

May 27-June 2, 2019

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1; Matthew 25; Mark 12–13; Luke 21; “The Son of Man Shall Come”

Summary: *Jesus foretells the impending destruction of Jerusalem—He also discourses on the Second Coming of the Son of Man, and the destruction of the wicked.*

Jesus gives the parables of the ten virgins, the talents, and the sheep and the goats.

Jesus gives the parable of the wicked husbandmen—He speaks of paying taxes, celestial marriage, the two great commandments, the divine sonship of Christ, and the widow’s mites.

Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem—He tells of the signs to precede His Second Coming and gives the parable of the fig tree.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How is anointing used in life and death?

The considerable amount of supplemental information about burial in the previous lessons carries over to this lesson as well. Anointing is done as one of the respectful ways of preparing a body for burial. Perhaps Jesus, knowing that Mary of Bethany would not have the chance to prepare His body in death as she and other women surely would have desired to do, appreciated her anointing Him while He was still alive. “Anointing with oil is a very ancient custom. It was done for both practical and symbolic reasons. The practical use was cosmetic, to soften and protect the skin, as well as medicinal, to heal various afflictions. Anointing also figured in the coronation of the king, in the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests, and in the purification of a person suffering from leprosy. These anointings were not for practical purposes but of symbolic value; they symbolized the new rank and power given to the anointed person and they evoked God’s blessing on him.” “The anointing oil was holy and made according to a special formula. It could be used for no purposes other than those outlined above. In the case of leprosy, the oil used was not holy. According to the Talmud, the anointing oil was compounded only once in history --- by Moses, who made enough to last for the whole period from the anointing of Aaron until the residue was hidden away by King Josiah. After that time no anointing took place.” “In the case of kings, the whole head was anointed, i.e., covered with the oil, whereas the priests had only a mark made on the head with the oil. For King David and his descendants the oil was poured out of a horn; for King Saul it was from a phial since “his kingdom was not a lasting one.” The kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were not anointed with oil but with balsam.” “The word messiah literally means “the anointed one.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) Mary’s affectionate service in anointing Jesus could have been her way of testifying of His Messiahship.

How can anointing change us?

“Anointing with oil was symbolic of change in a person’s status. Thus, for example, Aaron was anointed with oil before becoming a priest. Kings were anointed before taking the throne and even brides were anointed with oil before marriage. A person cured of leprosy had to go through a whole purification ritual involving the sprinkling and anointing with oil.”

“Aaron and his sons were anointed in "holy anointing oil" prepared in the wilderness. Samuel anointed Saul and David with this special oil, and Zadok anointed Solomon. Oil saturated with perfume for ordinary use was called "apothecary's oil" or "precious oil." It was mainly used by women, but men did scent their beards with it. Candidates for Ahasuerus' favors were treated "six months with oil of myrrh and six months with sweet odors and with other ointments of the women" (**Esther 2:12**).” “Josiah was far-sighted. Despite his successes, he heeded Hulda's prophecy and hid the Ark of the Covenant so that it should not be captured when Jerusalem fell. He also hid the anointing oil, prepared in the wilderness by Moses.” “The primary feature of the coronation was the anointing of the king's head with oil by a priest or prophet, the sign of the divine covenant --- that is, he had been chosen as God's anointed.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How was the Triumphal Entry viewed by the locals?

The triumphal entry of Jesus was indeed an expression of hope, as many people wanted Him to relieve them of the cruelty of the Romans and the corruption of the Jewish priests. Five days before the Passover, Jesus sent His disciples to the neighboring village of Bethphage to acquire a donkey. They returned with two animals, a donkey and its colt. Jesus chose to ride the colt. The sight of a large man riding a small donkey is startling enough. However, the gesture must have called up historical images of honored kings riding into Jerusalem on lowly donkeys that had never before been ridden. To some, this may have implied that Jesus was their King. The people, hearing that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, then took branches of palm trees, a well-known symbol of Jewish independence, and cried as, “. . . they heard that Jesus was coming . . . Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (**John 12:12-13**)

How does Palm Sunday connect with the Passover that year?

