

# THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

*A Message of Hope and Fulfillment For Those Longing For God*

## *Discerning the Times*

**Luke 21: 1-38**

A conversation about money turns into a conversation about the end times. There are many interesting and subtle lessons hidden in the widow's small offering; as the discussion turns to the beauty of the Temple Jesus indicates that its glory will soon become a faded memory. Out of this arises the question, and Jesus answer, about the end of human history as we know it.

### **I. A Widow's Gift—vv. 1-6**

- A. God's math—the truth about giving (vv.1-4)
- B. Honoring God by giving in faith, regardless of the use (v.5)
- C. God does not value what man values (v.6)

### **II. The Beginning of the End—vv. 7-9**

- A. False messiahs (v.8)
- B. Wars (v.9a)
- C. Disturbances, disorder, and tumults (v.9b)

### **III. Things to Come—vv. 10-24**

- A. Persecution of the saints (vv.12-19)
- B. Nations at war, earthquakes, plagues & famines, terrors, & signs in the heavens (vv.10-11)
- C. The destruction of Jerusalem (vv.20-24)

### **IV. Signs Growing in Intensity—vv. 25-28**

- A. Signs in the sun, moon, & stars (v.25)
- B. Dismay among the nations (v.25)
- C. Changes and turbulence in the oceans (v.25)
- D. Terror coming upon people in anticipation of the end (v.26)
- E. The coming of the Son of Man in glory (v.27)
- F. Lift up your heads, redemption is drawing near (v.28)

### **V. Parable of the Fig Tree—Be on Your Guard—vv. 29-36**

- A. We may not know the day or the hour of Christ's return, but we can read the signs of the times and sense the nearness of His coming (v.29-33)
- B. Be on guard, live as those who expect His coming, avoid the entanglements of the world that distract from the most important things (vv.34-36)
- C. Stay alert! (v.36)

The Jews greatly valued the majestic glory of Herod's Temple. Even the poorest considered it a privilege to give for what they believed to be the glory of God. God is not nearly so impressed with what we build. This dichotomy of value leads to a discussion of the return of Messiah and the end of the age. Jesus give us some understanding of what to look for in anticipation of His coming and makes the main point: do not be caught up in riches and worldly concerns, do not become anxious about the future—be alert, unencumbered, and ready for His coming . . . Especially as we see the day approaching.

And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on." And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them. When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately." Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives. "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies,

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the primary lessons we can learn from the story of the widow's very small gift?
2. How does God "keep score"?
3. What time period does Luke 21 cover in the history of the church?
4. What signs does Jesus say will occur immediately before His coming?
5. What might believers face before the return of Jesus Christ?
6. What is the basic message of the fig tree?
7. What is the most important lesson from this passage?

### NOTES

then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.

**Luke 21: 1-38 NASB**