

# The Single Largest Charitable Contribution In American History

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The gift by the famous economist Warren Buffet of 37 billion dollars to the Bill Gates Foundation is “the single largest charitable contribution in American history.” Buffet, the world’s second richest man, told Charlie Rose that he had always thought his late wife Susie would outlive him and bear the responsibility of distributing their wealth, but her untimely death placed that responsibility upon him. He said they had always purposed to return their wealth to society. In Rose’s discussion with Buffet which included Bill and Melinda Gates, it was pointed out that the Gates Foundation largely is dedicated to relieving suffering stemming from poverty and disease around the world. They spoke of millions of lives that have been saved as a result of funding from their foundation and speculated that more than twice the good that has been done through the foundation could now be done with the additional funds from Warren and Susie Buffet.

The unsurpassed example of philanthropy on the part of Mr. Buffet, while obviously and irrefutably impressive and even humbling, is exceeded in gargantuan proportion by an unnamed Jewish widow during the personal ministry of Jesus Christ who unlike the wealthy men of her day who cast into the Temple treasury out of their abundance instead cast in two mites, one of which designates the very smallest coinage of the day and the two together make a farthing, which represented all the living that she had in this world.

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*“And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.”*

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Mark recorded the event, “And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living” (Mk. 12:41-44).

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*Big numbers go from million to billion to trillion to quadrillion to quintillion to sextillion. Mr. Buffet’s commendable gift was 37 billion dollars; the widow’s gift of one cent over time is 3.7 sextillion with no danger of theft or corruption and no possibility of the bank being “bought out” by a larger consortium.*

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The widow was blessed then, and her faithful foresight continues to be a blessing to her in perpetuity because the Lord Jesus taught, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt. 6:19-21). If it were possible to relate the widow’s mites contributed to the Temple treasury in the first century A.D. to Mr. Buffet’s gift in 2006, the contrast would be staggering. For example, if the widow’s mites were nearly equal to a penny

in U.S. currency and one penny was placed in the First National Bank of Jerusalem in the first century at just 2.75% simple interest compounded annually the widow's mite would be worth in today's dollars \$3.7 sextillion. Big numbers go from million to billion to trillion to quadrillion to quintillion to sextillion. Mr. Buffet's commendable gift was 37 billion dollars; the widow's gift of one cent over time is 3.7 sextillion with no danger of theft or corruption and no possibility of the bank being "bought out" by a larger consortium. Obviously, the meaning of the Lord's statement, "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury," has nothing to do with such a comparison but rather underscores her total dependence on God and shows the sacrifice for which heaven is looking.

Hopefully, Mr. Buffet's billions will benefit humanity in the short run, that is, physically; but sacrificial gifts small or great given to the Lord's work serve to meet the greatest need of all time, and that is the salvation of eternal souls. In this light the single largest financial contribution in the history about which all Americans should be aware, God's word, was not given by the renown philanthropist Warren Buffet but by an unnamed Jewish widow who put her money where it would do the most good both temporally and eternally.

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