

The Empty Room Class

A new class in an empty room
that we hope won't be empty for long!
Sundays 9:50 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall
Featuring Coffee & Conversation
Downtown First UMC • Lexington, KY



Week 5

Are you new to Lexington?

To Christian faith?

To Downtown First UMC?

Do you want a safe place to explore
questions or doubts about Christianity?

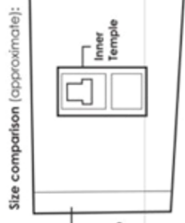
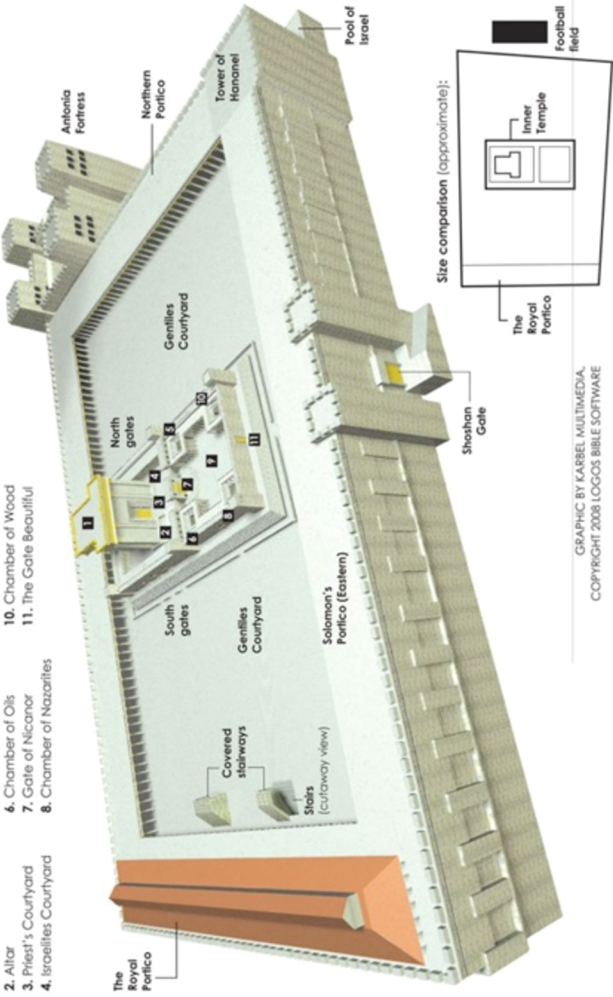
Do you want to grow in your faith and friendships?

Then **The Empty Room Class** is for YOU!

Herod's Temple

King Herod the Great began renovations on the Second Temple approximately 20-19 BC. The entire temple wasn't completed until approximately 62-64 AD, only to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

- 1. Holy Place
- 2. Altar
- 3. Priest's Courtyard
- 4. Israelites Courtyard
- 5. Chamber of Lepers
- 6. Chamber of Oils
- 7. Gate of Nicanor
- 8. Chamber of Nazarenes
- 9. Women's Courtyard
- 10. Chamber of Wood
- 11. The Gate Beautiful



GRAPHIC BY KARBEL MULTIMEDIA.
COPYRIGHT 2008 LOGOS BIBLE SOFTWARE

Hubbard, S., Ritzema, E., Watkins, C., & Wentz, L. with Logos Bible Software and KarBel Media. (2012). Faithlife Study Bible Infographics. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Orientation N ↑

Place of the Skull

Temple Compound

Garden of Gethsemane & Mt. of Olives

The City of David

The Empty Room Class

Close Encounters of the Christ Kind in the Gospel of Luke - Part Five

*Share this booklet, or a link to it at www.doncummings.com,
with a friend and invite them to join us in The Empty Room!*

Class Leaders – Don & Bonnie Cummings
Study guides for this series are prepared by Don Cummings

The Panoramic View An Outline of the Gospel of Luke by Fred B. Craddock

Preface

Luke 1:1 - 4

Part One: Infancy and Childhood Narratives

Luke 1:5 – 2:52

Part Two: Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus

Luke 3:1 - 4:13

Part Three: The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee

Luke 4:14 – 9:50

Part Four: The Journey to Jerusalem

Luke 9:51 – 19:28

Part Five: The Ministry in Jerusalem

Luke 19:29 – 21:38

Part Six: The Passion Narrative

Luke 22:1 – 23:56

Part Seven: The Resurrection Narrative

Luke 24:1 – 53

The Closer View

Close Encounters of the Christ Kind Jesus Arrives in Jerusalem

Luke 19:28 – 21:38

Jesus Enters Jerusalem for the Climax of His Mission (19:28 – 21:38)

