

ENGAGING GOSPEL DOCTRINE 147

Lesson 21: [“What Is the Sign of Thy Coming?”](#)

Class Member Reading: JS--Matthew (Matthew 24)

It is hard to know how best to apply these scriptures to our lives because apocalypses are written from a perspective so foreign to our own (though it has influenced ours, and we can relate to the needs they fulfill)

1 For I say unto you, that ye shall not see me henceforth and know that I am he of whom it is written by the prophets, until ye shall say: Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord, in the clouds of heaven, and all the holy angels with him. Then understood his disciples that he should come again on the earth, after that he was glorified and crowned on the right hand of God. (The triumphal end of the story of the Messiah, which at this point seemed a disappointment)

2 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and his disciples came to him, for to hear him, saying: Master, show us concerning the buildings of the temple, as thou hast said—They shall be thrown down, and left unto you desolate. Historically, it is virtually certain Jesus predicted the temple would be destroyed (see)

3 And Jesus said unto them: See ye not all these things, and do ye not understand them? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here, upon this temple, one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.

4 And Jesus left them, and went upon the Mount of Olives. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying: Tell us when shall these things be which thou hast said concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews; and what is the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world, or the destruction of the wicked, which is the **end of the world?** (Note how closely all these events are associated... early Christians expected Jesus to return in the first generation)

5 And Jesus answered, and said unto them: Take heed that no man deceive you;

6 For many shall come in my name, saying—I am Christ—and shall deceive many; (that is, they will claim to be Messiahs, or deliverers)

7 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations, for my name's sake;

8 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another;

9 And many **false prophets** shall arise, and shall deceive many;

10 And because **iniquity** shall abound, the **love of many shall wax cold**; “love waxing cold” is a vivid phrase. How does this happen? How can we avoid it?

11 But he that **remaineth steadfast and is not overcome**, the same shall be saved. This is the goal—remain steadfast in the midst of opposition and difficulty.

12 When you, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, then you shall stand in the holy place; whoso readeth let him understand. (very possibly refers to the zealots using the temple as a military base in 69)

13 Then let them who are in Judea flee into the mountains;

14 Let him who is on the housetop flee, and not return to take anything out of his house;

15 Neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes;

16 And wo unto them that are with child, and unto them that give suck in those days;

17 Therefore, pray ye the Lord that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day;

18 For then, in those days, shall be great tribulation on the Jews, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, such as was not before sent upon Israel, of God, since the beginning of their kingdom until this time; no, nor ever shall be sent again upon Israel.

19 All things which have befallen them are only the beginning of the sorrows which shall come upon them.

20 And **except those days should be shortened, there should none of their flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake, according to the covenant, those days shall be shortened**. We can all relate to this longing for pain and difficult to

stop, to end, to be cut short.

21 Behold, these things I have spoken unto you concerning the Jews; and again, after the tribulation of those days which shall come upon Jerusalem, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe him not;

22 For in those days there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch, that, if possible, they shall **deceive the very elect**, who are the elect according to the covenant. [Warning against complacency.](#)

23 Behold, I speak these things unto you for the elect's sake; and you also shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars; see that ye **be not troubled**, for all I have told you must come to pass; but the end is not yet.

24 Behold, I have told you before;

25 Wherefore, if they shall say unto you: Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not;

26 For as the light of the morning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, and covereth the whole earth, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. [This verse is saying Jesus' coming will be undeniable and visible to all on the earth.](#)

27 And now I show unto you a parable. Behold, wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together; so likewise shall mine elect be gathered from the four quarters of the earth.

28 And they shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars.

29 Behold I speak for mine elect's sake; for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

30 And again, because iniquity shall abound, the love of men shall wax cold; but he that shall not be overcome, the same shall be saved.

31 And again, this **Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world**, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come, or the destruction of the wicked;

32 And again shall the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, be fulfilled.

33 And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall

be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

34 Verily, I say unto you, **this generation, in which these things shall be shown forth, shall not pass away until all I have told you shall be fulfilled.**

Both Jesus' generation and the early saints believed Jesus was going to return in their time. Pretty much every generation has believed Jesus was returning in their time..

35 Although, the days will come, that **heaven and earth shall pass away**; yet my words shall not pass away, but all shall be fulfilled. Old creation shall pass away to make room for the new. There are contradictory conceptualizations of the relationship between the present and future age, however. All agree that the world will be remade, made new and perfect. It is an appealing idea, if problematic in some ways.

36 And, as I said before, after the tribulation of those days, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, then shall appear the **sign** of the Son of Man in heaven (Probably an ensign, a battle standard), and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn (Why mourn? Probably because they realize they failed to recognize Jesus and with regret realize their error. These ideas draw from Zech. 12:10 and Dan 7:13-14); and they shall **see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory**; A good thought exercise: What would our emotions be when Jesus appears?

