



“Hosanna to the Son of David”

Matthew 19-25

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Introduction

These chapters include the last of Matthew’s five ‘books’ or sections of his writing that remind us of Moses’ five books in the Old Testament. In this book, Jesus leaves Galilee for the last time, passing through Perea before arriving in Jerusalem. These chapters cover much of the last week of Jesus’ life, including the triumphal entry, teaching in the temple, and the great eschatological discourse about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world.

Outline of Matthew

Matthew seems to break his work into seven sections (seven representing perfection): a prologue and climax, with five middle sections, each concluding with a major discourse by Jesus. This makes it similar to the five books of Moses. An overall outline for the book of Matthew is as follows (with the focus of this lesson in bold):

1. Prologue—Birth and Infancy (1-2)
2. Proclamation (3-4); Sermon on the Mount (5-7)
3. Galilean ministry (8-9); Missionary discourse (10)
4. Opposition (11-12); Parables (13)
5. Christ and the Church (14-17); Church life and order (18)
6. **Jerusalem (19-23); Eschatological discourse (24-25)**
7. Climax—Passion, Death, and Resurrection (26-28)

Note: In each lesson on the gospels, where there are overlapping or parallel texts, those will be noted in the heading. References in bold are the preferred reading(s) and will be the principal section of analysis, though some unique points in the current gospel will be noted, as well as helpful JST changes.¹

Jerusalem (19-23)

At the beginning of this section (chapters 19-20), it is perhaps about December of A.D. 29. The Feast of Tabernacles is past, the Feast of Dedication coming shortly. Jesus was teaching in Galilee and Perea, working his way toward Jerusalem. He stayed in the area until spring and the Passover. He continued to upset the local leaders with his doctrines and intentional violations of their traditions, at the same time pulling his disciples closer and revealing more about the end of his mortal ministry.

In chapters 21-22, Jesus arrived in the Jerusalem area for the Passover, staying in Bethany, presumably at the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Here’s a sketch of the last week or so, assuming the events were in A.D. 30, according to the Synoptic gospels:

Jewish calendar	Our calendar (A.D. 30)	Key events
7 Nisan	Fri, 30 Mar	Arrival at Bethany (Fri evening)
8 Nisan	Sat, 1 Apr	Dinner at Simon’s house
9 Nisan	Sun, 2 Apr	Triumphal entry

¹ Not all JST changes are noted, only those of textual or doctrinal interest. Interested readers are encouraged to see Wayment, *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament* or the manuscripts themselves on the Joseph Smith Papers website (josephsmithpapers.org).

10 Nisan	Mon, 3 Apr	Curses fig tree; cleanses the temple
11 Nisan	Tue, 4 Apr	Disciples see the fig tree withered; Olivet discourse
12 Nisan	Wed, 5 Apr	[No record]
13 Nisan	Thu, 6 Apr	Preparations for the Passover
14 Nisan	Fri, 7 Apr	Passover Feast (starts at sunset); Gethsemane; arrest; trial; crucifixion
15 Nisan	Sat, 8 Apr	In the tomb
16 Nisan	Sun, 9 Apr	Resurrection

From 25-48% of the four gospels are devoted just to the events of this week. We only have a partial record of what Jesus did, but consider what we do know: he cleansed the temple of money changers and animal keepers; gave at least three parables; was challenged by multiple groups of Jewish authorities out to kill him; preached in the temple; watched a widow put in her mite; and gave a great sermon on the events coming to Jerusalem shortly and those coming upon the whole earth in the latter days. He travelled to and from Bethany each day on foot. And all the while he knew he was leaving soon by way of an excruciatingly painful death and was working to get his disciples ready to run the Church. No wonder there is no record anything he did on Wednesday—he probably needed a quiet day to prepare himself for the weekend’s ordeals.

Traveling to Jerusalem (Matt 19:1 – 20:34)

Instructions about divorce – Matt 19:1-12 (Mark 10:1-12)

19:1 **departed from Galilee.** With this departure, Jesus never returned to the land where he grew up and spent most of his ministry. He first moved south in the area “beyond Jordan,” meaning Perea (the Greek word there is *peran*, which means ‘beyond’).

19:2 **JST**

Matt 19:2 KJV	JST
And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.	And great multitudes followed him; and many believed on him and he healed them there.

The JST clarifies that Jesus didn’t just heal the multitudes that came to him but that those who were healed first “believed on him.” Faith precedes the blessing.

19:3 **Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him.** The Pharisees likely hoped for an outcome similar to John the Baptist, who was executed because of his strong opinions on marriage, particularly the one between Herod Antipas and Herodias. The controversy was based on an interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1 and Leviticus 18:6-18. Hence their question, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause,” or “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?” (NASB).

19:4 **Have ye not read.** Of course, they have read what Jesus quoted them, which is Genesis 1:27 or 5:2. This wording is intended to reprimand for not understanding what they claimed to teach to others.

19:5 **shall a man leave father and mother.** The scripture is Genesis 2:24, an editorial insertion into the story of Adam and Eve, drawing out a lesson that Jesus calls upon in this conversation.

19:6 **What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.** This is God’s law of marriage, but the subject was hotly debated in Jesus’ day with opposing schools of thought interpreting Deuteronomy 24:1 in different ways: “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.” One school interpreted it that she would have to commit adultery to be divorced (the meaning of the Hebrew word *’ervah*, translated ‘uncleanness’ in the KJV, is naked or shame, both tied to an adulterous relationship). But the other interpretation claimed that this scripture gave a man authority to divorce his wife even if she just spoiled his dinner, since she would then not have favor in his eyes! Jesus definitely

came down on the more conservative side and then went beyond that with a very high standard for marital relationships.

19:6 **no more twain, but one flesh.** The Hebrew word used in Genesis 2:24 for “flesh” (*basar*) has many meanings, including the flesh of the body but also kindred or blood relations. It is not unreasonable to translate that verse as “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and stay with his wife, and they shall be a single family.”

19:6 **What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.** Or, “let no man separate” (NASB, ESV). A marriage covenant enacted under the priesthood authority from God is not something that mortal men should shatter, Jesus taught.

19:8 **because of the hardness of your hearts.** They countered back to Jesus, who appeared to be advocating for no divorce, why he was contradicting Moses who gave them a chance to divorce (19:7). Jesus replied that Moses only gave them this ‘out’ because of hard hearts, implying that if they were truly righteous, they would follow Jesus’ higher law of marriage.

19:9 **put away his wife, except it be for fornication.** Jesus clarified his position, suggesting that divorce would be allowed in cases of *porneia*. While translated “fornication” in the KJV, the better term is ‘immorality,’ because it covers a broad range of immoral behaviors.

19:10 **it is not good to marry.** With such a strict standard, some of the disciples worried that they could not live up to it, so perhaps it was better not to marry at all, they wondered. This contradicts the scriptures that Jesus was alluding to, such as Genesis 2:18, which teaches that “it is not good that the man should be alone.”

19:11 **All men cannot receive this saying.** Then as now, the divine law of eternal marriage is hard for many to live. That doesn’t mean people should not marry but the Church today allows for divorce and does not enforce the higher marriage laws.

19:11 **JST**

Matt 19:11 KJV	JST
But he said unto them, All <i>men</i> cannot receive this saying, save <i>they</i> to whom it is given.	But he said unto them, All cannot receive this saying. It is not for them save <i>they</i> to whom it is given.



The JST explains that this doctrine was only given to a few who were prepared for it. It is not for most people who “cannot receive” it.

19:12 **some eunuchs**. This is one of the most difficult passages in the NT to understand. A literal eunuch is one who is castrated; Jesus’ definition also takes into account those born with some sort of defect that doesn’t allow them to have sexual relations, and those who become eunuchs to serve God. For the latter, he may have had in mind the Essenes who live celibate in order to purify themselves, much as many do today in various religions. The best explanation of this verse is probably in the JST version of 1 Corinthians 7:27-40, which teaches that the default life choice is marriage but that there are times when celibacy is appropriate, such as when engaged in God’s work (including during missionary service).

Jesus blesses little children – Matt 19:13-15 (Mark 10:13-15; Luke 18:15-17)

19:13 **JST**

Matt 19:13 KJV	JST
Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put <i>his</i> hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.	Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them, saying, There is no need, for Jesus hath said such shall be saved.

