’s mite or the story of the widow’s offering. One day, Jesus was sitting with His disciples near the temple treasury watching people depositing money into the offering receptacles. The court of women held thirteen such receptacles, and people could cast their money in as they walked by. Jesus watched as the rich were contributing large sums of money, but then along came a widow with two small coins in her hand. The ESV calls them “two small copper coins, which make a penny” (Mark 12:41). The KJV calls the coins “mites.” **These were the smallest denomination of coins.** The widow put her coins into the box, and Jesus called His disciples to Him and pointed out her action: “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all **gave out of their wealth**; but she, **out of her poverty**, put in everything—all she had to live on” (Mark 12:43–44; cf. Luke 21:1–4).

There are several things that the story of the widow’s mite teaches us. **First, God sees what man overlooks.** The big gifts in the temple were surely noticed by people; that’s probably what the disciples were watching. But Jesus saw what no one else did: He saw the humble gift of a poor widow. This was the gift that Jesus thought worthy of comment; this was the gift that the disciples needed to be aware of. The other gifts in the treasury that day made a lot of noise as they jingled into the receptacles, but the widow’s mites were heard in heaven.

**Second, God’s evaluation is different from man’s.** The widow’s two mites added up to a penny, according to man’s tabulation. But Jesus said that she had given *more* than anyone else that day (Mark 12:43). How could this be, when “many rich people threw in large amounts” (Mark 12:41)? **The difference is one of proportion**. The rich were giving large sums, but they still retained their fortunes; the widow “put in everything—all she had to live on” (Mark 12:42). **Hers was a true sacrifice; the rich had not begun to give to the level of her sacrifice.**

**Third, God commends giving in faith. Here was a woman in need of *receiving* charity, yet she had a heart to give.** Even though the amount was negligible—what could a widow’s mite buy? —she gave it in faith that God could use it. The widow’s faith is also evident in the fact that she gave the *last* of her money. Like the widow of Zarephath, who gave her last meal to Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:7–16), the widow in the temple gave away her last means of self-support. Does that mean the widow left the temple completely destitute, went home, and died of starvation? No. **The Bible teaches that God provides for our needs (Matthew 6:25–34).** We don’t know the details of this particular widow’s future, but we can be certain that she was provided for. Just as God provided for the widow and her son in Elijah’s day (1 Kings 17:15–16), God also provided for the widow in Jesus’ day.

It is interesting that, just before Jesus commented on the widow’s mite, He commented on the scribes “who devour widows’ houses” (Mark 12:40). The religious officials of the day, instead of helping the widows in need, were perfectly content to rob them of their livelihood and inheritance. The system was corrupt, and the darkness of the scribes’ greed makes the widow’s sacrifice shine even more brightly. “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7), and He is faithful to take care of His own.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Offer two or three lessons you learn from this story about the widow’s mite.
2. Concerning the widow and her gift:
3. Concerning the rich people who threw in large amounts:
4. What do you learn about giving from the following texts?
* Deuteronomy 15:10-11
* Proverbs 19:17
* Matthew 6:1-4
* Acts 20:35
* 2 Corinthians 8:1-7
* 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
* 1 Timothy 6:17-19

**Personal reflection:** Do you desire to change any aspects of your giving based on reading God’s Word? If so, what do you plan on changing?

1. Read Luke 21:5-38 along with Matthew 24, Mark 13, and the article below entitled, “What signs indicate that the end times are approaching?”

Many Bible-believing scholars have different views concerning eschatology, the study of the last things, and the world's end. The purpose of this study lesson is not to dig into these differing views but to focus on the central truths being taught in this specific chapter concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. and the signs that will usher in the second coming of Jesus Christ.

**Signs of the End!**

Matthew 24:5–8 gives us some important clues for discerning the approach of the end times: “Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.” An increase in false messiahs, an increase in warfare, and increases in famines, plagues, and natural disasters—these are signs of the end times. In this passage, though, we are given a warning: we are not to be deceived, because these events are only the beginning of birth pains; the end is still to come.