His triumphal entry on a donkey's colt down the Mount of Olives and into the Gate Beautiful raised the spirits of the Jews. They wanted a Messiah, and they praised this extraordinary man of miracles. Simultaneously, priests were angered and decided to set in motion a plan to have Jesus executed. The triumphal entry has been called Palm Sunday; and again, it was five days before the Passover that year. (The beginning and ending days of Passover are two of the ten extra Sabbaths each year – called “High Days”). Riding a donkey's colt was one of the traditions ancient kings of Israel did to symbolize a greater king still to come. Other kings throughout the world ride in lavish vehicles weighted with gold and jewels. “And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.” (**John 12:14-15**) “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” (**Zechariah 9:9**) Jewish tradition also indicates a connection between a Messiah and riding a donkey.

What significance are the messianic expectations?

“According to the Talmud, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph. Folklore has it that he will arrive riding a donkey, although some sources have him arriving triumphantly riding the clouds. A widespread belief was that the Messiah will be born on the 9th of Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the First and Second Temples.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) With the inference of a Joseph Messiah preceding a David Messiah, please consider the parable Jesus related in (**Matthew 21:33-39; 42-44**). Paraphrasing, Jesus is saying that the

Kingdom will be taken from the “self-appointed priests in Judah” and will be given to another nation that will bring forth fruits. Turning the clock back to Jacob’s time, we see that the spiritual leadership of Israel was the birthright of Joseph, son of Jacob, yet his brothers schemed to replace him. “And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words . . . And his brethren envied him . . .” (**Genesis 37:8-11**) The kingdom has been restored with Joseph as the spiritual leader. “The personal visitation of the Father and the Son, choosing Joseph to be the leader of the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, marked the beginning of this work, and this was supplemented by the visitation of angels and other holy messengers, conferring upon Joseph the powers of the Priesthood, the authority to act in the name of God--to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ by divine authority to mankind, and by divine direction to organize and establish the true Church of Christ in the latter days.” (**Heber J. Grant, Gospel Standards, Pg. 16**)

How rapidly are the fruits being gathered?

When President Heber J. Grant was the living prophet, Latter-day Saint membership amounted to about 500,000 souls with the world population at about 2,500,000,000. “Church membership will continue to represent a small part of the world population into the future. While sociologist Rodney Stark predicted that the Church would become a “major world religion” by the middle of the twenty-first century, we predict that Church membership at an optimum realistic growth rate will remain below 1 percent of the world’s population through 2050. This is consistent with the Book of Mormon scripture where Nephi prophesied in about 600 BC that the Church would remain proportionally small to the world population before the Second Coming of Christ but would be represented in all nations (**see 1 Nephi 14:12**). This prophecy is more accurate than any suppositions that the Church is becoming the largest world religion at this time.” (<https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/re-16-no-1-2015/growth-church-jesus-christ-latter-day-saints-global-context>)

What does the unique feature of fig trees in Israel teach us?

In the “Parable of the Fig Tree” briefly referred to in (**Matthew 24:32**), (**Mark 13:28**), (**Luke 13:6; 21:29**) and the (**Doctrine & Covenants 35:16**), consideration should be given to the growth of fig trees. In Israel, first, the fruit appears, then the leaves grow as the tree becomes full, followed by a second fruit. If the first fruit fails (as the gospel accounts tells us), there could not be a second fruit (a second coming)! The modern portion of the parable includes, first, the restoration, then the growth of the Church, followed by the second coming of the Messiah. A pattern emerges as we see ancient Joseph rejected, Israel scattered, and the Messiah rejected. That rejection does not interfere with the eternal atonement He gave all mankind in the Meridian of Times. Then, a modern Joseph receives the restoration; the Lord’s people gather and grow in preparation for the Messiah’s return. The scattering and subsequent gathering of Judah’s scattered remnants parallels the scattering and gathering of Joseph.

What insights can we have about the “Gathering of Israel?”

