

JOSEPH SMITH-MATTHEW 1

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: JosephSmith-Matthew | VOLUME: Pearl Of Great Price | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

JosephSmith-Matthew is an extract from Joseph Smith's 'New Translation' of the Bible (JST), specifically covering Matthew 23:39 through Matthew 24. In this text, Smith significantly rearranges the chronological order of Jesus's Olivet Discourse. Unlike the King James Version, where the disciples' questions about the destruction of the Temple and the end of the age appear intertwined, Smith's revision explicitly separates them into two distinct historical epochs: the events leading to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the events preceding the Second Coming. The text introduces specific theological definitions, such as equating 'the end of the world' with 'the destruction of the wicked,' and places heavy emphasis on 'the elect according to the covenant.' It asserts that the elect must be gathered and that deception will be so potent that only those who 'treasure up' the Lord's word will survive spiritually. The text concludes with a reference to a prophecy of Moses regarding the wicked being cut off, an addition not found in the standard biblical manuscript tradition.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ, The Disciples, Joseph Smith (as Translator/Seer), The Elect, Daniel the Prophet, Moses

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. TEXTUAL INSUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE

Assertion: The Bible (specifically Matthew 24) requires reordering and clarification by a modern prophet to be fully understood.

"By the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,—Joseph Smith. ... [Textual rearrangement throughout]"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelicalism holds that the biblical text, as preserved in the manuscript tradition, is sufficient and reliable (2 Timothy 3:16). The existence of JosephSmith-Matthew implies that the canonical Gospel of Matthew is either corrupted or confusingly written, necessitating a 19th-century restoration. This undermines the authority of the historical apostolic witness by placing Joseph Smith's interpretive authority above the received text.

2. THE COVENANT ELECT

Assertion: Safety from deception and salvation are contingent upon being 'the elect according to the covenant.'

"insomuch that, if possible, they shall deceive the very Elect, who are the elect according to the covenant."

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the 'elect' refers to those chosen by God for salvation through Christ, secured by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:4-5). In this text, the addition of the phrase 'according to the covenant' points toward the specific Latter-day Saint concept of the New and Everlasting Covenant, which eventually includes temple ordinances. It implies that covenant-keeping is the mechanism of election rather than grace alone.

3. REDEFINITION OF 'END OF THE WORLD'

Assertion: The 'end of the world' is defined specifically as the destruction of the wicked, not necessarily the dissolution of the planet.

"the end of the world? (or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world.)"

Evangelical Comparison: Standard Christian eschatology views the 'end of the age' (synteleia) as the consummation of history and the final judgment. Joseph Smith's parenthetical insertion redefines this primarily as a punitive event ('destruction of the wicked'). This reflects a distinct LDS worldview where the earth is renewed to a paradisiacal glory, and 'the world' (representing worldliness/wickedness) ends, rather than the cosmos itself dissolving.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the authority of Scripture. By rewriting Matthew 24, Joseph Smith posits that the Bible as preserved is inadequate or corrupt. Furthermore, the text introduces the concept of the 'elect according to the covenant,' which in Mormon theology points toward a system of ordinances necessary for exaltation, contrasting with the Evangelical view of election as an act of grace received through faith alone. The text also alters the eschatological timeline to fit a specific restorationist narrative.

Shared Values:

Belief in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ; The necessity of spiritual vigilance; The reality of future judgment; Rejection of false prophets

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – The text alters the biblical canon without manuscript authority.
2. [Major] Sola Gratia – Links safety and election to 'the covenant' (often implying works/ordinances) rather than grace alone.
3. [Critical] Sufficiency of Scripture – Implies the Bible is confusing or incomplete without Joseph Smith's clarification.

Semantic Warnings:

"The Elect"

In Text: Those who are 'according to the covenant' (implying LDS covenant path).

Evangelical: Those chosen by God for salvation (Ephesians 1:4).

Example: *In this text, being 'elect' is tied to a specific covenant status that protects from deception.*

"End of the World"

In Text: The destruction of the wicked.

Evangelical: The consummation of the age and the final judgment of all.

Example: *Smith adds a parenthetical definition: '(or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world.)'*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Being saved (physically and spiritually) by enduring to the end and not being deceived.

How Attained: Through 'the covenant,' treasuring the word, and enduring.

Basis of Assurance: Assurance is found in not being deceived and standing in the holy place.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text emphasizes 'enduring to the end' and 'covenant' adherence. While 'enduring' is biblical, in this context it is often interpreted as maintaining worthiness, contrasting with the assurance of justification by faith (Romans 5:1).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Take heed that no man deceive you
2. Stand in the holy place
3. Flee into the mountains (historical context)
4. Pray that flight be not in winter or on Sabbath
5. Watch therefore
6. Be ye also ready

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible as authoritative
2. Treasure up the word of the Lord to avoid deception
3. Identify as 'the elect according to the covenant'

Ritual Requirements:

1. Gathering (implied by 'mine Elect be gathered')
2. Covenant making (implied by 'elect according to the covenant')

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. Why do you think Joseph Smith felt it was necessary to rearrange the verses in Matthew 24?
2. The text mentions being 'elect according to the covenant.' How does that differ from being chosen by God's grace?
3. If we have thousands of ancient Greek manuscripts of Matthew, and none of them match this version, how do we decide which one is the primary authority?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The desire for clarity in confusing times. – Just as the disciples wanted clarity, we all want to know the future. Jesus gives us the ultimate clarity not in a timeline, but in a Person to trust. [John 16:33 - 'In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.']}
2. The Faithful Servant – We all want to be found faithful. The Gospel tells us that Christ is the ultimate Faithful Servant who obeyed on our behalf. [Philippians 2:7-8]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Uncertainty/Epistemological Anxiety [Moderate] – The believer cannot trust the Bible in their hands but must rely on a 'translator' to unlock the 'real' meaning. This creates a dependency on the prophet rather than the Word of God.
2. Performance/Fear of Deception [Severe] – The text emphasizes that even the elect can be deceived if they don't 'treasure up' the word sufficiently. This creates a fear that one might not be smart enough or studious enough to avoid spiritual ruin.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Modern Revelation (Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible).

Verification Method: Treasuring up the word to avoid deception.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the fixed, historical canon of Scripture illuminated by the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 1:1-2). This text relies on a 19th-century prophet's ability to rewrite that history.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Translation work done approx. 1831; Published in Pearl of Great Price 1851.

Authorship: Joseph Smith (Revision of Matthew).

Textual Issues: There are no ancient Greek manuscripts that support the reordering of verses or the added phrases (e.g., 'according to the covenant') found in this text.