- a) The triumphal entry (19:28-44)
- b) Jesus drives the money changers out of the temple (19:45-48)
- c) The religious rulers question the authority of Jesus (20:1-8)
- d) The parable of the tenants (20:9-19)
- e) Trick questions
 - i) Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar? (20:20-26)
 - ii) Who will be the wife of a man in heaven who had many wives on earth? (20:27-40)
- f) Jesus has a question for his opponents: “Whose son is the Christ?” (20:41-47)
- g) Jesus comments on the widow’s offering (21:1-4)
- h) Jesus speaks further about the signs of the age (21:5-38)

This brief section of Luke’s Gospel is a study in contrasts. The crowds adore him and laud him as the long-awaited Messiah. The religious authorities loathe him and are threatened by his teachings and his popularity with the people. Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem for their refusal to repent and follow the way of love he has preached yet pronounces God’s judgment on the Jewish leaders in the parable of the tenants. In righteous anger he drives the money changers out of the Temple courtyard for price gouging Passover pilgrims, many of whom are poor, but must purchase the required unblemished sacrificial doves with Temple money, yet he commends the widow who offers her meager pennies as an offering because it was all she had. His enemies try to trap him with trick questions, but Jesus turns the tables on them with a question of his own.

These contrasts serve an Important purpose. The Kingdom of God is a central theme throughout the Gospel of Luke. In teaching after teaching, parable after parable, healing after healing, Jesus is lifting the veil to allow us a glimpse of God’s Kingdom, of life as God intended it

to be. Luke continuously contrasts what *is* with what *could be* if the world would follow Jesus. This contrast between the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of God is nowhere more apparent than in Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He came not as a king at war riding on a majestic horse, but as a king coming in love and peace on a donkey.

The Up-Close View
The Money Changers and the Widow
Luke 19:45-48, 21:1-4 (NIV)

The church interprets Scripture by
listening to the texts.

Read Scripture aloud to your own ear or listen to a free audio version of the Bible available at

[https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/?recording=niv-mclean.](https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/?recording=niv-mclean)

Jesus at the Temple

⁴⁵ When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. ⁴⁶ "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be a house of prayer'^(a); but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'^(b)"

⁴⁷ Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. ⁴⁸ Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.

The Widow's Offering

21 As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ² He also saw a poor widow put in two very small

copper coins. ³ "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴ All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Questions to Ask of the Text

The church interprets Scripture by
seriously interrogating the texts.

1. What was the role of the money changers in the Temple?
2. How did they fulfill that role?
3. Why did Jesus express such anger toward them?
4. How did the leaders of the Temple respond to Jesus' throwing the money changers out of the Temple?
5. What did Jesus do next?
6. A contrasting story to the money changers is the one about the widow giving her offering. Why did Jesus call attention to her? Why did he say her gift was of greater value than the rest?
7. How might the story of the money changers influence our faith and actions?
8. How might the story of the widow's gift influence our faith and actions?

Insights from Commentaries

William Barclay

The Entry of the King

From Jerusalem to Jericho was only seventeen miles, and now Jesus had almost reached his goal. Jerusalem, journey's end, lay just ahead. The prophets had a regular custom of which they made use again and again. When words were of no effect, when people refused to take in and understand the spoken message, they resorted to some dramatic action which put their message into a picture which none could fail to see. We get examples of

such dramatic actions in [1 Kings 11:29-31](#); [Jeremiah 13:1-11](#); [Jeremiah 27:1-11](#); [Ezekiel 4:1-3](#); [Ezekiel 5:1-4](#). It was just such a dramatic action which Jesus planned now. He proposed to ride into Jerusalem in a way that would be an unmistakable claim to be the Messiah, God's Anointed King. We have to note certain things about this entry into Jerusalem.

(i) It was carefully planned. It was no sudden, impulsive action. Jesus did not leave things until the last moment. He had his arrangement with the owners of the colt. The Lord needs it was a password chosen long ago.

(ii) It was an act of glorious defiance and of superlative courage. By this time there was a price on Jesus' head. ([John 11:57](#).) It would have been natural that, if he must go into Jerusalem at all, he should have slipped in unseen and hidden away in some secret place in the back streets. But he entered in such a way as to focus the whole lime-light upon himself and to occupy the centre of the stage. It is a breath-taking thing to think of a man with a price upon his head, an outlaw, deliberately riding into a city in such a way that every eye was fixed upon him. It is impossible to exaggerate the sheer courage of Jesus.

