

**Tenure in Office of Church Presidents,  
Listed by Decreasing Length of Service**

Prophet	Tenure as President	Dates of Service as President
Brigham Young	29 years 8 months	27 Dec. 1847 to 29 Aug. 1877
Heber J. Grant	26 years 5 months	23 Nov. 1918 to 14 May 1945
David O. McKay	18 years 9 months	9 Apr. 1951 to 18 Jan. 1970
Joseph F. Smith	17 years 1 month	17 Oct. 1901 to 19 Nov. 1918
Joseph Smith	14 years 3 months	6 Apr. 1830 to 27 June 1844
Spencer W. Kimball	11 years 10 months	30 Dec. 1973 to 5 Nov. 1985
Wilford Woodruff	9 years 5 months	7 Apr. 1889 to 2 Sept. 1898
Exra Taft Benson	8 years 7 months	10 Nov. 1985 to 30 May 1994
Gordon B. Hinckley	7 years on 12 Mar. 2002	12 Mar. 1995 to present
John Taylor	6 years 9 months	10 Oct. 1880 to 25 July 1887
George Albert Smith	5 years 11 months	21 May 1945 to 4 Apr. 1951
Lorenzo Snow	3 years 1 month	13 Sept. 1898 to 10 Oct. 1901
Joseph Fielding Smith	2 years 5 months	23 Jan. 1970 to 2 July 1972
Harold B. Lee	1 year 6 months	7 July 1972 to 26 Dec. 1973
Howard W. Hunter	9 months	5 June 1994 to 3 Mar. 1995

**Notes**

1. See D&C 10:81–83; 21:1; 47:3; and 85:1 for instances when the Lord gave commandments associated with the keeping of historical records associated with the history of the Church.
2. The word “ordained” in the column headings for both tables 1 and 2 implies “ordained and set apart.” For some of the Presidents, the *Church Almanac* gives only the dates of “sustaining.” In the case of Joseph Smith, he was sustained as the first elder of the Church on 6 April 1830.

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**Prophecies and Promises of Joseph Smith—Matthew**

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Joseph Smith—Matthew was translated by the gift and power of God, not by mastery of ancient Greek. It is noteworthy that the Prophet emphasized Matthew 24 more than any other chapter in the New Testament, and he made more changes in its text than in any other. This revision contains 33 percent more material than Matthew 24 in the Bible. Significant changes, corrections, or additions made by the Prophet are highlighted and emphasized in this

commentary with *italics*. (See also D&C 45 for a parallel account of much of what appears in this chapter; D&C 29:9–27 and 88:87–97 provide additional details.)

Why were these instructions and prophecies given? To frighten us? No, they are given to the true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to *prepare* us, not to *scare* us. Panic is not part of the gospel. We have His assurance that if we are prepared, we have no need to fear (see D&C 38:30).

We are actually commanded to study and learn the signs of His coming: “He that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man . . . and he that watches not for me shall be cut off” (D&C 45:39, 44).

The following verse-by-verse commentary will help gospel teachers and students to understand and explain the glorious prophecies and promises of Joseph Smith—Matthew. Many of these prophecies have double meaning; they apply to both ancient and modern times—conditions in the world and among God’s people after His first coming and before His Second Coming.

Teachers may find it helpful to share a basic outline showing dates for each section, as follows:

Verses 1–11: A.D. 33–70

Verses 12–20: A.D. 70

Verses 21–55: The Restoration to the Second Coming

### **Verse 1**

The first half of this verse comes from Matthew 23:39, with the Prophet Joseph Smith’s addition. The second half of the verse, beginning with the words “in the clouds of heaven,” is new material. “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” refers to His coming in glory at the end of the world—in the clouds of heaven with all the holy ones (the Saints) accompanying him.