37 And **whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived**, for the Son of Man shall come, and he shall send his angels before him with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall **gather together the remainder of his elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Because the elect are already partially gathered)

38 Now learn a parable of the fig tree—When its branches are yet tender, and it begins to put forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh at hand;

39 So likewise, mine elect, when they shall see all these things, they shall know that he is near, even at the doors;

40 But of that day, and hour, no one knoweth; no, not the angels of God in heaven, but my Father only. I find this framing very useful—Jesus doesn't have a set date to return, but we can know when it is close. Pregnancy is an even

better analogy I think. I find useful and powerful the idea that we need to **bring** the Second Coming with our preparation and righteousness.

41 But as it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be also at the coming of the Son of Man;

42 For it shall be with them, as it was in the days which were before the flood; for until the day that Noah entered into the ark they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage;

43 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

44 Then shall be fulfilled that which is written, that in the last days, two shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left;

45 Two shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken, and the other left;

46 And what I say unto one, I say unto all men; watch, therefore, for you know not at what hour your Lord doth come.

47 But know this, if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to have been broken up, but would have been ready.

48 Therefore **be ye also ready**, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh. *A key takeaway from the chapter—don't get so lost in day to day mundane living that we lose sight of the preparedness necessary.*

49 Who, then, is a **faithful and wise servant**, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

50 Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, **shall find so doing**; and verily I say unto you, he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

51 But if that evil servant shall say in his heart: My lord delayeth his coming,

52 And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken,

53 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

54 And shall cut him asunder, and shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

55 And thus cometh the end of the wicked, according to the prophecy of Moses, saying: They shall be cut off from among the people; but the end of the

earth is not yet, but by and by.

Additional Reading: [Mark 13](#); [Luke 21:5–38](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 45:15–55](#).

[Mark 13](#)

13As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” ²Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

³When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴“Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?” ⁵Then Jesus began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. ⁶Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. ⁷When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. ⁸For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birthpangs.

⁹“As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. ¹¹When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹²Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ¹³and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

¹⁴“But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; ¹⁵the one on the housetop must not go down or enter the house to take anything away; ¹⁶the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat. ¹⁷Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in

those days! ¹⁸Pray that it may not be in winter. ¹⁹For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be. ²⁰And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days. ²¹And if anyone says to you at that time, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!' or 'Look! There he is!' —do not believe it. ²²False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³But be alert; I have already told you everything.

²⁴"But in those days, after that suffering,

the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,

²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, **keep awake**—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake." *Evocative wording: keep awake/remain vigilant*

[Luke 21:5–38](#)

⁵When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, ⁶“As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.” (Note the emphasis on how beautiful the religious structure is now, and Jesus predicts the overturning of the status quo and present age) ⁷They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” ⁸And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them.” ⁹“When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” ¹⁰Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. ¹²“But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; ¹⁵for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your souls.

²⁰“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; ²²for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written. ²³Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people; ²⁴they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. ²⁵“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’

with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, **stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.**"

²⁹ Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the **kingdom of God is near.** ³² Truly I tell you, **this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place.** ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³⁴ **"Be on guard** so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the **worries of this life,** and that day catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. (Stay alive and aware of spiritual reality and true principles and priorities) For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." ³⁷ Every day he was teaching in the temple, and at night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives, as it was called. ³⁸ And all the people would get up early in the morning to listen to him in the temple.

[Doctrine and Covenants 45:15–55.](#)

Of all the scriptures about the Second Coming, this one has felt most like a direct timeline to me.

15 Wherefore, hearken and I will reason with you, and I will speak unto you and prophesy, as unto men in days of old.

16 And I will show it plainly as I showed it unto my disciples as I stood before them in the flesh, and spake unto them, saying: As ye have asked of me concerning the signs of my coming, in the day when I shall come in my glory in the clouds of heaven, to fulfil the promises that I have made unto your fathers,

17 For as ye have looked upon the long absence of your spirits from your bodies to be a bondage, I will show unto you how the day of redemption shall come, and also the restoration of the scattered Israel.

18 And now ye behold this temple which is in Jerusalem, which ye call the

house of God, and your enemies say that this house shall never fall.

19 But, verily I say unto you, that desolation shall come upon this generation as a thief in the night, and this people shall be destroyed and scattered among all nations. (Well the First Jewish War was drawn out over years, so not so much like a thief...)

20 And **this temple which ye now see shall be thrown down** that there shall not be left one stone upon another. **70.**

21 And it shall come to pass, that this generation of Jews shall not pass away until every desolation which I have told you concerning them shall come to pass.

22 Ye say that ye know that the end of the world cometh; ye say also that ye know that the heavens and the earth shall pass away;

23 And in this ye say truly, for so it is; but these things which I have told you shall not pass away until all shall be fulfilled.

