

What is the Sign of Thy Coming?
(Matthew 24; Joseph Smith Matthew 24)
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(This material shows how **Joseph Smith divided the two interlaced prophecies in Matthew 24. They are: (1) the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and (2) Christ's Second Coming. Here also is Jesus' counsel on how to prepare for the latter)**

- I. Joseph Smith's Translation of Matthew 24 **shows that he truly was a prophet.**
- A. Matthew 24 has been a scripture of much dispute. Many scholars of the world even today do not recognize that **the Savior was intertwining two prophecies in one.**
 - 1. Some see it only of Jerusalem's coming destruction in 70 A.D.
 - 2. Some see it as only pertaining to the last days.

- II. The prophet Joseph, though unlearned, recognized there were two separate prophecies and makes them clear. *So JST Matthew 24 is very important to study.*
- A. Jesus had made his prophecies in the manner of all of Israel's prophets.
 - B. That is, **He blended the facts of a real, impending event with a parallel future event, the first being a foreshadowing of the latter.**
 - C. Christ spoke of Jerusalem's rapidly-approaching destruction and the Last Day destructions on earth --- for the first foreshadowed the latter.
 - D. He could do so because both fit the same pattern.

- III. To help understanding, make two lists: "Destruction of Jerusalem." And "Destruction of the Wicked in the Last Days."
- A. Review JST Matt 24; list what would occur at each time. *Note that in many cases, the same events would occur at both times.*
 - B. For help refer to Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, pp. 634 -679.

Destruction of Jerusalem

Wars and rumors of wars
Apostasies and false Christs
Fullness of Gentiles to begin
Israel to be scattered

Saints to be persecuted, hated
Some saints would be deceived
Natural Disasters to come
Jerusalem surrounded by enemies
Gospel preached to all nations

Destruction of Wicked in Last Days

Wars and rumors of wars
Apostasies and false Christs
Fullness of Gentiles to end
Israel to be re-gathered
Gospel to be restored
Saints to be persecuted, hated
Some saints would be deceived
Natural Disasters to come
Jerusalem surrounded by enemies
Gospel preached to all nations
Signs in the Heavens
Saints to be caught up
Jesus to appear in power and glory

IV. It is also very important to know **that faithful saints in Jerusalem followed Jesus' warnings, heeded the signs He had given them, and escaped from Jerusalem prior to its destructions.**

- A. We can be similarly warned to seek safety, and should listen carefully to *the prophets for those preparations and warnings that are needed in our day.*
1. *In fact, the warnings of how to prepare are being given now.*
 2. *In the vast majority of cases, we find they are spiritual.*
 3. *Our prophets are already giving us the most important warning --- which is to be obedient to the Eternal teachings of Jesus Christ, and to keep our covenants.*

B. In the meantime, there are many evidences of how Latter-day Saints *have* been saved from current destructions [of these latter days] through the hand of the Lord.

1. During the recent earthquake in Nepal, a group of Latter-day Saints were on a tour there. I am acquainted with one family who was on that tour – the Joel Maycock family with Jane Packer, his sister. At the Fast and Testimony Meeting in May, 2015, in Alpharetta Ward, Atlanta, GA, one couple who were with the group bore their testimony and shared the following: The day before the earthquake, **their itinerary was unexpectedly changed.** As a result they were **not in the plaza where some of the most terrible destruction occurred.** In particular, they were not having lunch on the third floor of a building in that area. The buildings there are constructed very poorly. They felt very strongly that their lives had been thus preserved. And they were very, very grateful!

2. This is only one of many stories of similar experiences, of events which have occurred, that have kept Saints safe and out of danger in the many disasters of these days.

V. *The scriptures teach that unlike those of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. who were warned and fled before the destructions, in our day, the righteous will be caught up, and thus saved from those terrible destructions occurring at Christ's coming* (Matthew 24:44-45; Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; D&C 88:96; 101:31; 109:75).

A. As Latter-day Saints, we do not talk about this much. In fact, I have found that many Latter-day Saints have not known this is among our beliefs.

B. But it *is* part of our belief, and it should bring much comfort and joy when understood and believed! In fact, Elder Neil L. Andersen confirmed this truth in April Conference, 2015.

“In that day... He will appear ‘in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory; with all the holy angels.’ We will hear ‘the voice of the archangel, and... the trump of God.’ ... You and I, or those who follow us, ‘the saints... from [every quarter] of the earth’ ‘shall be quickened and... caught up to meet him.’”

C. This belief is dissimilar from teachings among some Christians, who believe they will be caught up and **escape a long period of tribulation preceding Christ's coming.**

D. We should recognize this “time of tribulation,” which they expect to escape, is already occurring. For the Lord even now is pouring out His wrath, showing His judgment upon all nations for disbelief and disobedience.

E. The real time of the “righteous being caught up” will occur at the very time of His Coming.

VI. Most importantly, **the Savior taught us what to do to be prepared in our day** (See Matthew 24:38-55).

- A. He taught that we should “Watch” for the signs that He warned would be given.
- B. Then he explains that “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?
Blessed is that servant, whom his lord **when he cometh shall find so doing**” (Verses 45-46).
- C. **Being prepared is as simple as that!** The Lord has given us stewardships over others in His kingdom --- to spiritually and physically care for them. **To be prepared is simply to be found sincerely caring for those over whom He has given us stewardship. [Such as those in quorums or those we home teach and visit teach].**
- D. So the answer is *not* that we should follow any unwise counsel to go to some desert place or mountain to wait (unless instructed by the First Presidency to do so).
 1. In the past, some individuals in the church came to believe they should go to certain areas to await the Lord’s coming. They persuaded others to go with them. They went to areas where jobs were few in number. Their judgments of “timing” were in error. Such movements have generally proved to be unwise
 2. Rather, note **the Lord’s counsel is to remain actively engaged in serving the Lord. He wants to find us working at our Posts!**
“Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh shall find so doing;”
 3. And what will be the result?
“verily I say unto you, **he shall make him ruler over all his goods (v. 50).**
- E. **Above all, when He comes, we must not be found “smiting our fellow servants” (V. 49).**
 1. That is, we must not be found making unkind judgments, deliberately excluding, bullying, slandering or mocking our fellow men!

VII. We should recognize this will be a **joyous** time, not one to fear.

- A. Elder Andersen in his talk emphasized this.
“There will be unforgettable reunions with the angels of heaven and the Saints upon the earth. But most important, as Isaiah declares, ‘all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God’ and He ‘shall reign over all flesh.’”

“In that day the skeptics will be silent. ‘for every ear shall hear... and every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess’ that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.’ ... May we prepare for His coming by rehearsing these glorious events [of the Resurrection] over and over in our own minds and with those we love, and may His prayer be our prayer: ‘Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.’”
- B. Elder Andersen’s talk was to help us understand that **when we are really ready, we will long for the coming of Christ.**
And we will find ourselves anxiously and joyfully pleading, “Come, O thou King of Kings.”