While most commentaries will say that the disciples were acting according to the understanding of their culture—that children were less than adults and thus not worthy of Jesus’ time—this change gives the impression that overzealous disciples were taking Jesus’ teachings on the salvation of little children and using that as a reason to keep them away from Jesus, who was constantly pressed with so many crowds.

19:14 **forbid them not, to come unto me**. In the first century, sixty percent of children born alive died before the age of sixteen. This is a scene of fearful mothers bringing their children to Jesus hoping that his blessing will help them beat the odds and live. Jesus showed that he valued all people.

The rich young man – Matt 19:16-22 (Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23)

See Mark.

19:18 **Which?** Only Matthew’s version includes the question “Which?” by the rich young man who came to Jesus after Jesus told him to “keep the commandments” (v. 17). Jewish scholars have identified 613 commandments in the Old Testament. While they may not have had the same list in Jesus’ day, the Pharisees especially had added even more “commandments” to the scriptures with their ‘fence’ around the law to keep people from inadvertently breaking any of God’s laws. So the question is relevant—is there a list of the critical laws, because it’s pretty overwhelming?

Riches and rewards – Matt 19:23-30 (Mark 10:23-31; Luke 18:24-30)

See also Mark.

19:23 **a rich man shall hardly enter**. Building off the experience of the rich young man who just walked away from Jesus, he bemoaned how hard it was for the rich to humble themselves and enter the kingdom. Mark’s account is more nuanced, building from that to generalize that salvation is not something any person can achieve, but like Mark, Matthew teaches the impossibility of salvation through man alone, but concludes “with God all things are possible” (v. 26).

19:26 **JST**

Matt 19:26 KJV	JST
But Jesus beheld <i>them</i> , and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.	But Jesus beheld their thoughts , and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but if they will forsake all things for my sake , with God whatsoever things I speak are possible.

This is an important JST change in terms of Jesus' status. First, he perceives their thoughts without them vocalizing them. He declares that they first key to making "all things" possible (KJV) is forsaking "all things" (JST) for Jesus' sake, and then whatever Jesus speaks will be possible through God. It changes Jesus' position from observer of God accomplishing all things to being the means of accomplishing those very things through the Father.

19:27 ***we have forsaken all***. Peter wondered about their own status. It seems clear that while they were not rich, he and at least some of the other disciples were fairly well off. While they had not done exactly what Jesus had said to the rich young man, they had willingly given up so very much to follow him. Was it enough?

19:28 ***in the regeneration***. The Greek word *palingenesia* means rebirth or renewal. The JST changes it to "**resurrection**," which is certainly a rebirth into an entirely new form of existence.

19:28 ***ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones***. Jesus' throne is a "throne of his glory." The Twelve's thrones are not described in the same way but are nonetheless seats of power and judgment over the entire house of Israel, like a king or queen who judges the entire kingdom.

19:28 ***judging the twelve tribes***. First, his twelve chosen apostles were assured of their own eternal role—they would be with him, judging the entire house of Israel.

19:29 ***receive an hundredfold***. Jesus' final point is easy to see and applies to us all: give up worldly things now, inherit great blessings later. Easy to see, hard to do. Yet the description "an hundredfold" is likely a gross under-exaggeration: the blessing of eternal life will outweigh the benefits of this world by far more than one hundred.

19:30 ***first shall be last***. The great reversal is a theme Jesus will pick up on in the next chapter, telling a whole parable to illustrate it (see the next section).

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard – Matt 20:1-16

20:1 ***early in the morning to hire labourers***. At harvest time, a vineyard owner would go to the marketplace to hire men to help him harvest his crop. This was done on a daily basis because it was hard to know exactly when the work would be done.

20:2 ***a penny a day***. A "penny" is a *denarius*, what has often been considered a single day's wages, mainly based on this account. However, archaeological evidence indicates that a day's wages would be more like three at the low end and perhaps eight at the high end for similar work. In other words, the man was offering a very low wage to the all-day workers, which sets up the confrontation at the end.

20:3 ***the third hour***. The workday was divided into twelve 'hours' or portions, the first at sunrise and the last ending with sunset. The time would, of course, vary based on the season. For ease of calculation, we can say that the first hour was roughly 6:00 am, the 3rd hour about 9:00 am, the 6th hour noon (v. 5), the 9th hour 3:00pm (v. 5), and the 11th hour 5:00 pm (v. 6).

20:6 ***Why stand ye here all the day idle?*** Men who waited around all day in the marketplace for work did so because they had no other way to earn money. Even a small wage for a partial day's work would help buy food.

20:8 ***beginning from the last unto the first***. Returning to the paradoxical language, Jesus' prepared his disciples for the lesson.

20:10 ***they likewise received every man a penny***. Though it may appear so at first glance, this parable is not about how long we serve. Instead, it is about our willingness to serve wherever and whenever asked. Notice that the men hired at the eleventh hour were without employment through no fault of their own: "no man hath hired us" (v. 7). They were willing, even anxious to work—they stayed all day trying to find something—but lacked the opportunity. Also, except for those at the beginning of the day, none of the workers negotiated a wage but were willing to trust the householder to pay them whatever was fair.

President J. Reuben Clark said, “In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines” (*Studies in Scripture* 5:371).

When I was a young counselor to a good bishop, he sent me off to call a sister in the ward to work in the Primary. When I interviewed her about it, she declined, saying that she didn’t like working in the Primary. I went back to the bishop to tell him, amazed in my inexperience that she had said no. The bishop sadly replied, “Yeah, I knew she’d say that.” I was more surprised by his response than her refusal. “You sent me to call her when you knew she’d say no?” I asked. “Yes,” he answered patiently. “Everyone has their agency. I was just hoping she may have matured enough to say yes this time. I guess we’ll just have to try again later, keeping giving her chances.” It really is about willingness, just as we need to be willing to repent and put our trust in God. He patiently waits for us, continuing to prompt, willing to take us whenever we have matured enough to say yes.

20:13 ***Friend***. The use of the title “Friend” is unexpected, since these were hired servants. It is a generous and kind word to use, showing the compassion of the householder.

20:13 ***I do thee no wrong***. The householder had fully honored their agreement and paid exactly the promised wage. Though the wage was perhaps lower than normal, they had in fact agree to it in the morning when they were hired (v. 2).

20:16 ***for many be called, but few chosen***. We see the close tie to D&C 121:34-40 (and D&C 95:5), but in fact this phrase was likely not in the original version of Matthew but slipped in by a scribe who perhaps saw some affinity with this parable and the one in Matthew 22:1-14 (below), which ends with this phrase.

[Jesus foretells his death a third time – Matt 20:17-19 \(Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34\)](#)

See Mark.

[The request of James and John – Matt 20:20-28 \(Mark 10:35-45; also Luke 22:24-27\)](#)

See also Mark.

20:20 ***the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons***. In Mark, James and John approached Jesus directly; here in Matthew’s account, it was James’ and John’s mother who came to Jesus on their behalf (though with them in tow). To ask for such preference was to show a complete lack of understanding of the many teachings recently given, such as blessing the children and the parable of the vineyard workers.

20:20 ***worshipping him***. “Kneeling before him” (NRSV). The verb means to fall on the knees and make a request. It could also involve bowing the head or even touching it to the floor.

20:22-23 Both verses include a reference to baptism, which is a metaphor used by Mark in his version. But the best manuscripts of Matthew do not include this phrase in either verse, it being a likely scribal addition at a later time.

20:26 ***let him be your minister***. The word “minister” is *diakonos*, where is typically translated “deacon.” The word means to help or care for another, or to wait tables. The parallel description in the next verse equates it with a slave.

20:28 ***the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister***. Using the verb form of the same word (*diakoneō*), Jesus taught that he came not to be waited on or cared for but to meet the needs of others. In other words, Jesus identified himself first as a deacon.

[The healing of two blind men – Matt 20:29-34 \(Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43\)](#)

See also Mark.

20:29 ***they departed from Jericho***. Having spent some time in Perea (part of modern day Jordan), Jesus moved to Jericho, from which he and his group could take a road that led up past the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem.

20:30 **two blind men sitting by the way side.** Matthew's version is similar to Mark's in location and the general event, with the big difference that he has two blind men requesting healing, while Mark only has one, blind Bartimaeus. Luke has only one blind man in his version of the story but doesn't give his name. Matthew's use of two men is a consistent pattern of using doublets.