Some interpreters point to every earthquake, every political upheaval, and every attack on Israel as a sure sign that the end times are rapidly approaching. While the events may signal the approach of the last days, they are not necessarily indicators that the end times have arrived. The apostle Paul warned that the last days would bring a marked increase in false teaching. “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1). The last days are described as “perilous times” because of the increasingly evil character of man and people who actively “oppose the truth” (2 Timothy 3:1–9; see also 2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Other possible signs would include a rebuilding of a Jewish temple in Jerusalem, increased hostility toward Israel, and advances toward a one-world government. The most prominent sign of the end times, however, is the nation of Israel. In 1948, Israel was recognized as a sovereign state, essentially for the first time since AD 70. God promised Abraham that his posterity would have Canaan as “an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8), and Ezekiel prophesied a physical and spiritual resuscitation of Israel (Ezekiel 37). Having Israel as a nation in its own land is important in light of end-times prophecy because of Israel’s prominence in eschatology (Daniel 10:14; 11:41; Revelation 11:8).

With these signs in mind, we can be wise and discerning in regard to the expectation of the end times. We should not, however, interpret any of these singular events as a clear indication of the soon arrival of the end times. God has given us enough information that we can be prepared, and that is what we are called to be as our hearts cry out, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. From Matthew’s account, what three questions did the disciples ask Jesus as they walked by the Temple Mount?
2. Focus on Luke 21:5-7 and 20-24. As Warren Wiersbe mentions in his commentary, the disciples thought the three events (the destruction of the Temple, Christ’s return, and the end of the age) would happen simultaneously. However, the Lord’s response, known as The Olivet Discourse, states otherwise. Jesus seems to imply that the destruction of the Temple would come first, followed by a long interval before the end of the age and his return.
3. When, in history, was the Temple in Jerusalem destroyed? Who destroyed it, and what happened to many of the Jews living at the time in Jerusalem (see article below entitled: *What were the Roman-Jewish Wars*?)?
4. What warnings did Jesus offer to those who would be alive at the time? Keep in mind that Jesus was facing his crucifixion. How do his warnings reveal his deep love for the Jews?

**What were the Roman-Jewish Wars?**

The Roman-Jewish Wars were a series of conflicts waged between the Roman Empire and Israeli rebels in AD 66—70, 115—117, and 132—135. These wars were devastating for Israel, resulting in immense Jewish casualties, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the expulsion of Jews from their homeland. The Jewish people would not reestablish statehood until 1948 when the modern state of Israel was founded.

During the time leading up to the Roman-Jewish Wars, Israel was under Roman domination and occupation; however, Jewish authorities were allowed some measure of autonomy. They were able to enforce certain religious laws but could not do anything beyond the limited authority allowed by Rome. For instance, the Jewish leaders were able to detain the apostles, forbid them to preach in Jesus’ name, and even have them beaten (Acts 5:17–40), but their authority went only so far. They killed Stephen in a sort of spontaneous “lynching” and thought about doing this with Jesus, but, normally, they would have had to seek Roman approval—as they ultimately did in Jesus’ case.

Rome was serious about “keeping the peace,” and the Jewish authorities were afraid of doing anything that would cause Rome to crack down on them. They were also afraid that Jesus would cause an uprising among the people if the leaders did nothing to curb His popularity (John 11:48) because it seems that Messianic expectations were running high. There was equal pressure on the Roman ruler at any given time because, if the Jews started an uprising, the Roman official in charge might be blamed for mismanagement; for this reason, he would normally give the Jewish leaders as much as he could. This seems to be why Pilate allowed Jesus to be crucified, against his better judgment (see Luke 23:20–22). All in all, first-century Israel was a turbulent place.

Roman occupation of Israel had been in place for over a generation, and most people living at the time of Christ would have never known a time when Israel was not occupied. Many Jews lived in the expectation that God’s Messiah would soon come to deliver them from the political and cultural bondage imposed by Rome. But, when Jesus the Messiah came, He made it clear that His kingdom was “not of this world” (John 18:36). After His “Triumphal Entry” (Matthew 21:1–11), instead of ridding Jerusalem of the Romans, Jesus cleanses the temple (verses 12–17); teaches that the kingdom will be taken away from Israel and given, at least in part, to the Gentiles (verses 33—22:14); tells His followers to pay taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:15–22); condemns the Jewish leaders (Matthew 23); and predicts that the temple will be destroyed (Matthew 24:1–2). He was not going to be the type of Messiah that so many expected, and they rejected Him.