“Ever since the time of the first Babylonian exile over 2,000 years ago, Jews of the world have yearned for the return to Zion. This theme is reflected in the daily prayers, literature, and song of the Jewish people.” “. . . the dream of re-establishing a Jewish homeland which would draw all of world Jewry to its midst served as a unifying force for the Jews of the Diaspora.” “This dream began to take on practical form during the last quarter of the 19th century, as Jews set about rebuilding Israel to serve as a refuge for victims of the pogroms

and for other Jews the world over.” “Zionism in its modern sense began in 1897, when Theodor Herzl founded the World Zionist Organization. Herzl's objective was to "secure for the Jewish people a publicly recognized, legally secured home in Palestine." His ambitious efforts captured the imagination of his fellow Jews and soon the initial settlers were joined by new groups of Zionists as the Second Aliyah (1904) and continuous waves of immigrants after that made their way to Israel. These groups established agricultural settlements all over the country, revived the Hebrew language, and created their own Watchman Society to guard their members from Arab attack. In 1909, on land purchased by the Jewish National Fund, the first kibbutz, Deganyah, was established. By 1914, the *yishuv*, as the Jewish community was called, numbered some 85,000.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How does a physical gathering relate to the spiritual gathering?

“On May 14, 1948 (the fifth of Iyar according to the Jewish calendar) at a special meeting of an elected council, David Ben-Gurion read out the Declaration of Independence, establishing the State of Israel.” “As emigration restrictions in the former Soviet Union were lifted and then with its dissolution, nearly 500,000 immigrants had arrived from the Soviet Union in Israel by the mid 1990s. In the end of 1993, 76,800 new immigrants arrived in Israel, the vast majority, 66,000 were from the former Soviet Union. In the same year, virtually all of the Beta Israel from Ethiopia, approximately 55,000 had also emigrated to Israel.” “As of (1999), the total population in Israel (excluding the administered areas acquired as a result of the Six-Day War) (is nearing 6,000,000) consisting of citizens from almost every religion, geographical area and ethnicity in the world. In this decade, Israel absorbed approximately (1,000,000) immigrants, primarily from the former Soviet Union and its successor states - increasing the population by (about 20%). Israel's population, unlike that of the Diaspora, has a high rate of natural increase (average 2.9 children, and among orthodox Jews it is much higher). It is expected that in the coming decade Israel will overtake the United States as the world's largest Jewish community. Israel is also fast becoming one of the most densely populated countries in the world, particularly in its central coastal area.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) The 2019 statistics reveal that there are about 7 million Jews in Israel, the land of Judah, about 16-million throughout the world. That is parallel to the world-wide membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at about 16-million. About 7-million live in the United State of America, the land of Joseph. Both peoples each represent about ¼ of 1-percent of the world's population. Both people's gifts to humanity are extra-ordinary.

How do we relate to governmental authority?

In a juxtaposition of time, other patterns remain consistent. Jesus' teaching “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's,” is a repeat of former and later statements of belief. Elisha's continued purpose was to be a servant of God; he even refused payment from Syria's highest ranking officer in the Land of Israel. The anomaly is that the children of Israel strongly objected to the Syrian occupying forces. The prophet was probably teaching the same principle that Jesus taught and that has been revealed again in our day. “Then (Jesus) saith he unto them, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. (Matthew 22:21) “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” (Articles of Faith 12)

How did Jesus refer to an Old Testament account about an “enemy?” The faithful Israelite woman, serving in Naaman's household, was a believer and prompted the

occupying Syrian officer to come to the prophet to be blessed. Elisha sent a message to do something simple--bathe in the Jordan River. When Naaman finally swallowed his pride he was blessed! Imagine--the enemy was blessed! Jesus would later say, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (**Matthew 5:44**) We don't know for sure if that resulted in Naaman's conversion, and it doesn't really matter. The blessing was unconditional. The lesson for the unbelieving Israelites was repeated by the Savior as he said: "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of (Elisha) the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." (**Luke 4:27**) Within these thoughts is the cure for hypocrisy. We must love everyone, even those who stray, who believe, worship, dress or speak differently than we do. The Lord loves us ALL, and we are to do the same.