### **Verses 2–3**

Mark 13:1 notes that the disciples were impressed with the grandeur of the Jerusalem temple. Of all the building enterprises of Herod the Great, there was none greater than in the capital, Jerusalem. He rebuilt the former Hasmonean fortress and named it the Antonia Fortress in honor of his Roman friend Mark Antony. Herod also constructed his royal palace and towers, a theater, an amphitheater, a stadium, and monumental gates and staircases to the Temple Mount. However, his grandest edifice was the temple in Jerusalem.

The Temple of Herod was constructed beginning in 20 B.C. with the help of ten thousand workmen. One of Herod’s main purposes was to provide greater space for the hundreds of thousands of worshipers who came to the temple during the pilgrimage festivals and high holy days. One thousand priests who had been trained as masons and carpenters helped to build the holiest parts, and a thousand wagons transported materials. The temple proper was under construction for a year and a half, and the courtyards and porticoes for eight years (though embellishment of the outer courts actually continued for more than eighty years). It was said that whoever had not seen the Temple of Herod had never seen a beautiful building in his or her life. No other temple complex in the Greco-Roman world compared with its expansiveness and magnificence.

Jesus prophesied that not one stone of the temple would be left standing on another (see Mark 13:1–2; Luke 21:6). The magnificent temple, the house of the Lord, to which many Jerusalemites must have looked with a confident sense of inviolability, would be leveled to the ground and the Temple Mount plowed! Isaiah had once assured the Lord’s people that as birds protectively hovered over their young, so the Lord of Hosts would defend and preserve Jerusalem (see Isaiah 31:4–5). But with no allegiance and devotion to their God, the leaders of the Jews and many of their followers had abandoned the Hope of Israel. Without their faith and faithfulness, the Lord’s hand would not be stretched out to protect them or the holy temple. In this case, the temple

would be destroyed, as foreseen by Daniel the prophet: “[Then] shall Messiah be cut off . . . and the people of the prince [Latin, *princeps*, as the Roman general Titus] that shall come *shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*” (Daniel 9:26; emphasis added). The largest and grandest of the temples in Jerusalem would also be the shortest lived.<sup>xxiv</sup> 1

Jesus’ prophecy was that not one stone would be left standing on another “*upon this temple.*” The last phrase was added by the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Lord was not referring to the massive retaining walls around the Temple Mount—the eastern, southern, and western parts of which are still standing—but to the temple proper. That prophecy was literally fulfilled within a generation or so after His departure.

#### **Verse 4**

Upon leaving the Temple Mount, Jesus walked down and crossed the Kidron and then hiked up onto the Mount of Olives to a point overlooking the temple. The Apostles came to Him privately and asked three questions involving two different dispensations: [1] “Tell us *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 [3] of the end of the world?” Of all the question words—what, how, when, who, where, why, and so forth—the Savior’s Apostles, some of the greatest men on earth at the time, wanted first to know *when*. The Old Testament prophet Daniel also wanted to know *when* (see Daniel 12:6). Joseph Smith also wanted to know when (see D&C 130:14). That seems to be the first question we all have. Our natural human curiosity wants to know when pivotal events will occur, either because of our fear of being caught unprepared or because of a righteous desire to be ready ourselves and help others be ready.

A significant portion of their questions is presented here for the first time, added into the scriptural record by the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Tell us when shall these things be *which thou hast said concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews* [in A.D. 70]; and what is the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world, *or the destruction of the wicked; which is the end of the world?* [yet future].” The Apostles asked when, and Jesus responded with details about events.

Incidentally, in D&C 101, the Lord gave a parable concerning the redemption of Zion—one of the signs of the end of the world. In verse 59, the question is asked, “*When shall these things be?*” The answer given in the next verse is “When I will[!]” Then, verse 62 notes that “*after many days* all things were fulfilled.” The cross reference on that verse is D&C 105:37, which reveals the same message: all things pertaining to Zion will be accomplished “*after many days.*” Earlier, the Saints in Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, were advised by the Lord that they were honored in *laying the foundation* of the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand (see D&C 58:7). The Lord continued to explain that “the time has not yet come, *for many years*, for them to receive their inheritance in this land” (58:44; emphasis added).

