

New Testament Lesson # 21
May 27- June 2
The Son of Man Shall Come
(Joseph Smith - Matthew 1; Matthew 25; Mark 12-13; Luke 21)
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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. Included 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.**

The prophet Joseph, though unlearned, recognized there were two intertwining prophecies, separates them and makes them clear.

Jesus had made his prophecies in the manner He gave all prophecies. That is, **He blended the facts of a real, impending event with a parallel future event, the first being a foreshadowing of the latter.** Christ spoke of Jerusalem's rapidly-approaching destruction and the Last Day destructions; the first foreshadowed the latter. Both fit the same pattern.

II. To help understanding, we could make two lists: "Destruction of Jerusalem." And "Destruction of the Wicked in the Last Days."

Looking at JST Matt 24; list what would occur at each time. *Note that in many cases, the same events would occur at both times. For help refer to Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, pp. 634 -679.*

Destruction of Jerusalem

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

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

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

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.

Our prophets are already giving us the most important warning --- which is to Stay on the Covenant Path, being obedient to the Eternal teachings of Jesus Christ.

IV. 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).

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. But it *is* part of our belief, and 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.’”

This belief is dissimilar from teachings among other Christians, who believe they will be “raptured.” However, they believe the earth and all the rest will be left without God and in the total powers of evil, never to be redeemed.

Dr. Lynn Ridenhour, a Baptist pastor who has come to know the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith is a prophet, was quite excited to learn that Joseph revealed that the Saints will return to the earth; that Christ will dwell with the righteous; and that eventually the Earth will be Celestialized. He found this a joyous doctrine.

V. Most importantly, **the Savior taught us what to do to be prepared in our day**

He taught that we should “Watch” for the signs that He warned would be given.

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).

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 caring for those over whom He has given us stewardship. [Such as those to whom we are assigned to minister and to do temple work for].**

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).

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;”

And what will be the result?

“verily I say unto you, **he shall make him ruler over all his goods (v. 50).**

When He comes, we must not be found “smiting our fellow servants” (V. 49).

That is, we must not be found making unkind judgments, deliberately excluding, bullying, slandering or mocking our fellow men!

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

Elder Andersen 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.’”

VII. The Savior gave three powerful parables to help us be prepared. One is the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Those prepared kept their lamps filled with oil.

Keeping **His spirit with us continually begins with partaking of the sacrament. In doing so we covenant we always remember Him and the promise returned is that we will “always have His spirit to be with us.”**

VIII. The Parable of the Talents is more significant than most of us realize.

Jesus gave the parable as a deliberate “follow through” to the Parable of the Ten Virgins, and thus **its theme is related to it.**

After all, when the Savior says of those who buried their “talents” they should be “*cast... into outer darkness*”: we should recognize that is pretty harsh punishment for just neglecting musical or other skills. Furthermore, the placement of this parable right after The Parable of the Ten Virgins and before the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, shows it speaks of more serious gifts.

The real Gifts the Lord has bestowed were His teachings, His Priesthood, His Spirit, His sacred ordinances and His sacred covenants. He was the one “travelling into a far country” --- back into His Father’s presence. And He was leaving “His own servants, and delivering unto them His goods.” And the question He was asking them was: “What are you going to do with these precious Gifts I have given you?”

So in sum, what are we doing with those gifts? Are we sharing them and thus causing them to grow? Or have we buried them and left them useless?

IX. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Mat 25:31-46).

A. Jesus shows clearly in this parable that men *will be judged* by how they care for others, as well as by their faith in Christ. For Jesus makes clear that how we care for others, even the least of those among us, is counted as ***how we treat Him.***

B. Jesus is obviously teaching we must be charitable to those who are **physically** in need: such as the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned.

C. **But Jesus’ parable mostly relates to what we do with His Gifts of the Gospel.**

1. This parable teaches that men and nations will be judged and rewarded according to how they cared for the **spiritually** needy.

2. When we spread the Gospel we are feeding the *spiritually* hungry and giving drink to the *spiritually* thirsty.

3. When we bring others into the Church, we are “taking in the stranger.” We are giving the comfort and blessings of Jesus’ full teachings: the greatest kind of blessings.

4. When **we do temple work, we are visiting those in Spirit Prison.**

5. And even more important, we are helping to set them free!

a. Very few people actually “visit captives in prison. But **all members** can minister to and even free those in Spirit Prison.

6. Even more wondrous, through Temple Work, we are *also* “**clothing the naked.**”

a. That is, we are offering to the deceased, the special blessing of a witness of the atonement through Jesus’ sacred covering. [The word “atonement” means” to cover”]. We do this through the sacred ordinances of “clothing” provided in the temple.