(iii) It was a deliberate claim to be king, a deliberate fulfilling of the picture in [Zechariah 9:9](#). But even in this Jesus underlined the kind of kingship which he claimed. The ass in Palestine was not the lowly beast that it is in this country. It was noble. Only in war did kings ride upon a horse; when they came in peace they came upon an ass. So Jesus by this action came as a king of love and peace, and not as the conquering military hero whom the mob expected and awaited.

(iv) It was one last appeal. In this action Jesus came, as it were, with pleading hands outstretched, saying, "Even now, will you not take me as your king?" Before the hatred of men engulfed him, once again he confronted them with love's invitation.

The Pity and the Anger of Jesus

In this passage there are three separate incidents.

(i) There is Jesus' lament over Jerusalem. From the descent of the Mount of Olives there is a magnificent view of Jerusalem with the whole city fully displayed. As Jesus came to a turn in the road he stopped and wept over Jerusalem. He knew what was going to happen to the city. The Jews were even then embarking upon that career of political manoeuvre and intrigue which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when the city was so devastated that a plough was drawn across the midst of it. The tragedy was that if only they had abandoned their dreams of political power and taken the way of Christ it need never have happened.

The tears of Jesus are the tears of God when he sees the needless pain and suffering in which men involve themselves through foolish rebelling against his will.

(ii) There is the cleansing of the Temple. Luke's account is very summary; Matthew's is a little fuller ([Matthew 21:12-13](#)). Why did Jesus, who was the very incarnation of love, act with such violence to the money changers and the sellers of animals in the Temple courts?

First, let us look at the money changers. Every male Jew had to pay a Temple tax every year of half a shekel. That was equal to about 6 pence, but, in evaluating it, it must be remembered that it was equal to nearly two days' pay for a working man. A month before the Passover, booths were set up in all the towns and villages and it could be paid there; but by far the greater part was actually paid by the pilgrims in Jerusalem when they came to the Passover Feast. In Palestine all kinds of currencies were in circulation, and, for ordinary purposes, they were all--Greek, Roman Tyrian, Syrian, Egyptian--equally valid. But this tax had to be paid either in exact half shekels of the sanctuary or in ordinary Galilaean shekels. That is where the money changers

came in. To change a coin of exact value they charged one maah, which was equal to 1 pence. If a larger coin was tendered a charge of one maah was made for the requisite half shekel and of another maah for the giving of change. It has been computed that these money changers made a profit of between 28,000 and 9,000 British pounds per annum. It was a deliberate ramp, and an imposition on poor people who could least of all afford it.

Second, let us look at the sellers of animals. Almost every visit to the Temple involved its sacrifice. Victims could be bought outside at very reasonable prices; but the Temple authorities had appointed inspectors, for a victim must be without spot or blemish. It was, therefore, far safer to buy victims from the booths officially set up in the Temple. But there were times when a pair of doves would cost as much as 75 pence inside the Temple and considerably less than 5 pence outside. Again it was a deliberately planned victimization of the poor pilgrims, nothing more or less than legalized robbery. Worse, these Temple shops were known as the Booths of Annas and were the property of the family of the High Priest. That is why Jesus was brought first before Annas when he was arrested ([John 18:13](#)). Annas was delighted to gloat over this man who had struck such a blow at his evil monopoly. Jesus cleansed the Temple with such violence because its traffic was being used to exploit helpless men and women. It was not simply that the buying and selling interfered with the dignity and solemnity of worship; it was that the very worship of the house of God was being used to exploit the worshippers. It was the passion for social justice which burned in Jesus' heart when he took this drastic step.

(iii) There is something almost incredibly audacious in the action of Jesus in teaching in the Temple courts when there was a price on his head. This was sheer defiance. At the moment the authorities could not arrest him, for the people hung upon his every word. But every time he spoke he took his life in his hands and he knew well that it was only a matter of time until

the end should come. The courage of the Christian should match the courage of his Lord. He left us an example that we should never be ashamed to show whose we are and whom we serve.