#### **Verses 5–11**

These verses describe conditions in Jerusalem between the conclusion of the Savior’s ministry (A.D. 33) and the destruction of the city and the temple less than forty years later. The order of the verses in Matthew 24 was appropriately changed by the Prophet Joseph Smith in this inspired revision.

#### **Verses 5–7**

The disciples could expect to see false Christs or false Messiahs who would deceive many people. They could also expect to be afflicted, hated, and killed for the cause of Christ. For example, Peter and John were delivered up to the Jerusalem Sanhedrin. Paul was delivered up to Gallio, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. Stephen, James, Peter, Paul, and others were killed.

### **Verses 8–11**

In those days (as in modern times) many, even in the Church, would be offended, betray one another, hate one another, be deceived by false prophets, and, because of sin, lose their natural human affection. Violence, irreverence, coarseness, and crudity all cause abandonment of normal human sensitivities. Would anyone be safe and be saved during these treacherous times? Yes, *“he that remaineth steadfast and is not overcome”* (verse 11).

### **Verses 12–20**

These verses describe conditions and events in the fateful year of A.D. 70. “These things I have spoken unto you concerning the Jews” (verse 21) and their city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (see verse 18).

#### **Verse 12**

For many centuries, scholars and lay readers alike have wondered about the meaning of Daniel’s phrase “the abomination of desolation.” The Prophet Joseph Smith added a defining statement into the verse: the abomination of desolation refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. When the destruction comes upon Jerusalem, it is good to be found standing “in the holy place[s]”—that is, among the Saints, among the pure in heart, or in Zion (see D&C 45:32; 87:8; 101:22–23). Any additional meaning is left to the reader: “Whoso readeth let him understand.”

### **Verses 13–17**

How to survive the desolation in those days: stand in holy places and flee the city. According to Eusebius, the members of the Church of Jesus Christ fled Jerusalem before its destruction in the A.D. 70 and settled in Pella, a few miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>xxv2</sup> Survival instructions are urgent and decisive: don’t even go back home to retrieve some coveted items; leave, get out quickly! It would be particularly hard on women who are pregnant and breast-feeding their infants in those days. The Lord adds that they should pray their flight is not in winter nor on the Sabbath (verse 17).

### **Verses 18–21a**

Much in these verses is new material. The tribulation of the Jews and Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was the worst since the establishment of their kingdom (in the days of David, ca. 1000 B.C., or upon the death of Solomon, ca. 935 B.C.) and the worst that would ever be sent by God upon them. Other horrible, tragic tribulation would later come (such as the Holocaust), but it would not be sent “of God.”

What happened to the Jewish people in A.D. 70 was only the beginning of the sorrows that would come upon them (verse 19). When the Savior spoke that idea, it was prophecy; now, as we look back over the centuries, it is history.

Were the sufferings involved in that destruction in the first century A.D. not cut short, the Lord says that the Jewish people might be made extinct (verse 20); but because of the covenant (the promises made to them) He would step in and stop the destruction. The remnants must be scattered to the far-flung reaches of the world until the gathering at the end of days. **Verses**

### **21–55**

In the middle of verse 21 (“after the tribulation of those days”), the scene shifts to the latter days. Warnings are repeated: we can anticipate and expect to see false Christs and false prophets who will show great signs and wonders. The “miraculous” powers of Satan are quite visible in our modern world; spiritualistic phenomena are plentiful. “And he that seeketh signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation” (D&C 63:7). Not all supernatural manifestations are from God. “Ask of God . . . that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men; for some are of men, and others of devils” (46:7). Even the elect have to be careful so as

not to be deceived. Each must have his or her own light and knowledge and faith and testimony. And the remarkable promise is that “whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived” (verse 37).

#### **Verses 23–24**

Jesus taught all these things for the sake of His Saints, the elect, the covenant people. There will be many wars (unceasing since the American Civil War; D&C 87:1–2) and rumors of wars. These are no surprises, as He has explained clearly beforehand what is to happen: “See that ye be not troubled, for all I have told you must come to pass.”

