

JOSEPH SMITH-MATTHEW 1:1-55

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

OVERVIEW

Joseph Smith-Matthew is an extract from Joseph Smith's 'inspired translation' (JST) of the Bible, specifically covering Matthew 23:39 and all of chapter 24. Received in 1831, this text addresses a common exegetical difficulty in the New Testament: the disciples' dual question regarding the destruction of the Temple and the end of the age. While the biblical text of Matthew 24 interweaves these events typologically, Joseph Smith's revision structurally separates them—verses 1-21 pertain to the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70), while verses 21-55 focus on the Latter-days and the Second Coming. The text introduces significant theological modifications, defining the 'end of the world' specifically as the 'destruction of the wicked' rather than the termination of the physical earth. It places a heavy emphasis on the 'elect' who are defined 'according to the covenant,' and introduces the concept of 'treasuring up' the word as the primary safeguard against the deception of false Christs. The text culminates by linking the judgment of the wicked to the 'prophecy of Moses,' reinforcing the LDS concept of a covenant people being gathered while the wicked are cut off.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ, The Disciples, The Elect (according to the covenant), False Christs/Prophets, Daniel (Prophet), Moses (Prophet), Joseph Smith (Implicit Translator)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. OPEN CANON / TEXTUAL MUTABILITY

Assertion: The biblical text is insufficient or erroneous as preserved and requires prophetic correction/expansion to be fully understood.

"An extract from the translation of the Bible as revealed to Joseph Smith the Prophet in 1831"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical Christianity holds to the plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, believing the canonical text is sufficient and closed (Jude 1:3, Revelation 22:18-19). Textual criticism aims to reconstruct the original autograph from manuscripts. In contrast, this text asserts that the Bible has errors or omissions that cannot be fixed by manuscript evidence but require a new 'revelation' to a modern prophet. Joseph Smith rearranges the chronology of Jesus' sermon and inserts phrases not found in any Greek manuscript (e.g., 'according to the covenant'), placing modern prophetic authority above the historical textual witness.

2. SAFETY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE (GNOSTICISM)

Assertion: Spiritual safety and salvation from deception are contingent upon 'treasuring up' the word.

"And whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived... (v. 37)"

Evangelical Comparison: While Evangelicals value scripture memorization (Psalm 119:11), protection from deception is primarily rooted in the indwelling Holy Spirit and the objective truth of the Gospel (1 John 2:26-27). The phrase 'treasureth up my word' in the LDS context often implies a specific adherence to the 'restored' revelations. This creates a subtle shift where the mechanism of preservation is the believer's diligence in doctrinal mastery rather than the keeping power of God (Jude 1:24, 1 Peter 1:5).

3. THE GATHERING OF THE ELECT

Assertion: The elect are a specific covenant group that must be physically or spiritually gathered from the four quarters of the earth.

"they shall gather together the remainder of his elect from the four winds (v. 37)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical eschatology, the gathering of the elect occurs at the return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). In Mormon theology, supported by this text, the 'gathering' is an ongoing process of missionary work bringing people into the LDS covenant structure (Zion). The addition of the phrase 'the remainder of his elect' implies a incompleteness that the church must actively resolve through missionary effort, linking eschatology directly to denominational expansion.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: While the eschatological events described are similar to standard Christian views (wars, famines, return of Christ), the theological gap lies in the source of the text. By accepting JS-Matthew, the adherent accepts that the Bible is insufficient and that Joseph Smith is the necessary lens for interpreting Jesus. Furthermore, the addition of 'according to the covenant' (v. 22) shifts the definition of the elect from God's sovereign choice (Ephesians 1:4) to a covenant-keeping group (LDS Church members), introducing a works/ordinance-based nuance to election.

Shared Values:

Belief in the literal Second Coming of Christ; Warning against false prophets; Call to spiritual watchfulness; Reality of future judgment

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – The text claims to correct the Bible via modern revelation without manuscript support.
2. [Critical] Canon Closure – Adds new words of Jesus not recorded in the apostolic deposit.
3. [Major] Sola Gratia – Safety depends on the believer's action ('treasureth up') rather than solely on God's keeping grace.
4. [Major] Ecclesiology – Redefines the 'elect' through the lens of a specific covenant organization.

Semantic Warnings:

"The Elect"

In Text: Those who are 'according to the covenant' (implying the New and Everlasting Covenant of Mormonism).