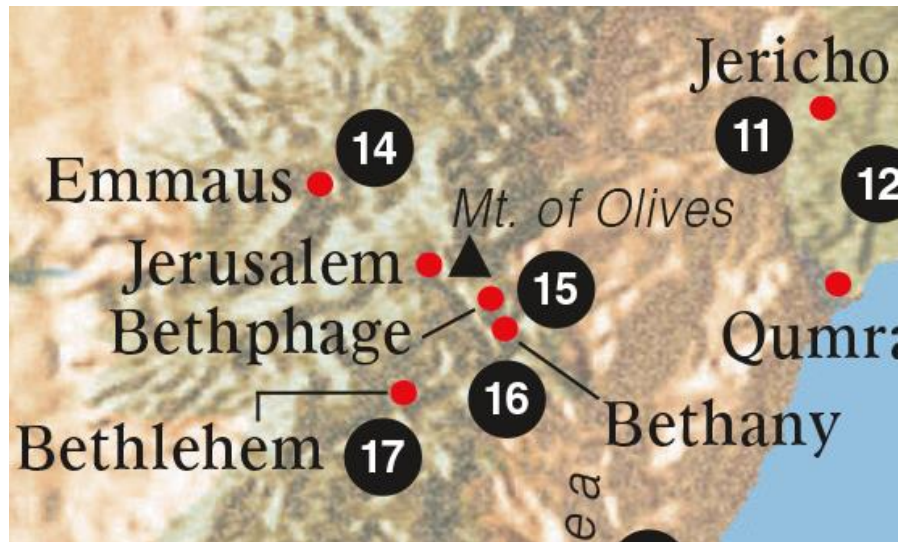
20:34 **they followed him.** Mark concludes that the blind man healed "followed Jesus in the way," using the term that described the group of disciples later in early Christianity ("the way"). Matthew's account has the two blind men leaving Jericho and literally following Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem (Matt 21:1-27)

The triumphal entry – Matt 21:1-11 (Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-40; John 12:12-19)

Maintaining our focus Matthew's message, we'll examine just how the events of Jesus' last week fit into Matthew's story. It helps to recognize certain Old Testament scriptures which pertain to this event; they are listed below in a logical order.

21:1 **when they drew nigh until Jerusalem.** It was Sunday morning, the day after the Sabbath, now called Palm Sunday by many Christians in recognition of this event. Jesus travelled on the road to Jerusalem and quickly passed through a small village called Bethphage ('house of unripe figs'). The exact location is unknown but it is somewhere east of and close by Jerusalem.



21:2 **Go into the village.** Though the traditional location of the disciples getting the animal is Bethphage, verse 1 says that is their location and they were to go to "the village" to get it. Perhaps it was nearby Bethany. He sent two disciples (v. 1) to get "an ass" and "a colt" tied up near the road (the colt was a young but full-grown donkey; Matthew alone mentions also bringing the donkey's mother, which would serve to calm the animal as it was ridden through great, noisy crowds, perhaps for the first time,). When the owner asked who needed it, the disciples gave the answer Jesus previously supplied: "The Lord hath need of them" (v. 3) The unknown owner offered no objections, just as he would if a king requested it, and as Jesus predicted (v. 6). The disciples brought the donkey back, then piled their outer garments on him, and Jesus sat on him (v. 7)

Riding the donkey is a symbol of humility and peace, showing Jesus did not come conquering. (Some third century anti-Christians portrayed Jesus' followers with donkey heads or had them worshipping a donkey as a result of this event.)

1 Kings 1:32-40 is the story of David ensuring that Solomon followed him as king, including having Solomon ride on David's mule from the Gihon Spring to the palace, with all the people shouting and playing music as he came into the city.

21:5 **Behold, thy King cometh.** Zechariah 9:9-10, the scripture that Matthew quoted, prophesies that the king will come into Jerusalem "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

21:7 **they set him thereon.** It was traditional for kings of Judah to follow this pattern from the reign of Solomon and enter Jerusalem on a donkey. Jesus was thus claiming his kingship by this act.

21:8 **spread their garments . . . cut down branches.** In the Old Testament, as the king rode into town, people would throw their garments in the road as a symbol of submission. The branches (which John tells us were palm branches) symbolized righteousness (Psalms 92:12), Jewish nationalism, and victory, used to celebrate when Judas Maccabeus recaptured Jerusalem from the Seleucids. The palm tree was on many coins of the time.

21:8 **Son of David.** Calling Jesus the “Son of David” recognizes his right to kingship. They are crying out to Jesus to save them.

21:9 **Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.** “He that cometh” is the from Greek verb *erchomai*, which refers to ‘the coming one,’ meaning the Messiah.

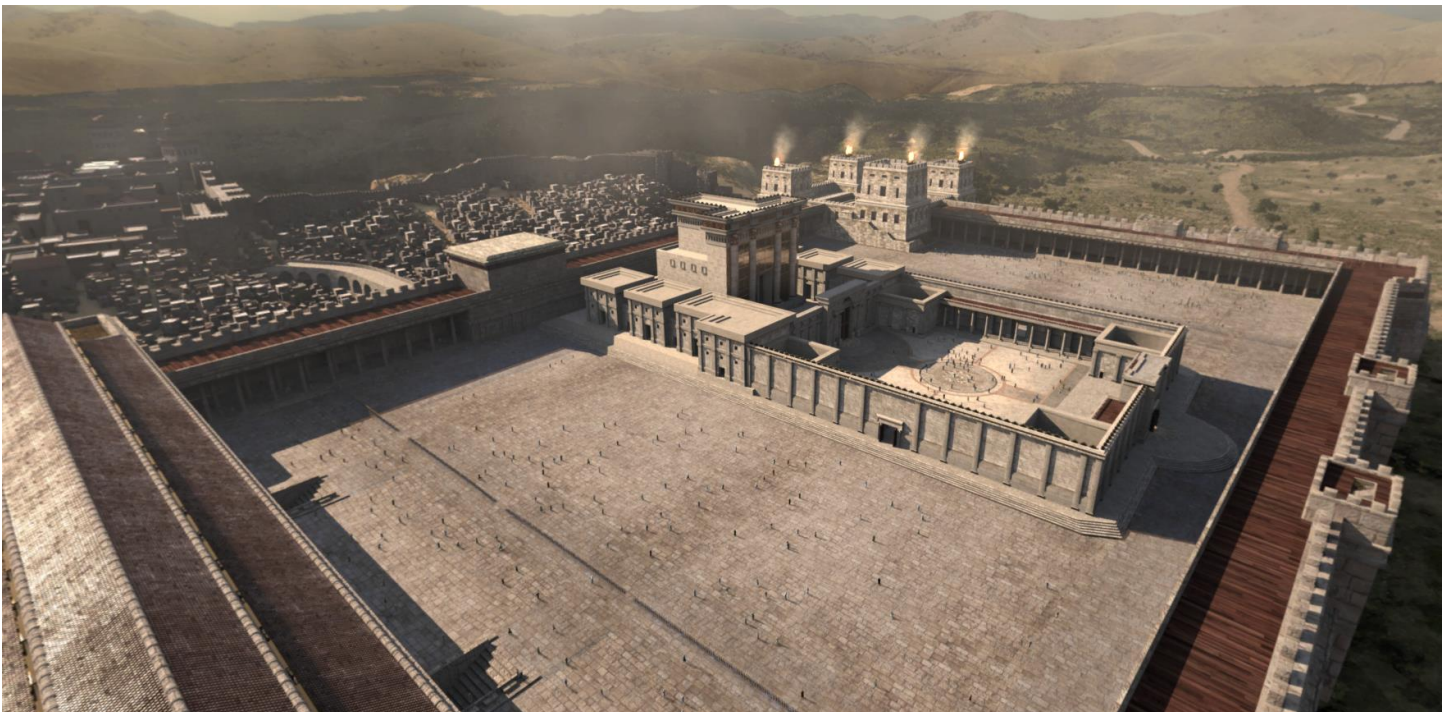
21:9 **Hosanna in the highest.** ‘Hosanna’ is *hoshi-ah-na* in Hebrew, meaning ‘O save’ or ‘save now’ or ‘save please’ (Hebrew *na* has several meanings) and comes from Psalm 118:25-26, part of the *Hallel* recited at Passover and which has great Messianic significance.

21:11 **the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet.** Calling Jesus a “prophet” doesn’t lessen his status. “Prophet” in Hebrew is *nabi*, which has the meaning of spokesman. The crowd recognized Jesus as God’s spokesman, someone who acted in the name of God and did his will.