#### **Verses 25–26**

If some were to claim that the Messiah is out in the desert or in the secret chambers, don’t believe them, for His coming will be open, conspicuous, and grand.

According to the King James Version, Matthew used *lightning* to describe the Second Coming of the Savior: “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (24:27). That analogy from nature—Jesus coming as lightning from the east—is a brilliant and powerful image but is meteorologically incorrect. In the Holy Land, lightning does not come from the east. Lightning, as with all storm clouds and precipitation, originates in the west from over the Mediterranean. The Prophet Joseph Smith (who, of course, had no training in Near Eastern weather patterns) corrected the prophecy to read: “For as the *light of the morning* cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, *and covereth the whole earth*, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:26). **Verse 27**

Jesus’ parable indicates that wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. The King James text leaves the reader to surmise what the lesson of this analogy might be, but Joseph Smith—Matthew includes a simple explanation: “So likewise shall mine elect be gathered from the four quarters of the earth.” The JST of Luke 17:37–38 gives additional insight: “Wheresoever the body is *gathered*; or, in other words, *whithersoever the saints are gathered*, thither will the eagles be gathered together; or, *thither will the remainder be gathered together*. *This he spake, signifying the gathering of his saints, and of angels descending and gathering the remainder unto them.*”

#### **Verses 28–29**

Foreshadowing of wars and rumors of wars is a repetition. So also is the Lord’s declaration that He is speaking for the elect’s sake. Natural disasters will also occur: famines, pestilences, and earthquakes (and we might add floods, hurricanes, tsunamis, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, and fires). These catastrophes seem to be increasing as we approach the Second Coming.

#### **Verses 30**

In the last days, the love of men shall wax cold—one of the most frightening of all conditions among those who live without God in the world. And why does this happen, this lack of natural human affection? “Because iniquity shall abound.” Sin breeds more sin; satisfying the lusts of the flesh foments abortion, abuse, and violence.

#### **Verse 31**

Again, in the last days, the gospel will be carried by the missionaries and members of the kingdom to all parts of the world. The end of the world, the destruction of the wicked, will not come until the witness has penetrated all nations. The Lord’s hand is clearly evidenced in the recognition of the Church in numerous nations and the opening of the way for the preaching of the message of salvation. Of approximately two hundred nations in the world, the Church is

currently represented in at least 156 nations, but there is still a very large portion of the earth's population without contact of any kind with the Lord's representatives. **Verse 32**

In the last days, the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, will be fulfilled. That is, as in the first century after Christ (verse 12), so in the last century before His Second Coming, Jerusalem will be besieged and suffer much destruction.

### **Verse 33**

Immediately after the tribulation of those days (such things as enumerated in the previous verses), the sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven. Many passages of scripture foreshadow these ominous irregularities in the celestial orbs (see Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10, 3:15; Revelation 6:12–13; D&C 29:14, 45:42, 88:87). What is the cause of this strange behavior of all the heavenly luminaries? The answer is found in D&C 133:49: "So great shall be the glory of his [that is, the Lord's] presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places." Section 133 of the Doctrine and Covenants details several effects of the Savior's coming in glory:

1. The sun, moon, and stars will hide or withhold their light, being insignificant compared to the brilliance of Him who is literally the light of the world (see D&C 88:7–13). Recall that Joseph Smith described Him and His Father as "above the brightness of the sun . . . whose brightness and glory defy all description" (Joseph Smith—History 1:16, 17; cf. verses 30–31).
2. Mountains will flow down at His presence (D&C 133:40, 44).
3. Waters on the earth will boil (verse 41).
4. All nations will tremble at His presence (verse 42).
5. Wicked people and things will be burned and destroyed by the brightness of His glory (D&C 5:19; Malachi 4:1–3; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Joseph Smith—History 1:37; D&C 29:9, 12; 64:24; 101:23–25; see further on Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:36).

John the Revelator wrote in his description of the celestial city of God, the New Jerusalem, "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Revelation 21:23).