The rejection of Christ left the door open for other would-be messiahs to try to save Israel from Rome, and in less than 40 years after Jesus ascended into heaven, an Israelite rebellion against Rome had been crushed and the temple had been destroyed. This was the first in a series of uprisings against Roman rule that are known today as the Roman-Jewish Wars or sometimes simply the Jewish Wars.

The First Roman-Jewish War took place about AD 66—73 and is also known as the Great Jewish Revolt. About halfway through the conflict, the temple in Jerusalem was completely destroyed, and the Jews in Jerusalem were slaughtered. It was a time of unprecedented suffering. Jewish nationalists took a final stand at the fortress of Masada, where, under siege and with no hope of victory or escape, almost 1,000 freedom fighters committed suicide rather than surrender or be captured by the Romans. This is the war that is chronicled by Josephus in *The Jewish War*. Following the defeat of the Jewish rebels, Roman rule was restored in Judea.

About 40 years later, riots and rebellions broke out among Jewish exiles in various parts of the Roman Empire. These were all eventually crushed by the Roman military. This series of uprisings is called the Kitos War; some consider it the Second Roman-Jewish War, although some do not because it did not occur in Israel.

The final chapter in the Roman-Jewish Wars was the Bar Kochba Revolt, led by Simeon bar Kosba, who made messianic claims and was renamed Bar Kokhba (“Son of the Star”) by an influential rabbi. The rebels were able to defeat Roman forces garrisoned in Palestine, and, for about two years, they established an independent Jewish state. As a result of Bar Kokhba’s victories, many hailed him as the Messiah who would restore the kingdom to Israel. However, Emperor Hadrian ordered six legions of soldiers with reinforcements into the area, and the rebellion was crushed. Many Jews were slaughtered in the process.

After this final rebellion, the Roman-Jewish Wars ended. In the aftermath, Jews were barred from Jerusalem except for the festival of Tisha B'Av, which commemorates the destruction of the first and second temples. The Jews began to be persecuted in a way they had not been before, and the Diaspora began in earnest. Bar Kokhba was denounced by Jewish leadership as a false messiah, and Jews began to abandon the concept of a personal messiah who would restore Israel. Approximately 100 years after rejecting Jesus as Messiah, Judaism was giving up any hope of a personal messiah, a Jewish homeland, and an independent Jewish kingdom.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Focus on Luke 21:8-18 and 24-28. List some of the signs (birth pains) that Jesus said will appear as the time of his Second Coming approaches
2. According to verses 12-28, how should we expect to be treated by others as followers of Christ (John 15:18-21)? Do you believe persecution will increase as the end approaches?

**Personal reflection:** Have you ever been persecuted because of your association with his name—Jesus? If not, why do you feel you have not been persecuted?

1. Verse 25b states, “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Explain. Suggest any evidence that Israel today is still being trampled upon by Gentile nations.
2. Read Romans 11:25-27. Explain how these verses could apply to Jews preceding the end of times, just before the Second Coming. How might these verses be good news for many Jews who are alive today?
3. As the world experiences more frequent and more intense ‘birth pains,’ what will people experience emotionally? According to verse 28, what should believers do and experience emotionally as the end approaches?

**Personal reflection:** Read Psalm 91. Are you spiritually prepared and ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? What do you think you will experience as these birth pains increase in frequency and intensity? What comfort do you take from Psalm 91?

1. “What does Jesus want us to learn from what He said about the widow’s mite?”

 Got Questions Ministries, accessed July 27, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/widows-mite.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “What signs indicate that the end times are approaching?” Got Questions Ministries, accessed July 29, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/signs-end-times.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “What were the Roman-Jewish Wars?” Got Questions Ministries, accessed August 15, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/Roman-Jewish-Wars.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)