Cleansing the temple – Matt 21:12-17 (Mark 11:15-9; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-22)

Jesus upset the tables of the moneychangers and animal keepers to make a statement—the corrupt priesthood who profited from this trade were denounced, and the temple should remain a house of prayer and revelation.

21:12 **went into the temple.** This is the *hieron*, which includes all the outer courtyards of the temple but not the temple building itself. It doesn’t mean the marketplace outside the temple but in the courtyards of the Gentiles, the areas closest to the walls and marked by the *soreg* or barrier, a latticed railing that indicated the area where only Jews could enter. The *soreg* had signs by each gate indicating a Gentile risked death by passing the barrier.



21:12 **them that sold and bought in the temple.** The area where this activity was happening appears to be the Royal Stoa, a two-story set of porches located at the southern end of the temple mount (far left above), part of the Court of the Gentiles. After Jesus’ time, the Sanhedrin appears to have used the Royal Stoa for their meetings instead of the Chamber of Hewn Stones which was just west of (behind) the temple.

21:12 **the moneychangers**. Every male Jew was asked to pay a half-shekel per year temple tax, often collected at Passover. This tax was used to fund the daily activities at the temple. The chief priests had determined that they would only accept Tyrian silver shekels because they did not flaunt Roman rule. As Jews came from all over the Roman world, they would here exchange their local money for Tyrian shekels for a small fee, in order to pay the tax. The moneychangers and the chief priests all made a profit on the exchange.

21:12 **them that sold doves**. Leviticus 1:14-17 and 5:7 allowed for doves to be used if one could not afford the larger animals or did not have access to one. Since those that had animals were the rural folks, those from cities especially might purchase a dove for their own use.

21:13 **It is written**. Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11, combining them so that he described what the temple should be and what they turned it into.

21:14 **blind and the lame came**. Matthew alone records this detail. Blind and lame persons were not allowed into the inner temple courtyards (though they could go in the court of the Gentiles). By healing them, Jesus made it possible for many to enter the temple for the first time and to fully participate in temple worship. This goes with the cleansing because he drove out the sinners and made it possible for the justified to enter the temple instead.

21:16 **Out of the mouth of babes**. Rebuking the Pharisees attitude about the many people praising Jesus, the Savior quoted Psalm 8:2.

21:17 **into Bethany; and he lodged there**. Thus ended Sunday; Jesus and his disciples probably went to Bethany to stay with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, a town about a mile and a half away, on the southeastern side of the Mount of Olives.

[Cursing a fig tree – Matt 21:18-22 \(Mark 11:12-14, 20-26\)](#)

21:18 **in the morning**. This section begins on Monday morning as Jesus returned to the temple to teach, when he was approached by representatives of the Jewish leadership.

21:19 **presently the fig tree withered**. Mark also tells the story of the fig tree but presents it differently, bracketed around the story of the cleansing of the temple (discussed in more detail with Mark). With Matthew, it is a call to faith: “If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done” (Matthew 21:21). The “mountain” Jesus referred to was either the Mount of Olives, which they were passing over on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, or perhaps the temple mount itself, visible in front of them as they crested the summit of the Mount of Olives. Either way, it was an amazing statement of the power of faith.

[The question about authority – Matt 21:23-27 \(Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8\)](#)

21:23 **By what authority doest thou these things?** “These things” could mean any number of things that Jesus has done lately, including healings and teachings, but especially his overturning the tables the previous day. They are saying, in effect, ‘You are not one of us. You have not been taught at the feet of the great rabbis. You are not schooled in the scriptures through us. We are the leaders and we have granted you no authority. So how can you claim any authority to do these things?’ Notice that they no longer ask for a sign to show his authority—he had given them many signs which had only served to fuel his support among the people! This is the question that Jesus will then answer in multiple interactions/confrontations with the Jewish leaders.

21:25 **The baptism of John, whence was it?** A hostile question from the Jewish leaders elicited a counter-question from Jesus. The elders admitted they could not answer, and Jesus responded with a rejoinder (v. 27). This pattern is a typical rabbinic debate style, something they all would have used in teaching their own students. In other words, they challenged Jesus’ authority because he is not trained through their schools, and he used their own schools’ teaching methods to refute their challenge.

Parables of Judgment (Matt 21:28 – 22:14)

In this section and the next, Matthew has Jesus teach three parables (two of which are unique to Matthew) and experience four encounters with Jewish leaders, for a total of seven pericopes, representing a perfect final interaction with the public before turning to spend his time solely with his disciples. They tried to entrap him, but he led them through discussions that revealed his identity as the Son of God—his true authority to do “these things” (v. 23). The seven pericopes all are designed to truly respond to their initial challenge about his authority.

The parable of the two sons – Matt 21:28-32

First parable: Two sons. A father asks his two sons to work in his vineyard. The first son says, ‘I won’t go’ but then repents and goes. The second says, ‘Sure, I’ll go’ but doesn’t. When asked, the elders replied that the first was the most obedient. Jesus applied the parable to them, clearly saying they were the second son while the first was the publicans and harlots that disobeyed the Law at first, but then heard John, believed him, and repented. The reference to John was surely due to the previous question about authority. The reference to working in the vineyard is a common metaphor for serving Israel (from Isaiah 5, among other things, which leads to the next parable). The message is summed up nicely in the JST addition to verse 32, which shifts the point away from John and directly to Jesus and those who needed to repent and recognize him for who he was.

Matt 21:32 KJV	JST
For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen #, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.	For John came unto you in the way of righteousness and bore record of me, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, afterward, when ye had seen me, repented not, that ye might believe him; for he that believed not John concerning me, cannot believe me, except he first repent; and except ye repent, the preaching of John shall condemn you in the day of judgment.

The parable of the wicked tenants – Matt 21:33-46 (Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19)

Second parable: Wicked tenants. This is a clear reference to Isaiah 5:1-7, but with a different twist. Both Mark and Luke include this parable but Matthew’s has slightly more details.

21:33 **hedged it round about.** Built a wall around it to protect it from animals and thieves.

21:33 **digged a winepress.** Grapes were put in a dug-out pit either of rock or lined with lime, then walked on to smash them. The juice flowed to the lowest side where it drained into a cistern or other holding area, then was put into goatskin bags to ferment.

21:33 **built a tower.** For a watchman to see the enemy coming and call for defenses. The householder has done everything in his power to make this vineyard successful and protected.

21:33 **let it out to husbandmen.** A common practice to have tenant farmers take care of part of a wealthy estate, especially when the owner was away.

21:34 **he sent his servants.** The servants were the prophets, many of whom were persecuted and killed (v. 36). Finally came the Son, but he was killed, too (vv. 37-39). Jesus asked what the absentee landowner should do to these husbandmen? (v. 40). The only response possible was given for their murderous acts: “miserably destroy those wicked men” (v. 41).

21:42 **The stone which the builders rejected.** This is Psalm 118:22-23, part of the *Hallel* sung at Passover and other times, and just a few verses before the words the crowds shouted in the Triumphal Entry (see 21:1-11 above). Jesus, the stone rejected by the Jewish leaders, became the most important stone in the building, the cornerstone. Announcing this in the temple courtyards would also be a reference to Jesus being the cornerstone of the temple itself and thus the foundation of the worship of God.

21:43 **shall be taken from you.** The Jews received the gospel first, but after they rejected Jesus, it went to the Gentile nations, and they carried it to the earth.

21:45-46 Again, the JST explains the meaning of Jesus' words wonderfully, anticipating the eschatological discourse of chapters 24-25:

Matt 21:45-46	JST
And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.	And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. And they said among themselves, Shall this man think that he alone can spoil this great kingdom? And they were angry with him.
But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.	But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because that they learned that the multitude took him for a prophet. And now his disciples came to him, and Jesus said unto them, Marvel ye at the words or the parable which I spake unto them? Verily, I say unto you, I am the stone, and those wicked ones reject me. I am the head of the corner. These Jews shall fall upon me and shall be broken, and the kingdom of God shall be taken from them and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (meaning the Gentiles). Wherefore, on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder. And when the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, he will destroy those miserable, wicked men, and will let again his vineyard unto other husbandmen, even in the last days, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. And then understood they the parable which he spake unto them, that the Gentiles should be destroyed also, when the Lord should descend out of heaven to reign in his vineyard, which is the earth and the inhabitants thereof.