### **Verse 34**

"This generation [of Jews; D&C 45:21], in which these things [all these signs of the Lord's coming] shall be shown forth, shall not pass away until all I have told you shall be fulfilled." The Jewish race ("this generation") will still be a distinct people at the Second Coming.

### **Verse 35**

Heaven (the atmosphere around our earth) and the earth itself will pass away—that is, be changed from a celestial to a terrestrial order (for the Millennium) and then from a terrestrial to a celestial order for eternity (see Revelation 21:1; D&C 29:23). The word of God, however, will not pass away; His words are unchanging and will all be fulfilled (see also D&C 1:38). "The word of our God shall stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8). "The word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Peter 1:25).

### **Verse 36**

The Savior repeats: After the tribulation of those days, and the powers of the heavens are shaken (see verse 33), then there will appear in heaven "the sign of the Son of Man." Exactly what this one grand sign consists of has been the topic of innumerable discussions and suppositions, but the verse itself as expanded by the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith defines and clarifies the subject of the sign: "They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." The one grand sign, Joseph Smith taught, is the Lord Himself.<sup>xxvi</sup>3 He

comes with power and great glory and with tens of thousands of His holy ones (Saints) accompanying Him (the subject of the Harry Anderson painting that hangs at the entrance of our visitors' center at Independence, Missouri—the Savior with arms extended and the hosts of angelic trumpeters on both sides). Who are they who accompany the Savior at His coming? They are the inheritors of His celestial kingdom: “These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven” (D&C 76:63).

The power and the glory of the Lord at His coming, when all the world will see and know that He has come, is described variously in superlative terms in the scriptures. His aura or dwelling cloud or *Shekhinah* is depicted as “glory,” “fire,” “like lightning,” “light,” “exquisite whiteness,” “brightness,” “brilliance,” and “radiance.”<sup>xxvii</sup>4 The fire, or glory, of the Lord will remove all telestial people and things from this sphere. The “fire-insurance” policy that Church members may contract and honor is the payment of tithing: “Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day . . . for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming . . . for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord” (D&C 64:23–24). Another question is appropriate: To *where* is the Lord coming in His glory? “The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple” (Malachi 3:1; 3 Nephi 24:1). Here is another unequivocal sign of the Lord’s coming—He will come to His temple (see also D&C 36:8; 42:36; 133:2). But what temple? He will come to the house of the Lord in the New Jerusalem and in the Old Jerusalem.

This great prophecy [Isaiah 2:2–4], as is often the case, is subject to the law of multiple fulfillment. (1) In Salt Lake City and other mountain locations temples, in the full and true sense of the word, have been erected, and representatives of all nations are flowing unto them to learn of God and His ways. (2) But the day is yet future when the Lord’s house is to be built on the “Mount Zion” which is “the city of New Jerusalem” in Jackson County, Missouri. (D&C 84:2–4.) Mount Zion, itself, will be the mountain of the Lord’s house in the day when that glorious temple is erected. (3) When the Jews flee unto Jerusalem, it will be “unto the mountains of the Lord’s house” (D&C 133:13), for a holy temple is to be built there also as part of the work of the great era of restoration (Ezekiel 34:24–28.)<sup>xxviii</sup>5

### **Verse 37**

If we don’t want to be caught up in the deceptions of the world, the Lord counsels us to treasure up His word. In fact, He puts it in the form of a promise: “Whoso treasureth up [not just reads, or even studies, but *treasures up*] my word, shall not be deceived.” If we are not caught up in the deceptions of the world, we may be caught up to meet the Lord in glory (see verses 44–45).

### **Verses 38–39**

We can and should become acquainted with the signs of the Lord’s Second Coming and be prepared for all these events and phenomena. We can and should know the general timing of His coming. There are three simple illustrations Jesus gave to enable us to judge the proximity of His arrival: (1) the fig tree, (2) a thief in the night, and (3) a woman in travail.

