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# Knowing Jesus

## **The Recognition of Christ**

**Luke 20:45-47; 21:1-6**

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**4/7/2019**

**Main Idea: God is not impressed with earthly appearances, but recognizes the submissive heart.**

**Lesson Objective: Trust in the work of Jesus Christ.**

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## Introduction

*As your class time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

Have you ever heard the old story of the Emperor's New Clothes? Two swindlers come to town looking to make some quick money. Playing upon the emperor's vanity, they tell him they will make him some royal robes, the likes of which no one in his kingdom has ever seen before. There is just one catch.

They are made from a special thread-- what makes it special is that only those who are worthy can see it. As the emperor's attendants go to check in on the progress of the garments, they realize that they cannot see anything. However, unwilling to damage their reputation by saying they couldn't see them, they tout their unparalleled beauty. The same thing happens over and over until the day of the great celebration in town. The emperor proudly marches through town (in reality, naked), boasting his fine garments for all to see. The townspeople don't know what to say or think. They know he's not wearing any clothes, but everyone is afraid to point out the obvious, until a child, unaffected by reputation or pride, cries out the scandalous truth—"The emperor is naked!" He quickly becomes the laughingstock of the whole town, as his "garments" go from "royal robes" to "filthy rags."

We often suffer from this same disillusionment, thinking that we are wearing royal robes when all we are wearing is shame and disgrace--filthy rags! Often times we can get caught up in thinking that our righteousness comes from the religious practice that we follow. We think it beautiful, but in reality it is full of holes and filth. Others can see through these displays that we put on. They can see what imposters we are, and so can God. We shouldn't attempt to make our

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own robes of righteousness, for we, like the king, will fail. We must run to Christ, who has made perfect the robes of righteousness for us. He has made them gloriously perfect through His redemptive work on the cross. He has made royal robes for us, the likes of which this kingdom has never seen! Only what is true and pure will receive the proper recognition from God. All other works will be nothing in comparison to His great work. Those who trust in their own worth will be found without and embarrassed.

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## Just for Show

### Luke 20:45-47

*<sup>45</sup> And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, <sup>46</sup> “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, <sup>47</sup> who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”* [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#).

Jesus was being questioned by the religious leaders. They tried to trick Him into saying something against Rome that they could have used against Him. They even asked an impossible question about the resurrection, to which Jesus pointed out their lack of understanding. In turn, Jesus called on them to answer a question about the Messiah, which they refused to answer. From this context come our passages for today.

Jesus criticized the **scribes** for their prideful and greedy attitudes. They wanted everyone to see them and give them attention. They wore extravagant **long robes**. These long flowing robes were apparently meant to draw attention to them. They **love** to be treated like important people in **the marketplace, in the synagogues**, and at banquets. Everyone would have recognized the type of behaviors from the religious leaders due to their appearance, the over-the-top salutations, a strident demands to be in the best of places because of who they were. They would have spoken the best of the Hebrew and corrected everyone who had attempted to use it with them. Their attitude portrayed a belief that God was lucky to have them on His side.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark C. Black, [Luke](#), College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 1995), Lk 20:45–47.

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We have our contemporary Christian counterparts. These folks love to brag about how “busy” they are with all of the conferences and podcasts they have. They seem to be always running from one “important” meeting to another and they demand a certain respect for their achievements and degrees. It must be said that there is nothing wrong with showing respect to people, but it is quite another thing when the people want to “lord” those things over you. There is a trap even in Christian environment that feeds into the mind-set that sees religious life as a kind of lordship—sitting in the honored seat, being the feted guest at luncheons, speaking at prominent gatherings, building monuments, collecting honoraria and titles. But watch out! As Joseph Bayly observed, “No person can foster the impression that he/she is great, then exalt a great God.”<sup>2</sup>

Jesus wanted His hearers to know that, while these leaders *appeared* to be important and righteous, they actually **devour widow’s houses**, and their prayers are **lengthy** not because they are sincere but because they want to be seen praying. It is unclear just what it means to “devour widow’s houses,” but it probably means that they were taking advantage of the helpless widows in order to take what belongs to them. They did this by taking payment from widows for legal aid even though such payments were prohibited, cheating inexperienced widows of their inheritance, living off the hospitality of lonely women, mismanaging widows’s property who had dedicated themselves to service in the temple, and accepting money from the naive elderly in exchange for special prayer.