The parable of the wedding feast – Matt 22:1-14

Third parable: The marriage feast. Jewish tradition held that the Messiah would offer a great feast to which all the righteous would be invited. In Jesus' parable, the king honored and invited many and sent servants to bid them to come, but they declined, caught up in their own affairs. Some, in anger, actually attacked the servants and killed them. So the king then sent his army to destroy them and their city. Next, the king invited people in the highways, but one slipped in wearing the wrong clothing. When the king saw him, he was cast out.

The interpretation is clear. God is the king, Jesus the son, Israel the bride. The invited guests are the Jewish leaders, the city destroyed is Jerusalem, and the guests called in from the highway are sinners and Gentiles, to whom the gospel would go under the apostles.

But what of the man dressed in the wrong garment? It was important to wear the correct clothing when appearing before a king. Because the people were called in without time to prepare, by common practice the king himself would have supplied the clothing—probably white robes. The man was not wearing it because he had determined that his own clothing was 'good enough,' a direct insult to the king. He wanted to be part of the great feast, but on his own terms, lacking humility and gratitude. John would echo this same thought years later when he wrote that the wedding garment would be "fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. . . .

Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:8-9). It could also be an allusion to Zephaniah 1:7-8 where those wearing the wrong clothing are thrown out.

The JST concludes the parable in 22:14 this way: “For many are called, but few chosen; **wherefore all do not have on the wedding garment.**” If a person does not accept the invitation to do things the Lord’s way, he is cast out.

Last Public Teaching (Matt 22:15 – 23:39)

A question about taxes – Matt 22:15-22 (Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26)

First interaction: Tribute to Caesar. Frustrated by their inability to entrap Jesus, the Pharisees, strict legalists of the Law (v. 15), joined forces with the Herodians, the pragmatics who likely supported Rome (v. 16). Normally these two would have little or nothing in common, but here they united against Jesus. They sent some of their own disciples—”spies,” Luke calls them—to flatter Jesus and try to get him to say something that could be used against him.

22:17 **Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?** Either answer would get Jesus in trouble with someone. Should he affirm the tax, the Pharisees could raise that issue with the people who hated the tax. Should he say not to pay it, the Herodians could charge him with sedition against Rome. It was the perfect question for these unlikely allies—or so they thought.

It is estimated that most Jews paid about 49% of their income to taxes: 32% to the Romans; 12% to Jewish taxes; and 5% forced on them by corrupt officials. This was clearly a ‘hot’ question. The specific tax mentioned here is the *kēnsos* or “poll tax,” an annual census-based property tax that was required of all men.

22:17 **Caesar.** Caesar was the title for the Roman emperor since the days of Julius Caesar (d. 44 BC). It was Augustus (31 BC – AD 14) when Jesus was born, and at this time it was Tiberius (AD 14-37). Later Caesars included:

- Caligula (37-41) who ordered a statue of himself put in the temple at Jerusalem
- Claudius (41-54) who expelled the Jews from Rome
- Nero (54-68) who persecuted Christians, killing many including probably Peter and Paul
- Vitellius (69) and Vespasian (69-79) who laid siege to Jerusalem and destroyed the temple

22:20 **Whose is this image and superscription?** Tiberius Caesar’s profile was found on the *denarius*, the most common coin of the day. The Latin inscription read: “Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus.”

22:21 **Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.** The “image” on the coin was the *eikōn*, the same word used to describe how man is created in the “image” of God in the Greek (LXX) version of Genesis. James Talmage and others noted the lesson: “As unto Caesar should be rendered the coins upon which his effigy appeared, so unto God should be given the souls that bear his image. Render unto the world the stamped pieces that are made legally current by the insignia of worldly powers, and give unto God and His service, yourselves—the divine mintage of His eternal realm” (*Jesus the Christ*, 547).

A question about the resurrection – Matt 22:23-33 (Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-39)

Second interaction: Resurrection. Next came the Sadducees, who did not believe in a resurrection because they could find no basis for it in the *Torah* alone (they did not accept any other books as scripture), asking Jesus what will happen in the resurrection (that they did not believe in!). They cited the law in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 which outlines how a brother should support his brother’s widow, then gave an extreme example of applying this law (vv. 25-27). This scripture is often cited as a demonstration that marriage is an earthly covenant only, ‘till death do us part.’ But that is not the Savior’s intent.

22:29 **Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures.** He first answered their question, saying that the Sadducees simply didn’t understand the scriptures (most of which they rejected so naturally they didn’t understand them), nor God’s power.

22:30 **they neither marry.** “They,” meaning the fictitious people in the Sadducees’ made-up story and not all of mankind; “they” would not accept the true priesthood authority Jesus brought to the earth, so “they” would not be able to enjoy marital relations after death. This is best explained with D&C 132:15-19. Note also that the Sadducees denied the existence of angels, so as a bonus Jesus’ answer also refuted that belief.

22:31 **as touching the resurrection.** Having dealt with their direct question, Jesus took on their disbelief in the resurrection with some great rabbinic-style logic. God called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but they are dead. But since God uses that name, they must still be alive, and the resurrection must be a valid event, because God is the God of the living (see Exodus 3:6, 16).

The greatest commandment – Matt 22:34-40 (Mark 12:28-34)

Third interaction: The great commandment. Frustrated by their inability to trip Jesus up, and seeing the Sadducees failure, the Pharisees brought out a heavy hitter, one of their best scribes (“lawyer” in the KJV, v. 35). This man knew all 613 laws in the Mosaic law, no doubt, by heart—365 prohibitions to match the days of the year, and 248 mandates to match the number of bones in the body. He had participated in endless debates about their application to daily life. Now he challenged Jesus to pick one of them as the greatest (v. 36).

22:37 **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.** There was no hesitation in Jesus’ answer: The greatest commandment was to love God, from Deuteronomy 6:5. Then he gave a second ‘bonus’ commandment: love your neighbor (Leviticus 19:18; v. 39). His summary is, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (v. 40). Paul taught this same concept in 1 Corinthians, where he concluded, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13:13). The word Jesus and Paul used is the same in Greek: *agapē*, or generous love for others. God’s love for us is *agapē*: “For God so loved (*agapē*) the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Mormon, in a talk recorded by his son, Moroni, added: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him” (Moroni 7:46-47).

From pure love flows all happiness and blessings, and from the opposite of love—selfishness, greed, etc.—flows all misery and sin. Jesus was right—truly love God and others, and everything flows from there.

In Mark’s version of this event, the scribe is apparently touched and humbled by Jesus’ response. Disarmed by the Spirit, he replied that Jesus’ words are true, and that love is indeed greater than sacrifice. Jesus, who saw the sincerity in the man’s reply, encouraged him: “Thou are not far from the kingdom of God” (Mark 12:34). It is not recorded what happened to this man.

The question about David’s son – Matt 22:41-46 (Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:40-44)

Fourth interaction: Who is Christ? Having nicely handled everything they threw at him, Jesus now went on the offensive and marched up to a group of Pharisees with a question of his own. He could not leave people thinking that he was merely a good orator but was boldly going to declare his authority—the answer to the question that began the day. Said he, ‘What do you think about the Messiah—whose son is he?’ (v. 42). There could really only be one answer from a Pharisee— “the Son of David.” Samaritans would have answered, ‘the Son of Joseph’ or ‘the Son of Ephraim.’ But among the tribe of Judah, David was the first and greatest king, and the Messiah was to follow in his footsteps and be from his line.

Jesus then quoted Psalm 110:1, one of the most frequently quoted OT scriptures in the New Testament (v. 44). The Hebrew says this: ‘Jehovah declared to my master/lord, remain at my right hand.’ David thus called the Messiah ‘lord,’ something he would not do to a lesser ruler (v. 45). So by this paradox, Jesus showed that being the Messiah/son of David meant being greater than David, even sitting on the right hand of God. Jesus’ authority is thus from God himself, shown by the Messianic declaration that he would take the honored position of son and heir.

22:46 **no man was able to answer him a word.** Jesus won the battle of words and wits and doctrine. But though he had silenced his opponents, he was not ready to be silent himself.

Denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees – Matt 23:1-36 (Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:45-47)

Having easily dealt with the leaders of the Jews and boldly declared his authority, Jesus turned back to the multitude to denounce the false teachers of the day, and to teach the crowd one last time. He will not speak in public again after this sound condemnation.

