

# NEW TESTAMENT



## GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

### Lesson 21: "What Is the Sign of Thy Coming?" (Joseph Smith-Matthew (Matthew 24))

- Jesus foretells the impending destruction of Jerusalem.
- Jesus describes the signs that will precede the Second Coming.

A study of this lesson will help us recognize the signs that will precede the Savior's Second Coming and to encourage us to prepare ourselves for this great event.

### Introduction

Look out a window and observe the sky. What if the sky is clear and it's hot outside, but I predict that it will snow in a few hours? What if it's cold and rainy outside and it appears that the rain will continue for a while, but I confidently predict that it will be hot and dry outside within five minutes.

Think about my prediction. What would you predict about the weather in the next few hours? What helps you make that prediction? The signs of upcoming weather conditions influence the things we do and we often make preparations based on these signs. For example, we may make plans for outdoor activities when it appears that the weather will be pleasant, or we may make special preparations to withstand a severe storm.



Predicting the weather is one situation in which we rely on signs to help us prepare for upcoming events. If we watch the signs, we reduce our chances of being caught unprepared. Similarly, watching for the signs of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ can help us prepare for that great event. This lesson discusses some of the signs that Jesus prophesied would precede his Second Coming. Note that a prediction specifies something that may happen, while a prophecy specifies something that will happen. A prediction about the weather may turn out to be wrong, but the prophecies about the Second Coming will all be fulfilled.

In spite of the tribulations of the last days, we can look forward with joy to this great event.

**Matthew 24** contains the Savior's prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem and about his Second Coming. Over time, the verses in this chapter have been changed and rearranged, making it sometimes difficult to understand which event a particular verse describes. Fortunately, as part of his inspired translation of the Bible, Joseph Smith clarified the two prophecies and restored additional information. His inspired translation of Matthew 24 is found in Joseph Smith-Matthew in the Pearl of Great Price.

NEXT WEEK:  
#22 "Inherit the Kingdom Prepared for You" (Matthew 25)  
▫ FATHER'S DAY ▫

## Jesus foretells the impending destruction of Jerusalem. ( Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:1-20 )

A few days before Jesus was crucified, some of his disciples accompanied him to the Mount of Olives. The disciples asked two questions of Jesus.

- **Joseph Smith-Matthew (JS-M) 1:4** contains their questions about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Savior's Second Coming.
- **JS-M 1:5-20** is the Savior's answer to their first question about the destruction of Jerusalem.
- **JS-M 1:21-55** is the Savior's answer to their second question about his Second Coming.

**JS-M 1:2-3, 12** records Jesus' prophecy about the temple in Jeru-

salem and the city itself.

**JS-M 1:5-10** reveals the signs that the Savior prophesied would precede the destruction of Jerusalem.

**JS-M 1:11-15** contains Jesus' counsel to his followers on how to avoid destruction.

**Luke 9:62; D&C 133:14-15** tell why it was important that they not return to their homes once they had fled.

Although many Jews did not believe their great city and temple could be destroyed, the Lord's prophecies were fulfilled in A.D. 70. Believing that the Messiah would come and help them in battle, the Jews revolted against the Romans in A.D.



66. Four years later the Romans had destroyed the entire city. Those who listened to the Savior and fled into the mountains were spared. Those who did not heed this counsel were scattered and destroyed.

## Jesus describes the signs that will precede the Second Coming. (Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:21-55)

The second question asked by the disciples concerned the Savior's Second Coming and the accompanying destruction of the wicked, which is sometimes called "the end of the world".

**JS-M 1:22** describes one sign of the Savior's Second Coming. This prophecy is being fulfilled.

**Matt. 7:15-20; D&C 45:57; D&C 46:7-8** tell us how we can avoid being deceived by false prophets.

**JS-M 1:23** and **JS-M 1:28** mention other signs of the Second Coming. Think about evidence you see that this prophecy is being fulfilled. The Lord taught that we should "be not troubled" by wars and rumors of war.

