

Luke 21A

- As we begin Chapter 21, we are embarking on a series of teaching that will take us through the heart of eschatology, the doctrine of end times
 - Luke's 21st chapter includes one of Jesus' most famous discourses, the Olivet Discourse
 - And the discourse opens up a fascinating discussion on end times events – eschatology
 - In Luke's gospel, this discourse is actually part 2 of Jesus' discourse on the days of the end
 - Part 1 came in chapter 17, which we already studied
 - And in Matthews account of the Olivet discourse in chapter 24, both part 1 and part 2 are placed together
 - Whether Jesus presented the material in one sitting as Matt records or as separate discussions as Luke records (or Jesus simply taught some parts repeatedly) is a matter of debate
 - But the more important issue for our study today is to properly understand what events Jesus is talking about
 - And how they apply to the church today and in the future
- But before we get to that discourse, we need to attend to a few opening verses
 - They transition us from the moment in the temple where Jesus has been teaching in the day before His crucifixion
 - To the private moment on the Mount of Olives when He discusses the end times with the Apostles

[Luke 21:1](#) ¶ And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.

[Luke 21:2](#) And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins.

[Luke 21:3](#) And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all *of them*;

[Luke 21:4](#) 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."

- At the end of chapter 20, Jesus had been teaching in the temple grounds, enduring the tests of the Sanhedrin
 - And in the end He posed a question of His own, which they couldn't answer
 - Leaving His questioners to abandon their efforts to discredit Him, and to seek another way to bring Him down
 - Meanwhile, Luke records Jesus' observations of the practice of giving in the Temple
- Within the Temple there was a public collection taken by the priests to be used for charity among the Jewish people
 - These were not sacrifices required under the law
 - Nor were they an offering to the Lord, in the sense of a tithe
 - They were merely gifts for charitable purposes, often called alms
- The rabbis of the day had declared a standard that no less than 2 prutah could be giving to the treasury
 - A prutah was a small brass or copper coin representing the smallest denomination of Jewish currency
 - It was so minimal in value that 2 together roughly equaled about 1/64th of a denarius, which was a laborer's wages for one day
 - Or about 9 minutes of work
 - At minimum wage, we're talking about 75 cents today
 - Some refer to this story as the widow and the mite, from the French word miete, which means crumb or morsel
 - The point being obvious – the woman was giving the minimum she was permitted to give
 - The rabbinical rule required she give no less
 - And presumably she had no more to offer
 - So she gave all she had – voluntarily

- She gave all the money she had that day, she would have had no expectation of replacement funds, except that she trusted God to provide
- She was the kind of person that fund was intended to help
- She should have been requested a withdrawal instead of making a deposit
- In contrast, the rich were giving large sums
 - It's interesting that we even know what each was giving
 - And this could have been the result of a practice that was supposedly common within the Temple
 - Where priests would stand by the treasury and announce publicly what each person donated as they gave their gifts
 - So as the rich walked by the treasury, they dropped their gifts, and heard the priest call out their donation
 - How often do you think a poor person would think to make a trip to the treasury under these circumstances?
 - Which if this practice was in effect in Jesus day, it would explain to some degree why Jesus would have taken note of this woman's giving
 - It would have likely caught everyone's attention – and perhaps even scorn – to see her donate so little
- Yet Jesus commends her, though He doesn't condemn those who gave a lot
 - The comparison is this:
 - The woman's generosity was to be measured not by the amount of her giving by the degree of her sacrifice
 - And while those who gave much more money are not condemned for their giving
 - Neither should the woman
 - And in fact, her gift should be seen as an even greater gift because of the sacrifice it represented

- The lesson for each of us here should be obvious enough
 - Our Lord takes note of our giving
 - And He measures our generosity by what we sacrifice in our willingness to serve the needs of others
 - Not by the ultimate impact our giving achieves
 - God doesn't need our money
 - He is fully capable of providing through whatever means He wishes for the needs of anyone and anything He wishes
 - He is never limited by our stinginess
 - Nor is He enabled by our generosity
 - We aren't commanded to give, to be charitable and giving because God needs our money
 - We're commanded to do so for spiritual benefit of developing a growing trust and dependence on God that generosity brings

Matthew Henry

Though we can give but a *little* in charity, yet if it be according to our ability, and be given with an upright heart, it shall be accepted of Christ, who requires *according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not*; two mites shall be put upon the treasury, and credited to our account before God (if given in a right manner) as if they had been a fortune.

It is much to the praise of charity, when we give not only *to our power*, but *beyond our power*, as the Macedonian churches, whose *deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality*, 2 Cor. viii. 2, When we can cheerfully provide for others, out of our own necessary provision, as the widow for Elijah, and Christ for his five thousand guests, and trust God to provide for us some other way, *this is thank-worthy*.

Clarke

He shows that works of charity should be estimated, not by their appearance, but by the spirit which produces them, that all men are properly in a state of equality; for though there is and ought to be a difference in outward things, yet God looks upon the heart, and the poorest person has it in his power to make his mite as acceptable to the Lord, by simplicity of intention, and purity of affection, as the millions given by the affluent. It is just in God to rate the value of an action by the spirit in which it is done.