The Precious Gift

In the Court of the Women in the Temple there were thirteen collecting boxes known as the Trumpets. They were shaped like trumpets with the narrow part at the top and the wider part at the foot. Each was assigned to offerings for a different purpose--for the wood that was used to burn the sacrifice, for the incense that was burned on the altar, for the upkeep of the golden vessels, and so on. It was near the Trumpets that Jesus was sitting.

After the strenuous debates with the emissaries of the Sanhedrin and the Sadducees he was tired and his head drooped between his hands. He looked up and he saw many people flinging their offerings into the Trumpets; and then came a poor widow. All she had in the world was two lepta. A lepton ([G3016](#)) was the smallest of all coins; the name means "the thin one." It was worth one fortieth of a new penny; and, therefore, the offering of the widow woman was only one-twentieth of a new penny. But Jesus said that it far outvalued all the other offerings, because it was everything she had.

Two things determine the value of any gift.

(i) There is the spirit in which it is given. A gift which is unwillingly extracted, a gift which is given with a grudge, a gift that is given for the sake of prestige or of self-display loses more than half its value. The only real gift is that which is the inevitable outflow of the loving heart, that which is given because the giver cannot help it.

(ii) There is the sacrifice which it involves. That which is a mere trifle to one man may be a vast sum to another. The gifts of the

rich, as they flung their offerings into the Trumpets, did not really cost them much; but the two lepta ([G3016](#)) of the widow woman cost her everything she had. They no doubt gave having nicely calculated how much they could afford; she gave with that utterly reckless generosity which could give no more.

Sources:

(All web links are active in the online version of the study guides at www.doncummings.com)

Barclay, William, *The Daily Study Bible: Luke*, commentary on Luke 9:18-27: Westminster Press, 1956. Find the entire Daily Study Bible series here: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dsb.html>

Craddock, Fred B., *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching Luke*, John Knox Press: Louisville, 1990

Also find William Barclay's complete set of *The Daily Study Bible* commentaries for free online reading at <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dsb.html>
These files are public domain.
Text Courtesy of BibleSupport.com. Used by Permission.

Ray Vander Laan video course *That the World May Know*
<https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/>

From Todd Nelson's blog at <https://jtoddnelson.com/2021/09/09/day-21-of-21/>

- [Vanderbilt](#) has a website devoted to the lectionary. It will give you the weekly readings and some other resources.
- The [Upper Room](#) is a daily devotional from the United Methodist Church and has been a regular read for many.
- [Text Week](#) is a great resource based on the lectionary with devotional guides, sermons, and other study resources.
- [Max Lucado](#) is one of my favorite authors and he does a good job with a daily devotional that can be sent directly to your email every morning.

See www.doncummings.com for copies of the weekly study guide for this class.

More maps of Jerusalem in Jesus' day are at <https://www.faithtwincities.com/jerusalem-map-at-time-of-jesus>

How to Contact Our Class Leader
Questions and suggestions are welcome

don_cummings@msn.com

The Importance of Understanding the Culture in Which the Biblical Story Took Place

Much is missing when our interpretation of Scripture is limited to applying it directly to our time and culture. The statement “taking a verse out of context” often applies to divorcing the message of a verse or passage from the material that surrounds it in the text. For example, many verses appear on lovely greeting cards addressed to care and concern for the recipient of the card, but often those verses are stripped from not only their contextual surroundings but also from their historical and cultural context.

A prime example of this is Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” These are welcome words and a reassuring promise to anyone who is facing a difficult time in life today, but we are not the originally intended audience for this promise. These words were given by the Lord to Jeremiah to speak to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. They were cut off from their land, their place of worship had been destroyed, they were captives in a foreign land, even forced to sing their songs of worship for the entertainment of their oppressors. Into the depth of their personal and national despair and hopelessness God spoke his knowledge of their future and reassured them of his ultimate plans and unrelenting care for them.

A significant part of Bible study needs to include the cultural context of both the Old Testament and New Testament periods which encompass roughly 3,000 years and reach from Ur of the Chaldees through Palestine to Egypt, and back to Palestine and then on to Mesopotamia and beyond. A study Bible , Bible atlas, and Bible dictionary are good sources to start with. Bible commentaries are also a good source for filling in cultural background. And there many excellent books on the world of the Bible.

The value of this kind of deeper study is that it helps make better sense of some verses that we find difficult to interpret and apply in our own time. The key is to understand the Scriptures original situation in life, discern the key principle being applied to that cultural context, then make an application of that principle to our own time and culture. It changes our view of the Bible from 2D to 3D and its picture jumps off the page with deeper dimensions of understanding.