The Holy Land where Jesus lived has only two seasons: the hot, dry season (summer) and the cold, wet season (winter). The New Testament mentions only these two seasons. During late winter (usually in March), the fig tree issues its first tiny leaves, signaling the beginning of the warm season. “Now learn a parable of the fig-tree—When its branches are yet tender, and it

begins to put forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh at hand; so likewise, mine elect, when they shall see all these things, they shall know that he is near, even at the doors.”

Jesus also made the curious parallel between His return to earth and the coming of a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2; D&C 45:19; 106:4–5). “If the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and . . . been ready” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:47).

A homeowner who knows exactly when a thief is going to attempt to break into his or her home will be up and ready. In the same fashion, if Jesus had told us exactly when He is coming, we would be up and ready. He does not want us to be prepared for a certain date; He wants us to be ready always.

Jesus also made a parallel between His return to earth and a woman in travail (1 Thessalonians 5:3; D&C 136:35). Even though doctors can give a fairly accurate forecast of when a baby is due, even marking a certain date on the calendar, there is no way to know exactly what day or hour the babe will come. When a woman is about to deliver, the physical signs of the imminent arrival are evident. So a true disciple of Jesus will know and recognize the signs of His imminent coming.

#### **Verse 40**

No one knows the day nor the hour of Jesus’ coming again to the earth, not even the angels of God in heaven. Only the Father and the Son know when the time will be. Some have noticed the words “neither the Son” in Mark 13:32, but that phrase was deleted in the Joseph Smith Translation. Of course the Son knows when He is returning to the earth; “he knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows it” (2 Nephi 9:20; see also Mormon 8:17; Moroni 7:22; D&C 38:2; 130:7; Abraham 2:8).

There are many over the ages, especially in modern times, who have calculated and even published a date for the Second Coming—only to reap disappointment and lose faith. Our natural propensity to want to know “when” is perilous and fruitless, given the explicit declaration of the Lord Himself that no man would know that particular detail of the plan (or if it were sometime revealed to a prophet, He would seal it up and not reveal it to others). The Jews as a people have been disillusioned numerous times over the centuries by those who claimed to know the coming of the Messiah, to the point that one old sage published a terse warning to all who think they know: “May the bones of those who calculate the end rot.”<sup>xxxix</sup>6 Of the time of the Savior’s Second Coming, President Boyd K. Packer wrote:

Teenagers . . . sometimes think, “What’s the use? The world will soon be blown all apart and come to an end.” That feeling comes from fear, not from faith. No one knows the hour or the day (see D&C 49:7), but the end cannot come until all of the purposes of the Lord are fulfilled. Everything that I have learned from the revelations and from life convinces me that there is time and to spare for you to carefully prepare for a long life.

One day you will cope with teenage children of your own. That will serve you right. Later, you will spoil your grandchildren, and they in turn spoil theirs. If an earlier end should happen to come to one, that is more reason to do things right.<sup>xxxvii</sup>7

How grateful we are to have living prophets! President Gordon B. Hinckley, in the October 2001 general conference of the Church, said the following: “I do not wish to sound negative, but I wish to remind you of the warnings of scripture and the teachings of the prophets which we have had constantly before us. . . . I cannot dismiss from my mind the grim warnings of the Lord as set



forth in the 24th chapter of Matthew. . . . Now, I do not wish to be an alarmist. I do not wish to be a prophet of doom. I am optimistic. I do not believe the time is here when an all-consuming calamity will overtake us. I earnestly pray that it may not. There is so much of the Lord's work yet to be done. We, and our children after us, must do it."<sup>xxxix</sup>

#### **Verses 41–43**

The comparison with the last days of Noah is most appropriate—gross wickedness before the world is cleansed—back then by water (the earth's baptism by water) and at the Second Coming by fire (the earth's "confirmation" by fire, which fire is a symbol of the Holy Ghost). An ability to see the signs of the times will continue until the people are caught as it were—suddenly—with catastrophic destruction.