- Now why does Jesus make this observation at this moment, amidst all that was transpiring around Him and in light of what was coming soon
 - Beyond the simple lesson of charity and giving, the larger connection is probably found in the personal sacrifice that Jesus was about to make
 - For He gave all He had to give for the sake of those who were poor and destitute

[Rom. 5:6](#) ¶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

[Rom. 5:7](#) For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

[Rom. 5:8](#) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

- And then carrying this idea forward, we know Jesus will expect the disciples to make similar sacrifices
- And this leads us to the Olivet Discourse, because in this discussion Jesus will talk extensively of the disciples' personal sacrifices

[Luke 21:5](#) ¶ And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said,

[Luke 21:6](#) “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.”

[Luke 21:7](#) ¶ 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?”

- This discourse has several parts and they need to be separated out if we hope to understand them properly
 - First, let's look at the opening verses in Luke's version

- The disciples and Jesus are leaving the Temple grounds for the day
 - And the disciples begin some sightseeing conversation
 - The best picture of this is found in Mark's gospel

[Mark 13:1](#) ¶ As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples *said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!"

- While it's not hard to understand why the disciples were marveling at the Temple, it's also easy to understand why Jesus doesn't seem to have any patience for it
 - He's probably just hours from his passion
 - And He wants to be sure He leaves the disciples with some understanding of God's plan for their future, the future of the church and ultimately the future of the world
 - So in response to their casual observations of the temple's beauty, Jesus gives a provocative response
 - He basically says, you see this temple...well, there will come a day when not one stone will be left unturned
 - This entire structure will be torn down
 - This was an almost unbelievable statement
 - Similar to the world trade center
 - No doubt this comment got the disciples' attention
 - And they obviously appreciated the serious nature of this comment, because they wait to question Jesus privately over what He meant

[Matt. 24:1](#) ¶ Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.

[Matt. 24:2](#) And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

[Matt. 24:3](#) ¶ As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

- Although Matt's account contains an even longer version of this discourse, we aren't going to spend much time in Matt's version except to take note of these opening verses
 - First, we notice that this conversation took place after they had departed the Temple and arrived on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple Mount
 - Secondly, we notice that the questions asked by the disciples are recorded a little differently by Matt than by Luke
 - In Luke, the questions are summarized simply as "When will these things take place and what will be the signs of these things?"
 - While in Matt, the questions are broken out in greater detail
 - When will these things happen
 - Signs of coming
 - Signs of end of the age
 - Luke adds that the disciples also want to know the signs before the Temple comes down
- It's relatively easy to explain the different emphasis between the two writers
 - Matt writing to a Jewish audience would have taken a particular interest in any discussion on the ages of time in God's plan
 - The Jews had long been taught about God's plan for them and for the world took the form of a present age and an age to come
 - The age to come was synonymous with the Messianic Kingdom, the time when the Messiah would arrive to save the Jewish people and rule the earth
 - This is the kingdom that we too await, when Christ returns to earth
 - Luke on the other hand wrote to a Gentile audience
 - They had little understanding of an age to come

- They would simply have been curious about the circumstances surrounding the destruction of the temple itself
- Nevertheless, Luke still records Jesus answering all the questions that were asked that day
- If you turn to the handout, which I will also make available for download on the our website, you see the questions broken out by verse reference
 - Jesus actually answers four questions in all during the Olivet Discourse
 - He answers the three questions asked by the disciples
 - As well as a fourth question the disciples did not ask, yet Christ felt it was necessary to include this answer for their benefit
 - So as we study this important chapter of Luke, we are going to focus on Luke's version, but you can see the corresponding cross references in Matt as well
- The first observation is that Jesus is not talking to a crowd
 - Mark tells us that He is talking privately to Peter, James, John and Andrew
 - This is important
- Christ doesn't answer in the same order as the questions are posed
 - Begins with the question that wasn't asked
 - What are not the signs of the end
 - Since the signs themselves are not in and of themselves unique
 - The signs themselves could be confused for the actual signs that are yet to come
 - Although the real signs will be very obvious once they come, there are other more common events that could be mistaken for the signs unless Jesus educates these men on the differences
 - So He wants them to know what are NOT signs of the end so they won't jump to a conclusion about these events

[Luke 21:8](#) 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.

[Luke 21:9](#) “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.”

- False Messiahs will come
 - Don’t go after them
 - Don’t follow ANYONE who says they are the Messiah (because the real messiah will be obvious)
- Don’t let wars or similar disturbances cause you to conclude that the end is near
 - They are not signs in and of themselves
 - Because so many of the true signs are going to bring great disturbances, don’t jump to the conclusion that all calamity must mean the end is near
- So then Jesus begins to answer the third question

[Luke 21:10](#) ¶ Then He continued by saying to them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom,

[Luke 21:11](#) and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

- Need to look at Matt briefly here to help appreciate what Jesus is talking about

[Matt. 24:7](#) “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

[Matt. 24:8](#) “But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

- The question was what are the signs of the end of the age
 - Here Jesus is describing very unique signs
 - Nation upon Nation
 - Famines increase
 - Earthquakes
 - But these are merely the beginnings of birth pangs

- The end of the age (Jesus' return) will be marked by these events and yet they will come like birth pangs
- Only those looking for these signs and only those near the end will recognize them

[Luke 21:12](#) ¶ “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.

[Luke 21:13](#) “It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.

[Luke 21:14](#) “So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;

[Luke 21:15](#) for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

[Luke 21:16](#) “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death,

[Luke 21:17](#) and you will be hated by all because of My name.

[Luke 21:18](#) “Yet not a hair of your head will perish.

[Luke 21:19](#) “By your endurance you will gain your lives.

- But Before all these things
 - Moving back in time
 - To events that precede the signs themselves
 - To a personal moment for the disciples themselves
 - (Different than Matt)
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