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# “What Is the Sign of Thy Coming?”

Lesson  
**21**  
Summary

*Joseph Smith Mathew (Matthew 24)*

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**Scripture Summary:** *Jesus foretells the doom of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple—Great calamities shall precede His Second Coming—He gives the parable of the fig tree.*

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**Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:** **What is the Parable of the Fig Tree?** The repeated destruction and building of Jerusalem, as well as the scattering and gathering of Israel is a pattern of the “signs of the times.” The scattering is always followed by a gathering. The imagery of “first figs” and “second figs” in Jeremiah 24:1-10 is also referred to as the parable of the fig tree in Matthew 24:32, Mark 13:28 and in the Doctrine and Covenants 35:16.

**First Fruit and the Second Fruit:** In Israel, the first figs appear BEFORE the leaves do. The leaves then grow abundantly and later, the second figs appear. The first fruit is good, but the second fruit is better. There may be a parallel in the parable of the fig tree when the first fruit is like the “wheat and tares” that are allowed to grow together. But in the second fruit, when the Lord comes, judgement will be passed and the tares removed. Sins and hurt will be exposed and a way provided so that they can be removed and the people become redeemed.

**First Scattering of Israel:** “Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon who, in 586 B.C.E., destroyed the first Temple in Jerusalem and exiled the majority of the Jewish population of Judea. He reigned from 605 to 562 B.C.E., a period in which Babylon and Egypt were the two great powers of the civilized world, and during most of that time he was engaged in almost continuous battle with Egypt over the territories of Syria, Palestine and the surrounding region. In 597 he captured Jerusalem for the first time, deposed the Judean king, Jehoiachin, and appointed in his place a king of his own choice, Zedekiah. Several years later, while he was engaged in battle in the far east, Zedekiah together with the king of Syria revolted against his rule, but he returned in 588 and laid siege to Jerusalem. In 586, he captured the city, and on Tish'ah be-Av he had the Temple destroyed, carried off a large part of the population into captivity and put Zedekiah and other Judean notables to death. Daniel and the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel were eyewitnesses to all these events and the biblical books bearing their names testify to the political and spiritual crises which confronted Judea during this period. According to the Book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar suffered greatly for destroying the Temple. He was beset by dreams which he could not understand. One of them, a vision of a magnificent tree cut down in its prime was interpreted by Daniel for the king as a personal warning of many years of madness that were about to come upon him, during which time he would eat grass and live like an animal. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Second Scattering of Israel:** In New Testament history, after the great atonement by the Lord Jesus, similar destruction and scattering were experienced, beginning with Jerusalem.

“Upon Herod's death, Jerusalem was ruled by a series of Roman procurators. (One of these, Pontius Pilate (26--36 C.E.) was responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth in Jerusalem.) But the misrule of these administrators provoked the outbreak of yet another Jewish revolt, which soon became a full-scale war. In 70 C.E. Titus and his Roman legions laid siege to the city and then stormed its weakened defenders. The city was burned, its inhabitants massacred and the Temple destroyed. Of the once-glorious city, only the three towers of Herod's palace and the western wall of the Temple Mount remained intact.” “According to Jewish sources, the Romans razed Jerusalem to the ground and plowed the site over to prevent further settlement. Even so, some Jews managed to return. When the emperor Hadrian tried to establish a Roman colony there, the second Jewish-Roman war broke out with Bar Kokhba leading the Jewish rebels. They were defeated by Hadrian who subsequently decreed that no circumcised person should be allowed into Jerusalem under pain of death.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Savior prophesied of the destruction of the temple, a sign of another scattering of Israel. “And Jesus said unto them . . . there shall not be left here, upon this temple, one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.” “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted . . . let them who are in Judea flee . . . and not return to take anything out of his house.” (*Joseph Smith - Matthew 1*)

**First Part of the Restoration – First Fruit:** Yet in the subsequent gathering, an accountability of their sins becomes a blessing when the Redeemer comes and true repentance occurs. “And again, this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all the nations, and then shall the end come, or the destruction of the wicked . . .” “And, as I said before, after the tribulation of those days, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken, then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory;” “And whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived, for the Son of Man shall come, and he shall send his angels before him with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together the remainder of his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (*Joseph Smith - Matthew 1*)

**The “Leaves” Before the Second Fruit:** The latter-day restoration of the gospel to “Joseph” and the return of the keys of the gathering of Israel which includes both “Joseph and Judah,” represent the first fruit that precedes the growth of leaves in the parable of the fig tree. A remarkable gathering has started. This gathering is reflected in the growth of the Latter-day Saint population as well as the State of Israel, which in the parable of the fig tree is the growth of leaves. This gathering is in preparation for the coming of the Redeemer, which in the fig tree parable is the second fruit.

“Between 1948 and 1951 almost 700,000 Jews migrated to Israel . . . From 1955 to 1957 two-thirds of the almost 250,000 migrant Jews went to Israel (from Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Poland and Hungary). Half of a further 450,000 migrant Jews went to Israel between 1961 and 1964. (Virtually all Jews left Algeria for France during 1961--62). In the 1980s in two campaigns, Operation Moses and Operation Solomon, virtually the entire Jewish community of Ethiopia was airlifted to Israel. From the area of the former Soviet Union, some 400,000 Jews went to Israel in 1989/91, and many others went elsewhere in the West. In 1992/93 most of the remnant of the Jews in Yemen left the country, many eventually reaching Israel.” “An undoubted change has occurred in the motive for migration since the 1880s. From then on the main motive was distress. Migrations will continue as new world trouble spots develop.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Within the last ten years, Israel has experienced a growth of a million immigrants, mostly from Russian-speaking countries. That growth would be equivalent to the U.S.A. receiving more than forty million new citizens.

The world-wide Latter-day Saint growth to a sum of more than eleven million members has brought a ratio of “Joseph” and the world population to one Latter-day Saint for every six hundred people.

**The Second Fruit – the Second Coming:** The leaves are abundant; it is almost time for His arrival, He is coming!

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament and Book of Mormon Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *FREE* at [www.HolyLandsRevealed.com](http://www.HolyLandsRevealed.com). (Just click “LDS SUPPLEMENTS”)

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