Of the conditions at His Second Coming, Jesus said: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be also at the coming of the Son of Man." And how was that? "The earth was corrupt before God, and it was *filled with violence*. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is *filled with violence*, and behold I will destroy all flesh from off the earth" (Moses 8:29–30; emphasis added). Does that mean it will be impossible for us to live a good, wholesome life just before the Second Coming? We do not know how difficult life will be for the Saints during those years, but we do know that it will be possible to remain faithful. Moses 8:27 says, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; for Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and he walked with God, as did also his three sons."

#### **Verses 44–45**

At the Lord's Second Coming, there will be a selective destruction—two will be working in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and the other left. But which is preferred—to be taken from the earth or to be left on the earth? Would it be preferable to remain on the earth to be with the Savior and not taken away and destroyed? Or would it be preferable to be taken up to meet Him in His glory and not remain on the earth to be consumed in the inevitable mass destruction? Fortunately, there is a clear and specific answer to the query about which situation is preferred. Doctrine & Covenants 88:96 indicates that "the Saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be caught up to meet him."

#### **Verses 46, 48**

Again, the divine injunction and warning is given to watch and be ready at all times because we do not know the hour of His coming. In fact, it appears that He will come when we least expect Him.

#### **Verses 49–50**

Who are the servants who are firm and steadfast? They are the chosen servants who are feeding the flock and giving meat to the sheep of the Good Shepherd. Those whom He finds valiantly fulfilling their callings to feed His sheep He will make rulers over all His goods; all that the Father has shall be theirs. "Therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto [them]" (D&C 84:38; see also Luke 12:44; 15:31; Romans 8:32; Revelation 21:7; D&C 50:27; 76:55, 59).

#### **Verses 51–54**

Many who grew up in the latter half of the twentieth century grew up thinking that the Savior's coming in glory would usher in the seventh thousand-year period of this world's temporal existence—the great Millennium. But a careful examination of Revelation 8 and 9 (see the chapter headings) and D&C 77:12–13 shows that the seventh seal, the seventh thousand-year period, will open and plagues will be poured out, signs fulfilled, temples built, a great final war

fought, and so on. All these things “are to be accomplished *after* the opening of the seventh seal, *before* the coming of Christ” (D&C 77:13A; emphasis added).

The timing of the Second Coming appears to be as the servant in verse 51 clearly hints: “My lord delayeth his coming.” Matthew 25:5 notes that “the bridegroom tarried”; and D&C 45:26 says “Christ delayeth his coming.” These combined passages teach that the Savior will not come until some time into the seventh thousand-year period, “in an hour that [we are] not aware of” (verse 53). Thus, the beginning of the seventh thousand years and the actual coming of the Lord are not the same occasion. The millennial era of peace, tranquillity, righteousness, and terrestrial (or transfigured, renewed, paradisiacal) glory will definitely commence when He appears and reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

### **Verse 55**

This is a new verse added by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and it includes a prophecy of Moses. The end of the wicked—that is, those who will be cut off from among the people—is the end of the world, this telestial world (refer back to verse 4). The end of the earth itself is a different matter. The earth will be changed at the Lord’s coming into a terrestrial sphere. Then, at the end of the Millennium, it will be changed again, this time into a celestial sphere (refer to verse 35).

### **A Glorious Day**

The Savior gave His disciples the prophecies and promises recorded in Joseph Smith—Matthew to help us be prepared temporally and spiritually for the great day of His return. For those who have paid the price to be ready, it will be a glorious and welcome day. We will be able to see and participate in that world-changing occasion and rejoice in it. **Notes**

1. Summarized from David B. Galbraith, D. Kelly Ogden, and Andrew C. Skinner, *Jerusalem: The Eternal City* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 154, 186–88.
2. *Jerusalem: The Eternal City*, 224.
3. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 287.
4. For references see “Light, Fire, and Clouds with Celestial Beings” in D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, *New Testament Apostles Testify of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 383–86.
5. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 518.
6. Talmud, Sanhedrin 97b.
7. Boyd K. Packer, “To Young Women and Men,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 59.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Times in Which We Live,” *Ensign*, November 2001, 73–74.