

With Whom is God Concerned?

A BIBLE STUDY ON THE WIDOW, THE ORPHAN, AND THE STRANGER

Over and over in Scripture, three types of people come up as those for whom God seems to have special concern. They are the widow, the orphan (sometimes translated as the fatherless), and a category of people variously translated as stranger, sojourner, alien, foreigner, or immigrant. This study will trace this theme through some of the *many* passages where these vulnerable people are named. There are many more passages where we see them appear, but the people in the story are not directly named as widow, orphan, or stranger.

To begin, let's look at a few of the places where God directly commands the protection of these vulnerable people in the Torah (Pentateuch).

- Exodus 22:21-24
- Deuteronomy 24:17-22
- Leviticus 19:9-10, 33-34
- Deuteronomy 27:19

We can even see in the Torah that the widow, orphan, and stranger are elevated to similar levels of respect as the Levites—the branch of the family tree of Israel that was set apart as the priests who take care of the Tabernacle.

- Deuteronomy 14:28-29 & 26:12-13
- Deuteronomy 16:10-12

In addition to the commands of the Torah, we can see that in many of the spaces where we see God's heart, His concern for the widow, orphan, and stranger comes out, as well.

- Deuteronomy 10:18
- Psalm 146:6-9
- Psalm 10:14, 17-18
- Proverbs 15:25
- Psalm 68:4-6
- Proverbs 23:10-11

We can see that the protection of the widow, orphan, and stranger is closely tied to the justice of the Lord.

- Psalm 94
- Jeremiah 22:3
- Isaiah 10:1-2
- Zechariah 7:8-10
- Jeremiah 5:26-28
- Malachi 3:5 (abt the day of the Lord)

In the earthly ministry of Jesus, we see He continues to be concerned about the widow, orphan, and stranger.

- Matthew 25:31-46
- Luke 7:11-15
- Mark 12:38-40
- John 14:18

Note how Jesus is so moved to compassion for a widow in the passage from the Gospel of Luke, that He resurrects her (fatherless) son!

So what is our right response to this? Well, we see in James 1:27 that "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (NIV). Therefore, our right response to this call of God in Scripture is to care for and "look after" these very same people for whom God cares.

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Additional verses to consider: Leviticus 25:35, Deuteronomy 15: 7-11, Job 29:12-17, Isaiah 1:16-20, and Jeremiah 7:5-7 & 49:11