
Joseph Smith—Matthew — the Olivet Discourse Untangled, and the Two Questions Pulled Apart

Joseph Smith—Matthew: an extract from Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible (1831), covering Matthew 23:39 and chapter 24 — the Olivet Discourse, the disciples' two questions on the Mount of Olives, the destruction of Jerusalem, the signs of the Second Coming, and the gathering of the elect.

If you've ever read Matthew 24 and come away unsure WHEN Jesus is talking about — the fall of Jerusalem in his own century, or the end of the world — you're in good company; readers have argued for two thousand years. Joseph Smith—Matthew is the comb that untangles the braid. It reorders the Olivet Discourse so the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming stand apart, and adds verses that change how the whole thing reads.

Insights

- 1:4 — the two questions.** The disciples ask TWO things: when will the temple fall, and what is the sign of your coming and the end of the world? Those are separated by nearly two millennia — and KJV Matthew 24 answers them mixed together. The restored text keeps them sorted.
- 1:12-13 — flee.** The “abomination of desolation” and “flee into the mountains” aren't poetry about the end of the world; they're an evacuation order for a real city. History records the early Christians took it, fled to Pella, and survived the AD 70 siege.
- 1:22 — the very elect.** The last-days deception will be so good it could fool “the very elect.” The danger isn't bad people falling for obvious lies; it's good people fooled by a polished counterfeit.
- 1:37 — the answer to it all.** *And whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived.* Not a decoded timeline, not a bunker — a heart so full of the word that the counterfeit voice simply doesn't sound right. The quietest, most personal instruction, in the chapter most about catastrophe.
- 1:38-40 — read the season.** The fig tree: when the light begins to break, you'll know he's “near, even at the doors” — but “of that day and hour no one knoweth.” Read the season, not the clock. The last days are to be prepared for, not calculated.

Word Studies

bdelygma tēs erēmias (Greek) (βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως) — **the abomination of desolation / the desolating sacrilege 1:12 (cf. Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).** This phrase, “the abomination of desolation,” comes straight out of Daniel, and Jesus quotes it on purpose. In Daniel it means a desolating sacrilege — something so profane set up in the holy place that it empties the temple of God's presence. Its first fulfillment was already history by Jesus' day: in 167 BC the Greek king Antiochus IV had set up an altar to Zeus in the Jerusalem temple and sacrificed a pig on it, the event that sparked the Maccabean revolt. Jesus tells the disciples it will happen *again* — and in AD 70 the Roman armies, with their idolatrous standards, surrounded and desecrated the temple before burning it. So the phrase has a layered life: a thing that happened, that happened again, and that the last days will see once more. That layering is exactly why the Olivet Discourse is so easy to misread — the same prophetic language keeps applying to more than one event. Joseph Smith—Matthew's gift is to label which “abomination” goes with which coming, so the reader stops collapsing AD 70 into the Second Coming.

Apocryphal & Ancient Correlations

Daniel 7:13-14; 1 Enoch 37-71. The “Son of Man coming in the clouds” is Daniel's vision; 1 Enoch develops the heavenly Son of Man as judge and gatherer. HONEST: 1 Enoch was available to Joseph (Laurence 1821) and Daniel is canon — shared apocalyptic vocabulary, not hidden sources.

2 Esdras (4 Ezra) 13; 2 Baruch 25-30. Same-era Jewish apocalypses picture the Messiah gathering the scattered tribes from the four winds, and the birth-pang signs before the end. 2 Esdras was in the KJV Apocrypha (available); 2 Baruch was not (published 1860s).

The point. Joseph Smith—Matthew doesn't depend on a buried text. Its value is INTERPRETIVE — it untangles a discourse that shares its imagery with the whole intertestamental tradition and sorts the AD 70 prophecy from the last-days one. The restoration's gift here is clarity, not new data.

Canon = the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, Moses, Abraham. The old apocalypses illuminate the genre; they don't establish the doctrine. Read per D&C 91. An honest book to flag: this is clarity, not a “couldn't have known” case.

Where the threads lead

The Lord's own expansion. Joseph Smith—Matthew; D&C 45:16-59 (the Lord re-gives the Olivet Discourse); D&C 88:87-98 — the last-days signs and the gathering.

The abomination, layered. JS—M 1:12; Daniel 9:27; 11:31 (Antiochus, 167 BC); Luke 21:20 (Jerusalem compassed with armies, AD 70) — the same prophetic language fulfilled more than once.

The Son of Man on the clouds. JS—M 1:36; Daniel 7:13-14; 1 Enoch 37-71; Acts 1:11 — the title and the cloud-coming run from Daniel through the apocalyptic tradition to the Olivet Discourse.

Moroni quoted these. JS—M 1:36-41; Joseph Smith—History 1:36-41 — the angel Moroni rehearsed these last-days prophecies to the young Joseph, tying the two PoGP books together.

How the chapter changes the reader

Joseph Smith—Matthew lowers the temperature on date-setting (no one knows the day or hour; read the fig tree) and tells you exactly how to keep your feet when the deception gets good enough to fool the elect: “whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived.” Not a bunker, not a decoded chart — a heart so full of the Lord’s word that the counterfeit doesn’t land. The whole anxious sweep of wars and falling stars resolves into one calm, doable instruction: know the word.