23:1 **spake Jesus to the multitude.** Though he was not addressing the Pharisees and scribes and Herodians directly, he was in a public place in the temple courtyard, and they could have easily heard him, and probably did. His words would have greatly angered them and surely led to the events later that week of his arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

23:2 **Moses' seat.** Excavations at multiple synagogues in Judea and the Diaspora (places where Jews were found around the Roman empire) have uncovered a stone seat in a position of prominence, called the 'seat of Moses.' Though the usage is unclear, it appears to have been used to either: a) teach the law while sitting in the seat; and, b) provide a place to sit for the synagogue leader, who represented Moses in the synagogue service. Jesus' words appear to confirm both usages. This ties into the comment about "chief seats" in verse 6.

23:3 **whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe.** Some commentaries make it sound like Jesus is telling the Jews to obey the leaders even though they're wrong, but the sense of the passage is that they are hypocrites, so do what they say but not what they do. The JST clarifies this:

Matt 23:3 KJV	JST
All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.	All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, they will make you observe and do; for they are ministers of the law, and they make themselves your judges, but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

The change strengthens the idea that the scribes and Pharisees can enforce what they say on others because of their position in society, but the disciples should not follow after their works.

23:4 **bind heavy burdens.** The heavy burdens are the requirements of the oral law, laid on top of or around the Mosaic Law (the 'fence'), which traditions Jesus fought against all during his ministry. The JST adds that the leaders lay these heavy burdens "**on men's shoulders.**"

23:5 **make broad their phylacteries.** Many Jews put small scrolls of certain scriptures in small, leather boxes which they tied to their foreheads and arms during prayer. These are called *phylacteries* in Greek (meaning 'to guard') or *tefillim* in Hebrew. This was a literal response to Deuteronomy 11:18, Exodus 13:9, and Deuteronomy 6:8. Some made them larger so as to be easily noticed while praying in public.

23:5 **enlarge the borders of their garments.** Numbers 15:37-42 and Deuteronomy 22:12 asked that males put blue tassels or *tallit* at the corners of their outer garment as a reminder of their covenants. Like phylacteries, some would make these extra large in order to draw attention to their piety.

23:6 **the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats.** In their honor/shame society, being honored by being offered the best seat (better translation of "uppermost rooms") at a feast or at the synagogue indicated a high degree of social honor, which translated to power and authority over others.

23:7 **Rabbi, Rabbi.** This was a title used by Jews to address great teachers, who were also masters in that they took on disciples. The JST adds parenthetically, "**(which is master).**"

23:9 **JST**

Matt 23:9 KJV	JST
And call no man father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.	And call no one your creator upon the earth or your Heavenly Father; for one is your creator and Heavenly Father, even he who is in heaven.

The JST change is significant, focusing on God’s role as creator and counseling no one to give that honor to anyone on earth, referring back to the practices just described of men taking great honors upon themselves.

23:10 *JST*

Matt 23:10 KJV	JST
Neither be ye called masters : for one is your Master, <i>even</i> Christ.	Neither be ye called master : for one is your Master, even he whom your Heavenly Father sent, which is Christ; for he hath sent him among you, that ye might have life.

Another significant JST change, this time focusing on Christ’s role among men, having authority from the Father.

23:13 **woe unto you.** Matthew lists eight “woes” upon the Jewish leaders:

1. 23:13 **ye shut up the kingdom of heaven.** They piled their traditions on the Law, making it impossible for anyone to please God—by their standards.
2. 23:14 **ye devour widow’s houses, and for a pretence make long prayer.** They pretended to be pious with extended and public prayers but enriched themselves by creating laws that hurt even poor widows.
3. 23:15 **ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte.** They converted people to Judaism, but then burdened them down with rituals and traditions that were impossible to keep and turned them into ‘sons of Gehenna,’ meaning people who sacrificed to pagan gods, which Jesus considered only half as bad as the Jewish leaders themselves.
4. 23:16 **swear by the temple...swear by the gold of the temple.** The tradition allowed them to swear by the temple itself and not have the oath be binding, but if they swore by the gold of the temple, it was binding. Other examples and comments are in verses 18-22.
5. 23:23 **ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin.** They worried about paying exact tithes of every small garden item grown, but overlooked justice, mercy, and faith in God. Verse 24 is changed substantially in the JST, adding at the end of the verse: . . . **who make yourselves appear unto men that you would not commit the least sin, and yet you yourselves transgress the whole law.”**
6. 23:25 **ye make clean the outside of the cup.** Like the rituals they created about washing dishes (which didn’t clean them enough to use for eating but made them ritually pure), they hypocritically make themselves look pure on the outside, but on the inside, were full of sin.
7. 23:27 **ye are like unto whited sepulchres.** Sepulchres were painted white so someone would not accidentally enter them and become defiled, another symbol of hypocrisy.
8. 23:29 **ye build the tombs of the prophets.** They praised the prophets in the scriptures, bemoaning how their fathers killed them, but they were doing the same with John, Jesus, and his followers, and thus would they carry the guilt of their fathers who killed prophets from Abel (Genesis 4:8, the first man killed in scripture) to Zacharias (2 Chronicles 24:20-21, the last prophet killed in their scriptures).

23:32 *JST*

Matt 23:32 KJV	JST
Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.	And will ye Fill up the measure then of your fathers; for you yourselves kills the prophets like unto your fathers.

At the end of this verse, the JST makes a clear reference to both John the Baptist’s death and Jesus’ coming crucifixion.

23:36 *JST*

Matt 23:36 KJV	JST
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Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. **You bear testimony against your fathers, when you yourselves are partakers of the same wickedness. Behold, your fathers did it through ignorance but you do not; wherefore their sins shall be upon your heads.**

The last verse is a strong condemnation of the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders, who chastised their own ancestors for being wicked, but they themselves were no better. Jesus declared that their fathers did it unknowingly but they did not, referring to their being able to see him right before them, where the fathers did not have that privilege.

Lament over Jerusalem – Matt 23:37-39

23:37 **O Jerusalem.** At the beginning of this verse, the JST adds, “**Then Jesus began to weep over Jerusalem, saying,** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” There are not many recorded instances of Jesus weeping; this shows the emotion he felt about the rejection he had experienced just prior to the crucifixion. From Matthew’s account, this is still in the temple courtyard, before the large multitudes that had gathered to hear Jesus teach.

23:37 **as a hen gathereth her chickens.** The metaphor is marvelous. When danger is near, the mother hen clucks and calls for her brood to come to her. They are not old enough or experienced enough to recognize the danger, but they trust her, so they come running. She lifts up her wings and pulls them all in to safety, then settles down and surrounds them with her soft down so they are hidden and protected. Israel is like chicks that ignore the mother’s call and thus are completely susceptible to danger and attack from Satan. This same metaphor is used in 3 Nephi 10:4-6; D&C 10:65: 29:2; and 43:24.

23:38 **your house is left unto you desolate.** Two houses are likely referred to here: 1) the house of Israel, meaning the nation as a whole; and, 2) the temple, the house of the Lord.

23:39 **Ye shall not see me henceforth.** Jesus—Jehovah—to whom the temple was built, now left it, never to return again in mortality. This verse is the first verse of the JST (as reflected in Joseph Smith-Matthew), which is substantially changed to tie the phrase (from Psalm 118:26) to Jesus and his Second Coming, leading into the next two chapters. It is possible that until this moment, when Jesus first openly taught about it, the disciples may not have understood that there would be a Second Coming.

Matt 23:39 KJV

For I say unto you, ~~Ye~~ shall not see me henceforth, ~~and~~ ye shall say, Blessed is he ~~that~~ cometh in the name of the Lord.

JST

For I say unto you, **that you** shall not see me henceforth, **and know that I am he of who it is written by the prophets, until you** 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.**

Eschatological Discourse (24-25)

This is Jesus’ fifth and final discourse, which follows his confrontations with and castigations of the Jewish leaders, especially the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew’s account. It is apocalyptic in nature and eschatological in content.

Joseph Smith-Matthew is the JST version of this discourse (at least chapter 24). Not only are the words changed, but the verse order is dramatically altered, so the various changes will be brought in and discussed below, but not called out specifically as the reader can easily and should compare the two versions.

Prophecies of Present and Future (Matt 24:1-51)

No passage in the New Testament has been impacted more by the Joseph Smith Translation than the Olivet discourse, mainly rendered in Matthew 24 but also Mark 13 and parts of Luke 17 and 21. In Matthew, the Prophet changed wording in most verses as well as shifting verses around in order to form a clearer delineation between the prophecies of events in the apostles' days and those nearer the Second Coming. In Mark, the Prophet made chapter 13 into a copy of Matthew 24, moving large sections of text around and extensively revising most of it. The careful student will also consult D&C 29 and 45, which cover much of the same material but from the perspective of our dispensation. (Note that the Olivet discourse continues into Matthew 25, covered below.)