24 And this I have told you concerning Jerusalem; and when that day shall come, shall a remnant be scattered among all nations; **This happened especially after the Second Jewish War in 132-136.**

25 But they shall be **gathered again**; but they shall remain until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

26 And in that day shall be heard of **wars and rumors of wars** (this has pretty much always been the case), and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men's hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.

27 And the **love of men shall wax cold**, and **iniquity** shall abound.

28 And when the times of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the **fulness of my gospel**;

29 But they receive it not; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.

30 And in that generation shall the **times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.**

31 And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a **desolating sickness** shall cover the land.

32 But my disciples shall **stand in holy places**, and **shall not be moved**; but

among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

33 And there shall be **earthquakes** also in divers places, and many **desolations**; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another.

34 And now, when I the Lord had spoken these words unto my disciples, they were troubled.

35 And I said unto them: Be not troubled, for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled.

36 And when the light shall begin to break forth, it shall be with them like unto a parable which I will show you—

37 Ye look and behold the fig trees, and ye see them with your eyes, and ye say when they begin to shoot forth, and their leaves are yet tender, that summer is now nigh at hand;

38 Even so it shall be in that day when they shall see all these things, then shall they know that the hour is nigh.

39 And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man.

40 And they shall see **signs and wonders**, for they shall be shown forth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath.

41 And they shall behold **blood, and fire, and vapors of smoke**.

42 And before the day of the Lord shall come, the **sun shall be darkened**, and the moon be turned into blood, and the **stars fall from heaven**.

43 And the **remnant shall be gathered** unto this place;

44 And then they shall look for me, and, behold, I will come; and **they shall see me in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory**; with all the **holy angels**; and he that watches not for me shall be cut off.

45 But before the arm of the Lord shall fall, an **angel shall sound his trump**, and the **saints that have slept shall come forth** to meet me in the cloud.

46 Wherefore, if ye have slept in peace blessed are you; for as you now behold me and know that I am, even so shall ye come unto me and **your souls shall live, and your redemption shall be perfected**; and the saints shall come

forth from the four quarters of the earth.

47 Then shall the **arm of the Lord fall upon the nations.**

48 And then shall the **Lord set his foot upon this mount**, (the Mount of Olives) and it shall cleave in twain, and the earth shall tremble, and reel to and fro, and the heavens also shall shake.

49 And the Lord shall utter his voice, and **all the ends of the earth shall hear it**; and the nations of the earth shall mourn, and **they that have laughed shall see their folly.**

50 And calamity shall cover the mocker, and the scorner shall be consumed; and they that have watched for iniquity shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.

51 And **then shall the Jews look upon me and say**: What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet?

52 Then **shall they know that I am the Lord**; for I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God.

53 And then shall they weep because of their iniquities; then shall they lament because they persecuted their king. *Thought this is a beautiful, touching passage, from a religious tolerance perspective it is deeply problematic as it invalidates Judaism on its own terms.*

54 And **then shall the heathen nations be redeemed**, and they that knew no law shall have part in the first resurrection; and it shall be tolerable for them.

55 And **Satan shall be bound**, that he shall have no place in the hearts of the children of men.

Scripture Chain: [Isaiah 2:2–3](#); [Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:21–37](#); [Daniel 2:44](#); [D&C 45:16–35](#)

[Isaiah 2:2–3](#)

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the **mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains**, and shall

be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:21–37

(see above)

Daniel 2:44

44 And in the days of these kings shall the **God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed:** and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

D&C 45:16–35

(see above)

16 And I will show it plainly as I showed it unto my disciples as I stood before them in the flesh, and spake unto them, saying: As ye have asked of me concerning the signs of my coming, in the day when I shall come in my glory in the clouds of heaven, to fulfil the promises that I have made unto your fathers,

17 For as ye have looked upon the long absence of your spirits from your bodies to be a bondage, I will show unto you how the day of redemption shall come, and also the restoration of the scattered Israel.

18 And now ye behold this temple which is in Jerusalem, which ye call the house of God, and your enemies say that this house shall never fall.

19 But, verily I say unto you, that desolation shall come upon this generation as a thief in the night, and this people shall be destroyed and scattered among all nations.

20 And this temple which ye now see shall be thrown down that there shall not be left one stone upon another.

21 And it shall come to pass, that this generation of Jews shall not pass away

until every desolation which I have told you concerning them shall come to pass.

22 Ye say that ye know that the end of the world cometh; ye say also that ye know that the heavens and the earth shall pass away;

23 And in this ye say truly, for so it is; but these things which I have told you shall not pass away until all shall be fulfilled.

24 And this I have told you concerning Jerusalem; and when that day shall come, shall a remnant be scattered among all nations;

25 But they shall be gathered again; but they shall remain until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

26 And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men's hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.

27 And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound.

28 And when the times of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel;

29 But they receive it not; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.

30 And in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

31 And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.

32 But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

33 And there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another.

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