**1 John 4:16-18; D&C 6:34-36; D&C 45:34-35; D&C 59:23** are scriptures which teach us how we can find peace during such troubled times. Elder M. Russell Ballard gave the following counsel of hope and encouragement: "*Although the prophecies tell us that these*

*things are to take place, more and more people are expressing great alarm at what appears to be an acceleration of worldwide calamity. ... Admittedly we have ample reason to be deeply concerned because we see no immediate answers to the seemingly unsolvable problems confronting the human family. But regardless of this dark picture, which will ultimately get worse, we must never allow ourselves to give up hope! ... "The Lord is in control. He knows the end from the beginning. He has given us adequate instruction that, if followed, will see us safely through any crisis. His purposes will be fulfilled, and someday we will understand the eternal reasons for all of these events. Therefore, today we must be careful not to overreact, nor should we be caught up in extreme preparations; but what we must do is keep the commandments of God and never lose hope! ..."*

*the midst of such turmoil and catastrophe? Quite simply, our one hope for spiritual safety during these turbulent times is to turn our minds and our hearts to Jesus Christ. ... Armed with the shield of faith, we can overcome many of our daily challenges and overpower our greatest weaknesses and fears, knowing that if we do our best to keep the commandments of God, come what may, we will be all right"* (Ensign, Nov. 1992, 31-32).

**JS-M 1:27; JS-M 1:31** reveal still other signs of the Second Coming. These prophecies are being fulfilled today as missionary work is increasing, and the gospel is being taught and accepted in more and more places around the world. Each of us has a responsibility to help fulfill these prophecies.

**JS-M 1:29-30** teaches about the signs of the natural disasters that will precede the Second Coming.

**JS-M 1:12** The Lord told his followers in Jerusalem to “stand in the holy place”, and he has given similar counsel in our day in D&C 87:8 and D&C 101:22.

Regarding holy places in which we should stand and how these places will help protect us during the difficulties of the last days, **President Ezra Taft Benson** said, “*Holy men and holy women stand in holy places, and these holy places include our temples, our chapels, our homes, and the stakes of Zion, which are, as the Lord declares, ‘for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth’ (D&C 115:6)*” (“Prepare Yourselves for the Great Day of the Lord,” Brigham Young University 1981 Fireside and Devotional Speeches [1981], 68).

## Conclusion

Most of us have had experiences of getting caught in inclement weather unprepared because we either failed to check the forecast or we failed to heed it. In the Olivet Discourse, the Savior has given us the forecast. We need to, from time to time, compare the forecast to current conditions and make adjustments in our preparation. It is one thing to get caught unprepared in the rain, it will be quite another if we are caught unprepared as the events of the last days continue to unfold. The great storm described by the Master has started and we need to seek out “holy places” to give us refuge from the latter-day storm.

The scriptural prophecies about Jesus Christ’s Second Coming will all be fulfilled. By studying the teachings of the Savior and following the counsel of the living prophets, we can prepare ourselves to meet Christ. If we are prepared, the Second Coming will be a wonderful day for us.

**JS-M 1:37** provides guidance from the Savior to help us not be deceived in the last days before his Second Coming. We must treasure up the Lord’s word to avoid being deceived.

Jesus taught the following passages to help us prepare for his Second Coming:

- **JS-M 1:38-40** - The parable of the fig tree.
- **JS-M 1:41-43** - The comparison of the Second Coming to the days of Noah.
- **JS-M 1:44-46** - The prophecy of two people working in the field and two people grinding at the mill.
- **JS-M 1:47-48** - The parable of the good man and the thief.
- **JS-M 1:49-54** - The parable of the lord and his servants.

It is important that we continuously watch and prepare for the Lord’s coming.

What will happen to the righteous when the Savior comes again?

- **JS-M 1:37** The righteous will be gathered with the elect
- **JS-M 1:44-45** The righteous will be taken.
- **JS-M 1:50** The righteous shall be made rulers
- **1 Thes. 4:16-18** The righteous shall meet the Lord in the air and ever be with the Lord
- **D&C 88:96-98** The righteous shall be quickened and caught up to meet the Lord.