To illustrate the moving of, and in some cases, the repetition of content, the verse order of Matthew 24 is rearranged to match that of Joseph Smith-Matthew:

Matthew 24	JS-Matthew
23:39	1
1-5	2-6
9-13	7-11
15-21	12-18
8	19
22	20-21a
23-24	21b-22
6	23
25-28	24-27
6-7	28-29
12	30
14-15	31-32
29	33
34-35	34-35
30-33	36-39
36-51	40-54
[none]	55

The destruction of the temple foretold – Matt 24:1-8 (Mark 13:1-8; Luke 21:5-11)

1:2 ***the buildings of the temple***. We can imagine Jesus and his followers leaving the temple courtyards by the eastern Beautiful gate and heading across the Kidron valley and up the Mount of Olives on the way to Bethany. All around were buildings besides the temple, such as the rooms used by the priests and the Chamber of Hewn Stones where the Sanhedrin met, plus the porticoes and porches in the massive platform. Above them towered the massive Herodian wall of the temple mount, rising more than fifty feet above their heads and just to the east more than 270 feet above the Kidron valley floor. Some of the stones were fifteen feet long. Perhaps standing at the base of this wall, admiring the fortifications, was where the disciples asked about Jesus' words and he emphasized the utter destruction of the temple that was coming.

1:3 ***as he sat upon the mount of Olives***. The JST adds at the beginning of this verse that "**Jesus left them and went upon the mount of Olives.**" We can imagine Jesus climbing ahead of the group to a place where he could get a view of the city and sitting down to ponder the events of that day . . . and the ones coming.

1:3 ***the disciples came unto him privately***. The Mount of Olives would have started to be crowded with pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for Passover. The city was not large enough to accommodate all the visitors, so thousands camped out on the Mount of Olives and the other areas around the city. So coming to Jesus "privately" might have been more challenging than it would appear at first.

After hearing Jesus predict the destruction of the temple (v. 2), the disciples followed him back toward Bethany, pausing to rest at the summit of the Mount of Olives, as most did. (Mark 13:3 says that it was only Peter, James,

John, and Andrew who had this conversation, though the JST substitutes the generic ‘disciples’ for their names.) They ask him two key questions, which Jesus answered in his discourse (JST changes in bold): 1) “When shall these things be **which thou hast said concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews?**”; and, 2) “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?**)”

In the KJV, the answers are somewhat intermingled, but in the JST, the verses order is changed to keep the answers more separate. The answers that Jesus gave provide both warnings and comfort, as is typical in apocalyptic (secret or hidden) and eschatological (focused on the last days and judgment) writings.

The signs and events of the two periods are compared here (verse numbers are from JS-Matthew):

Destruction of Jerusalem	Second Coming	Latter-day Scripture
False Christs, prophets (5-6, 9)	False Christs, prophets (21-22, 25)	
	Wars and rumors of war (23, 29)	D&C 45:26, 33, 63
	Famines, disease, earthquakes (29)	D&C 29:16, 18-20; 45:31-32
Disciples hated and killed (7)		
Love wax cold (8, 10)	Love wax cold (30)	D&C 45:27
	Gospel preached worldwide (31)	D&C 29:7-8; 45:28
Abomination of desolation (12)	Abomination of desolation (32)	
	Sun, moon darkened (33)	D&C 29:14; 45:42
	Heavens shaken (36)	
	Sign of the Son of Man (36-37)	D&C 45:44
Flee Jerusalem (12-17)		
Great tribulation on the Jews (18)		D&C 45:18-21
Beginning of sorrows (19)		
Those days shortened (20)		

1:5 (also 4, 11, 22-24, 26) **saying—I am Christ.** There were many self-proclaimed messiahs during this period, but the best known was Simon bar Kokhba who declared himself as the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy in Numbers 24:17: “There shall come a Star out of Jacob”; *kokhba* means ‘star.’ In A.D. 132-135 he led an unsuccessful revolt against Rome, today known as the Second Uprising (the first resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70). Their actions were in response to Hadrian, the Roman emperor, outlawing circumcision and beginning to build a temple to Jupiter on the temple mount where the Jewish temple used to be.

1:6 **wars, and rumors of wars.** These will happen, but the elect will realize that “the end is not yet,” for other signs will come before Jesus returns. In the JST, this is part of the Second Coming prophecies.

1:8 **the beginning of sorrows.** This refers to the labor and delivery of a baby; when the disciples see these things, they are to realize that labor is just beginning. This is not the sign of the return of Jesus, but only of the beginning of what would prepare the Church and the earth for that event.

1:9 **and shall kill you.** Scripture only records the death of James the brother of John, but Christian tradition holds that nearly all of the apostles died violent deaths of martyrdom.

1:10 **betray one another, and shall hate one another.** Especially after the death of the apostles, the history of the early Christian church is one of opposing factions fighting to determine who was right. One group thought another to be teaching heresies; the second preached against a third; and so on. There were Marcionites, Judahites, Gnostics, and many more, each with a different view of what Jesus taught. As time marched on, divisions became even stronger, forming opposing churches that went to war one with another. None of this was the church that Jesus founded, and he here predicted these apostate actions that distorted and even ignored his true gospel. In the modern age, many attempted to find truth, forming new churches and doing their best to decipher the meaning of the scriptures. But it was not until 1820 that God again called a prophet to restore truth, authority, and scripture to a world in darkness and hate.

Persecution foretold – Matt 24:9-14 (Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-20)

1:11 **he that shall endure to the end.** JST: “**he that remaineth steadfast and is not overcome.**” Overcome by what? The hatred, false prophets, iniquity, and loss of charity. Only those with truth and charity can be saved.

1:12 **love of many shall wax cold.** “Many” means the majority of people. “Wax cold” is *psucho*, meaning ‘to cool by blowing’ as with hot foods, or to be chilled by a cold wind; it is a metaphor for diminishing love. An alternate translation is ‘the love of most people toward others will lessen.’ Everyone is looking out for self, an apt description for many in the Jewish revolt as well as society today. And the reason for this loss of love? “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound” (vv. 11-12). False teachings, readily accepted in an atmosphere of hate and darkness, lead to a lack of love in a person’s heart, which in turn leads to many sins, which sins cause selfishness—the opposite of love—to abound. Eventually the Spirit withdraws and the sinner is “past feeling”—unable to feel the light and the true love of Christ in their lives.

1:15 **abomination of desolation.** Otherwise translated, ‘the abomination that causes desolation.’ The abomination is that which defiles, taken from the writings of Daniel 11:31 and 12:11. There are several examples of the temple and Jerusalem being defiled before and after Jesus, including Antiochus Epiphanes defiling the temple, Pilate placing Roman military standards in the temple courtyards; and Hadrian’s temple to Jupiter being built on the same location. The phrase clearly means more than the temple, especially considering Luke’s version: “When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh” (Luke 21:20).

1:16 **flee into the mountains.** Eusebius, an early church historian, records that Christians followed Jesus’ teachings and inspired direction from their priesthood leaders and fled Jerusalem before the destruction and were thus saved. The city was under siege in AD 66, but the Romans pulled back and finally left because of supply problems. The Christians saw this as the fulfillment of the prophecy (the city under siege) and left. When the Romans returned to finish the attack, all followers of Jesus were gone. Eusebius says, “The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city and lived at a certain town beyond the Jordan called Pella” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.5.3). The wilderness and mountains have often been a place of refuge from attacking armies in Jewish history.

The desolating sacrilege – Matt 24:15-28 (Mark 13:14-23; Luke 21:21-24)

1:21 **great tribulation.** “Tribulation” is a great word, coming from the Latin *tribulum* meaning the sled or object dragged over grain to break open the heads. When the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem in A.D. 70, according to Josephus (*War of the Jews*, 5.9.3), it lasted 143 days and resulted in the deaths of 1,100,000 Jews. Another 97,000 were made slaves. During the siege there was great famine which caused many of the deaths. Not until the Holocaust of WWII would greater suffering among Jews be seen.

1:22 **except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.** “Shortened” is *koloboō*, meaning cut off or mutilated. Those days must be abruptly curtailed, or no one will be “saved”—not speaking of salvation, but *sozo*, rescued from danger and destruction.