Unfortunately, today the Christian landscape is littered with this type of greed. It seems that these guys are on most religious tv channels. They were

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<sup>2</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 285–287.

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the expensive suits and brag about their wealth. They prey on the weak and helpless promising God's blessing if they would give to their ministries. They claim that they are doing the Lord's work and they need more money to purchase faster jets and more comfortable lifestyles. Such thinking is mistaken and far astray from the true teachings of God's Word—an evangelical cover-up for greed.

Jesus pointed out that these misguided leaders would not escape the judgment. They would **receive the greater condemnation**. These leaders seemed to be getting away with these high crimes against God. However, God was not overlooking their wrongdoings. He would ultimately judge them with an eternal punishment that would be far greater than any benefit they could have held for their short life on earth. For us, if we claim to have a full knowledge of God's Word for his people, and further claim that we are charged to deliver it, we are more responsible to deliver it clearly and obey it. Our goal in this life is not to be comfortable, but to glorify God. When we demand so much attention on ourselves, we cause others to focus on us rather than on the One who can save the lost. We must guard ourselves against making ministry about what we can get out of it and must focus more on what God has done. This is what God's Word teaches pure and simple. Jesus is supreme for salvation, and such a Savior demands a lifestyle that glorifies him. He demands everything—our status, all our wealth, all our prayer and devotion!

**How would you identify greedy and prideful behaviors?**

**How would you differentiate between showing honor and feeding someone's pride?**

**How would you demonstrate a Christlike attitude in your ministry?**

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## All In

### Luke 21:1-4

*<sup>1</sup> Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, <sup>2</sup> and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. <sup>3</sup> And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. <sup>4</sup> For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."* [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

Many widows during the second temple period would spend their last days living in the Temple. There were events going on day and night at the Temple. People who found the stairs difficult to climb, had accommodations available for them. This widow could have been one of the ones who had come to spend her remaining days in the Temple area for prayer in fasting (for another example see Simeon and Anna, Luke 2:25-40). When she gave all that she had, it was much more than just the two copper coins. She was giving the last remaining days of her life in devotion to the LORD.

There were 13 coffer shaped like inverted trumpets in the court of women in the temple and a treasury room nearby where supplicants could deposit their offerings. The poor widow did not have much to give, unlike the rich who made a great show of their offerings. Imagine if you will the rich who had dropped their money into the metal containers which would have made a louder noise than the small coins. Tiny copper coins called mites were the smallest Jewish currency at that time. Everyone would have heard the loud noise of the money drop, and they would have paid special attention to the givers. This seemed to be the motivation for some of them. She would have gone unnoticed, if it were

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not for Jesus who brought her giving to light. Jesus commended the widow for giving sacrificially.

The widow did not give very much based on human standards; yet according to her means, she gave everything she had. We often judge people's gifts based on their amount, not on what they can afford. When we judge based on an external basis, we are not judging as God does. He alone sees the heart. Our giving is always seen in proportion to our income. When we get more, we should not look at how much we can spend, but how much we can give. As we learn to be generous and faithful with our money, we should ultimately become people who live and give sacrificially to the work of Jesus.

Tithing is the basic level of obedience expected from every follower of Christ, but that doesn't mean that our giving stops with tithing. The Bible is full of examples of people who give far beyond what is expected of them. In God's eyes, giving is not about how much we give, but how much we sacrifice.

