

SERMON *study* GUIDE

"APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEPTIVE" (LUKE 21:5-6)

BIG IDEA

Jesus gives this sermon to assure His followers: God has a plan. But we will struggle to understand God's plan if we judge things mainly by outward appearances.

WHY JESUS GIVES THIS SERMON

Luke 21 is about:

- The destruction of Jerusalem
- The return of Christ
- God's plans for the future

Jesus predicts difficult things:

- Wars
- Persecution
- Betrayal
- Fear
- Judgment

Why? To assure His disciples that these events are not outside God's control.

THINK ABOUT IT

- *When life feels confusing, what am I most tempted to doubt about God?*
- *Do I really believe God is working even when I can't see what He's doing?*

THE PROBLEM OF UNCERTAINTY

The early church experienced:

- Jesus crucified
- Christians persecuted
- Churches struggling
- Jerusalem destroyed

And they were tempted to ask: "Does God actually have a plan?"

Key Idea: There's hardly ever been a moment in church history where you would say, 'This is exactly how I expected it to go.'

THE ROLLER COASTER ILLUSTRATION

Life can feel:

- Chaotic
- Confusing
- Out of control

But:

"There is a track."

Jesus tells His disciples what is coming beforehand so they know:

- God is sovereign
- History is not random
- God's plan is moving forward

"In spite of how things feel, everything is right on track."

THINK ABOUT IT

- *Am I interpreting my circumstances by what I see or by what God has said?*
- *Where am I being tempted to trust my own understanding instead of God's Word?*

THE WARNING

Before understanding God's plan, the disciples needed to understand something first.

After everything Jesus had been saying and doing, the disciples walk away from the temple talking about: *the beauty of the temple.*

Meanwhile Jesus is saying: "It's all got to be torn down."

Something is still not clicking for Jesus' disciples!

THE CORE PROBLEM

The disciples were:

Overemphasizing externals

- What they could see
- Visible success
- Outward religion

Underemphasizing internals

- The heart
- Submission to Jesus
- Faith

"Overemphasizing what they see on the outside.
Underemphasizing what's going on on the inside."

RESULT?

Confusion and uncertainty

THINK ABOUT IT

- *What am I most impressed by when I think about success?*
- *Am I more concerned with appearances or with what Jesus sees?*
- *What does my response to Jesus reveal about my heart?*

THREE EXAMPLES

THE SCRIBES

Looked spiritual outwardly.

But inwardly:

- Proud
- Self-focused
- Rejecting Jesus

"Beware of the scribes."

THE WIDOW

Her gift looked small and insignificant.

But Jesus saw genuine faith.

"She put in more than all the rest."

THE TEMPLE

Looked beautiful and impressive.

But the nation was rejecting Jesus.

"It doesn't matter how nice the temple looks."

TWO DANGERS

FALSE CONFIDENCE

You can look religious outwardly while rejecting Jesus inwardly.

"There's no salvation without faith in Jesus."

THINK ABOUT IT

- *Is my confidence rooted in Jesus or in something else?*
- *Am I trusting in outward activity more than in Christ Himself?*

FALSE UNCERTAINTY

Circumstances may look hopeless:

- Persecution
- Suffering
- Confusion
- Loss

But appearances can be deceiving. Jesus tells us God is sovereign and accomplishing His plan in spite of how things look.

Confidence comes from:

- Trusting God's Word
- Remembering what Jesus said
- Walking by faith instead of sight

THINK ABOUT IT

- *Where am I tempted to believe God has forgotten me?*
- *What situation in my life requires me to trust God's promises over what I can see?*

FINAL CHALLENGE:

Will you stop trusting your own ability to interpret what is going on in this world and submit to what God says He is doing?