1:23 **JST**

Matt 24:23 KJV	JST
Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here <i>is</i> Christ, or there; believe is not.	Behold those 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 <i>is</i> Christ, or there; believe him not.

This verse in JS-Matthew (v. 21) serves as the transition verse between the prophecies about the events at the time of Jesus and those of the last days.

1:27 **as the lightning cometh out of the east.** The JST changes “lightning” to “**the light of the morning,**” which makes great sense to a modern ear. It also emphasizes that the Second Coming will not be a secret event. As with the sunrise, everyone will see it and know what it is.

1:28 **there will the eagles be gathered.** “Eagles” should be ‘vultures,’ which can spot a carcass miles away. The example is how great will be the power of the gathering.

The coming of the Son of Man – Matt 24:29-31 (Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28)

1:29 The JST adds a substantial amount to this verse, including the notion that Jesus speaks “**for mine elect’s sake.**” Signs preceding the Second Coming include: wars; famines; pestilences (insect infestations); earthquakes; sin abounding; love waxing cold; the gospel preached in all the world; the abomination of desolation; sun and moon darkened; stars falling from heaven.

1:30 **the sign of the Son of man in heaven.** The nature of this sign is unknown but it will be something that everyone will see and will cause great mourning throughout the world. It also immediately precedes the actual coming of Jesus “with power and great glory.”

The meaning of the fig tree – Matt 24:32-35 (Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21:29-33)

1:32 **a parable of the fig tree.** Perhaps drawing on the imagery of Matthew 21:19-21, where Jesus cursed the fig tree, he likened knowing the signs of the last days to a fig tree in the spring that starts to show leaves, indicating that the warmer days of summer are ahead.

1:34 **this generation shall not pass.** There is much debate about the meaning of “generation” here. The Greek word *genea* has many meanings, including: that which has been begotten; a family; the successive members of a family; all people living at the same time; and an age (era). What seems to make sense is that the generation in which the signs are first seen will not pass away until they are complete, giving a sense of time to the signs.

The need to be watchful – Matt 24:36-44 (Mark 13:32; Luke 21:34-36)

1:36 **the sign of the Son of Man in heaven.** Joseph Smith indicated that there “will appear one grand sign of the Son of Man in heaven. But what will the world do? They will say it is a planet, a comet, etc. But the Son of Man will come as the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, which will be as the light of the morning coming out of the east” (HC 5:337).

1:37 **as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.** The point is not that the last days will be wicked like Noah’s day (though potentially true) but that the people of Noah’s day were not watching and heeding the signs of the coming destruction, given them by prophets. It was ‘business as usual’ right up to the time when the rains began.

1:43 **the goodman of the house . . . would have watched.** In New Testament times, police protection was unheard of except for the most wealthy. A man had to protect his home as best he could. If he knew a robber was coming, he would stay up all night with lamps burning, prepared. He would even call his neighbors and warn them to they could protect themselves or help him if the robber came.

The faithful servant – Matt 24:45-51 (Luke 12:41-46)

1:45 **faithful and wise servant.** To be a faithful and wise slave was to always do the master’s bidding and desires. Such slaves could be trusted and rewarded accordingly (vv. 46-47). But a cruel servant has lost the trust of his master and could even be killed by his master for his misdeeds (vv. 48-51).

Parables of the Last Days (Matt 25:1-46)

The parable of the ten maidens – Matt 25:1-13

The chapter division at Matthew 25 breaks up the single sermon that Jesus gave in 24 and 25. This chapter starts with a parable that continues the theme of preparation and watchfulness that began in Matthew 24:32. This

parable is referred to several times in the Doctrine & Covenants, including 33:17-18; 45:56-57; 63:54; 65:3; 88:92; 133:10-11, 19.

25:1 ***Then shall the kingdom of heaven.*** The JST modifies the opening of the parable, giving a more precise timeframe for its fulfillment: “**And then at that day, before the Son of man comes, the kingdom of heaven shall be likened...**”

25:1 ***lamps.*** These are *lampas* (torches) not the *luchnos* (lamps) of Matthew 5:15. *Lampas* were usually metal bowls with covers on top of poles in which were placed oil-soaked rags. They could burn for several hours, and even more if extra oil was brought along and added.

25:1 ***went forth to meet the bridegroom.*** To begin the wedding ceremony, the bridegroom left his parents’ home with a few friends and journeyed to the bride’s home where the marriage ceremony took place. Then the party traveled to the new family’s home for the wedding feast, picking up more guests along the way. These guests had to wait and watch for the group to pass by, which was often at night, requiring lamps and torches to light the way.

25:2 ***five of them were wise and five were foolish.*** “wise” (*phronimos*) is ‘intelligent’, ‘prudent’, even ‘sensible,’ while “foolish” (*mōros*) is ‘without learning, forethought, or wisdom.’

25:6 ***at midnight there was a cry made.*** This wedding was unusually long, for some reason, but finally at midnight, the wedding party is ready to go to the groom’s house for the feast.

25:8 ***Give us of your oil.*** The five foolish young women’s torches burned out and they had no extra oil, probably because they didn’t imagine that it would be several hours until the bridegroom came.

25:8 ***our lamps are gone out.*** In Greek, it says ‘going out’. They are not out of oil but nearly so and do not have enough to last through the celebration.

25:9 ***go ye rather to them that sell.*** No shops would be open at midnight, so they would have to go to the merchants’ homes and rouse them. Either the merchants would be asleep and unhappy or were also waiting for the wedding, and so would still be unhappy having to take care of these foolish girls and risk missing the feast.

[The parable of the talents – Matt 25:14-30 \(see Luke 19:11-27\)](#)

Though both this and the previous parable have a similar message, and both demonstrate the need for good works over a long time, this one focuses more on the ‘doing’ part of our watching and preparing, while the previous one (the Ten Virgins) trains our attention more to the concept of patient waiting, faith, and trust.

25:14 ***For the kingdom of heaven is as.*** The JST alters the opening of this parable as well: “**Now I will liken these things unto a parable. For it is like as a man travelling...**”

25:15 ***talents.*** This word in Greek is strictly a monetary unit—seventy or so pounds of silver (in Jesus’ day) worth about 6,000 *denarii*. The modern definition of the term—abilities or skills—ironically seems to have started in the Middle Ages from a misunderstanding of the word in this parable! The value of the talents given to the slaves would be millions of dollars today.

25:21 (and 23) ***Well done, good and faithful servant.*** The language is the same for both of the faithful servants, even though they had different amounts to work with, emphasizing that the reward is the same when we have done our best.

25:25 ***went and hid thy talent in the earth.*** The third servant did nothing with the large sum given him, and thus did not honor his patron, who had been amazingly generous with him, even at just one talent. Doing nothing dishonored the slave and the master, hence the harsh punishment.

[The parable of the sheep and goats – Matt 25:31-46](#)

The other parables up to this point were about preparation and patient waiting for the Second Coming. Now Jesus described the final result, the day of judgment, which all mankind will face after his Coming.

25:32 ***divideth his sheep from the goats***. Palestine was one of the few places in the world where these herds were mixed, so the need to divide them fits well with Jesus' audience.

25:34 ***Then shall the king say***. The JST adds at the beginning of this verse: "**And he shall sit upon his throne, and the twelve apostles with him. And** then shall the king say..." This ties back to an earlier JST change in 19:28.

25:35 ***ye took me in***. Or, 'you brought me into your home.'

25:40 ***one of the least of these my brethren***. The judgment "is based on the treatment of deprived outcasts," letting Jesus give a "last warning to his followers and to the church, demanding a very different religious standard both from that of those scribes and Pharisees criticized in chap. 23 and from that of a world that pays more attention to the rich and powerful" (Brown, *An Introduction*, 199).

25:44 ***when saw we thee an hungred***. Though the question is similar, the attitude of the faithless is exactly the opposite: they do not ask because they have been busy serving and didn't not see Jesus among those they served, but because they went about their busy lives and never saw him in need. If they had, they would have helped! But he taught them that not doing it to the least among them was exactly the same as not doing it to him. The punishment for neglecting the poor, the needy, the lonely, the downtrodden, and other helpless victims? "everlasting punishment."

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- ESV – English Standard Version
- JST – Joseph Smith Translation
- KJV – King James Version
- LXX – Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)
- NASB – New American Standard Bible
- NIV – New International Version
- NJB – New Jerusalem Bible
- NLT – New Living Translation
- NRSV – New Revised Standard Version

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