**What did Jesus commend about the widow's giving? What reason did He give?**

**What does the widow's example teach us about giving?**

**How was her giving sacrificial? How did the widow's obedience far exceed the level of a tithe?**

**As you think about the sacrifice required for followers of Jesus, where can you lead the church?**

**Take a few minutes to write down one way the Holy Spirit is prompting you to give sacrificially, and then pray for the trust to act in obedience to the Spirit in the coming days.**

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## Fancy Temples

### Luke 21:5-6

*<sup>5</sup> And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, <sup>6</sup> “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”* [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

The temple building itself, along with its beautiful courts and porches, had been completely refurbished by Herod the Great. Most of the work had been completed in the decades just prior to the birth of Jesus, but minor improvements were still being made even until the sixties of the first century AD. All who saw the magnificent structures were struck with their beauty, as were **some of Jesus’ disciples**. Josephus described the size of some of the Temple stones as being forty-five cubits by five cubits by six cubits (*Wars* 5.5.6 [5.224] A “cubit” was about eighteen inches). Josephus also (*Wars* 5.5.6 [5.223]) stated that the whiteness of the stones was such that from a distance the temple appeared to be a snow-clad mountain. Some of these stones can still be seen today in the lower courses of the Wailing Wall.<sup>3</sup>

After Solomon’s temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 b.c., those returning from exile under Zerubbabel (Ezra 3–6) and Haggai (Hag 1–2) replaced it with a smaller temple built on the same site. This structure, which was clearly inferior to Solomon’s temple (Hag 2:1–3), was completed around 515 b.c. Under Herod the Great the temple experienced massive reconstruction, which began in 20 b.c. (cf. John 2:20) and continued until a.d. 63. This new

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<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 510–511.

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temple exceeded even Solomon's temple in beauty and size and justifiably could have been included among the seven wonders of the world.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus prophesied of the coming day when it would once again lie in ruins. Jesus told of **the time ... when not one stone will be left on another**. The ornaments of the temple, such as tapestries, golden and bronze doors, and golden grape clusters were given by people as **offerings** to the temple. The problem was that although the Temple was a magnificent technical and artistic beauty, it had caused the people to focus more on the structure than what it represented. The Temple was a symbol of national pride, and they believed that as long as the Temple was standing that God was for them. Their pride had caused them to lose sight of the covenant relationship, and they had fallen into spiritual poverty, corruption, and social injustice. Jesus saw the latter and not so much the physical beauty of the temple (Luke 13:33–35; 19:41–44), and in his understanding, the widow's two very small copper coins were more precious to God than all the physical beauty that the people adored.

Hearing Jesus make much ado about the small offering of the widow prompted some of the people to point out the marvelous and magnificent beauty of the temple. These folks were probably impressed with all that the rich people were putting in the treasury. Jesus was not impressed with the rich and their gifts; he was seeing the heart of the poor widow. As Jesus spoke the words of the destruction of the Temple, there is no doubt that everyone would have been in shock. Let's imagine what they must have felt... They grew up in Judea, they were Jews, they were familiar with the teachings in the synagogues, they revered the mighty Temple. It was what they held so dear, but Jesus stated that it would be gone. Where would they find stability if the Temple laid in ruins?

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<sup>4</sup> Black, Luke 21:5-6.

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What could possibly summarize and/or symbolize their faith as they had known it? Everything they believed in was all wrapped up in one site, one symbol, one building known and beloved by all – The Temple.

The Temple did fall. The people desired something to be seen and adorned. They missed the spiritual part that pointed to the present Messiah. The same thing happens when the church fails to see Jesus as LORD. Our calling is not to gain dominion and force those around us to conform to our way. It is rather to proclaim, reflect, and serve Jesus. We are to be the light when all around there is darkness. Only in the end are we guaranteed the rescue from pain and rejection.

Churches that preach triumph over evil without LORDship of Jesus fail to present the truth. We cannot place our hope in our nation, our president, even our own strength. We can pray for our nation. Yes, we can love our country and appreciate the freedom we have by living here. We should defend the freedoms of our nation, but just like the temple was destroyed in Jerusalem, our great temples to our earthly idols will fall. Where we place our trust and identity will have eternal implications. There will be accountability. God will not be interested in our earthly temples; He will look at our heart. God has provided, through His Son, the only means by which we can receive forgiveness. We cannot build a temple strong enough to save us. The Jewish people tried and failed.

**Why is the unseen spiritual condition of the heart so important to God?**

**How would you recognize false securities in your faith?**

**What actions could you take to remove them from your life?**