Evangelical: Those chosen by God for salvation by grace (Romans 8:33, Colossians 3:12).

Example: *In this text, the elect can be deceived 'if possible,' implying a precariousness that depends on their adherence to the covenant.*

"End of the World"

In Text: Explicitly defined in verse 4 and 55 as 'the destruction of the wicked,' not necessarily the end of the planet.

Evangelical: Often refers to the consummation of the age (synteleia) and the ushering in of the New Heavens and New Earth.

Example: *The text redefines the phrase to focus on the judgment of people rather than the cosmic conclusion.*

"Gospel of the Kingdom"

In Text: The 'restored' gospel preached by the LDS church.

Evangelical: The good news of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Example: *Verse 31's preaching of the gospel is interpreted by LDS as the global missionary program of the LDS Church.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Being 'saved' (v. 11, 30) in the context of physical preservation and spiritual endurance; ultimately linked to being 'gathered' and not 'cut off.'

How Attained: By remaining steadfast, not being overcome, and treasuring up the word.

Basis of Assurance: Personal faithfulness and knowledge ('whoso treasureth up... shall not be deceived').

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text emphasizes human endurance and cognitive preparation ('treasureth up') as the condition for safety, contrasting with the evangelical assurance of salvation secured by Christ's work (John 10:28).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Take heed that no man deceive you (v. 5)
2. Stand in the holy place (v. 12)

3. Flee into the mountains (v. 13)
4. Pray that flight be not in winter or on Sabbath (v. 17)
5. Believe not false Christs (v. 21, 25)
6. See that ye be not troubled (v. 23)
7. Treasure up my word (v. 37)
8. Watch and be ready (v. 46, 48)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's authority to rewrite biblical text
2. Identify as the 'elect according to the covenant'
3. Participate in the 'gathering' work

Ritual Requirements:

1. None explicitly detailed in this text, though 'standing in holy places' is often interpreted in modern LDS practice as Temple attendance.

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. When you read 'whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived,' what specific word or teachings do you feel are necessary to avoid deception?
2. Joseph Smith separated the destruction of Jerusalem from the Second Coming in this text. Why do you think the earliest Greek manuscripts we have don't show this separation?
3. How does the definition of 'elect according to the covenant' differ from simply trusting in Jesus?
4. If safety depends on us 'treasuring up' the word, how can we be sure we've treasured up enough to be safe?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Desire for Clarity – Just as the disciples wanted clarity on the future, we all want to know we are safe. Jesus gives us clarity not through a timeline, but through a Person. [John 14:6 - 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' (Safety is in a Person, not a plan).]
2. The Thief in the Night – The suddenness of Christ's return is a warning. But whereas this text suggests we prepare by 'doing' and 'treasuring,' the Gospel says we are prepared by being 'clothed' in Christ's righteousness. [Romans 13:14 - 'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ...']

Spiritual Weight:

1. Uncertainty/Distrust of Scripture [Severe] – The believer is taught that the Bible they hold is unreliable without Joseph Smith's corrections. This creates a dependency on the Prophet for basic truth, removing the ability to simply read God's word and be fed.
2. Performance Anxiety [Moderate] – The condition 'whoso treasureth up my word shall not be deceived' places the burden of spiritual safety on the believer's intellectual and spiritual diligence. If they are deceived, it is their fault for not 'treasuring' enough.
3. Exclusive Election [Moderate] – Defining the elect 'according to the covenant' creates an 'us vs. them' mentality where leaving the specific LDS covenant equates to losing one's status as God's elect.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (Joseph Smith's revision).

Verification Method: Adherents verify this text by the internal witness of the Spirit concerning Joseph Smith's prophetic calling, rather than by historical textual criticism.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the public, historical deposit of faith (Jude 3) and the illuminated reading of the preserved text (2 Timothy 3:16). This text relies on the private revelation of a single individual to overwrite the public record.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: 1831 (Dictated by Joseph Smith).

Authorship: Joseph Smith (claiming to restore Matthew's words).

Textual Issues: The text separates Matthew 24 into two distinct chronological sections (v. 1-21 for AD 70; v. 21-55 for End Times). While this solves interpretive difficulties, it has no basis in the Greek manuscript tradition (Textus Receptus, Alexandrian, or Western text types).