

Mark 13:21-23 – Deceivers inside and outside the Church

TSK, Henry, GreekLexicon, Clarke, Calvin, DeMar, Robertson, FFG, Barnes, JFB, Gill, Poole, Rienecker, Trapp, Clarke, Handfuls, Abbot, Gaebelein Beloved in the Lord: The destruction of Jerusalem was certain! God would destroy it because the Jews **killed his prophets** from Abel to Zechariah, they **prevented others from coming into his kingdom, they tried to kill the Son of God** and eventually did, they would **severely persecute Christians** after Jesus returned to heaven, and **they would not repent**.

In order to save his people when Jerusalem would be destroyed, the Lord told them to **leave when they saw the abomination which causes desolation** coming. The abomination which causes desolation was the idolatrous things the Romans would set up in the temple.

But there was another sign that would clearly mark the impending destruction of the Jews: **Many, many would claim to be Christ and would try to lure Christians to follow them**. This is what you will hear about today.

Our headings are:

Do not believe the deceivers

Do not believe the deceivers even if they do wonders

Do not believe the deceivers for I am giving you advance warning

Our goals are: That you will learn to **be on guard against deceivers** who pretend to speak God's Words and take you away from following the Lord, that **you will rebuke them**, and that **you will faithfully do God's work**.

Do Not Believe the Deceivers

21 "Then if anyone says to you, '**Look, here is the Christ!**' or, 'Look, He is there!' **do not believe it**.

1. Jesus declared that many would give false reports to Christians about Christ's presence in order to try to deceive them.

Satan knew that Christians loved Christ and would want to be where he was. And it would certainly be true that they would want to go to a place of safety if they were facing persecution. They would want to be with their own people, a place of comfort! **And these reports would not have been too difficult to believe as Jesus often went to various quiet places to pray**. **But Jesus went to heaven**...and when he finally returns, the whole world would see him. He won't be hiding!

2. Were there really reports of people trying to fool Christians before the destruction of Jerusalem?

Yes, there were many who tried to deceive Christians. The Scriptures are always correct. The Bible confirmed this many times.

2Corinthians 11:13 For such are **false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ**. 14 And no wonder! **For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light**.

Acts 20:29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to **draw away the disciples after themselves**.

Paul made a strong warning to the Ephesians of impending deception. Paul was not referring to the end of the world as the church in Ephesus was destroyed a long time ago.

3. There were historical records of men claiming to be Christ, trying to draw Christians away.

a. Historian Josephus wrote concerning this time: "A false prophet was the reason for [the Jews'] destruction. He made a public proclamation in the city **that God commanded them to get upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance**. Now, there was then **a great number of false prophets** bribed by the tyrants to [tell the people], that they should wait for deliverance from God."

b. Jerome quote Simon Magus as saying: "**I am the Word of God, I am the Comforter, I am Almighty, I am all there is of God...**" Irenaeus confirmed this...and added that **Simon claimed to be the creator of angels**.

c. Dositheus, according to historian Alexander Keith, pretended that he was the lawgiver prophesied by Moses.

4. In another account, Luke warned Christians not to go after these false teachers.

Luke 17:23 "And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them."

5. Lessons:

a. There are many false teachers who tell people to stick with them in their false churches. But when you see false teaching dominating the church, and you realize that the church is in danger, and you can't fix the problem, flee those churches and those pastors. Example: We learned of a church this past week which **focuses on the gay agenda**, which **built a brewery with the church**, and which wants to **give most of its money to Planned Parenthood** who aborts hundreds of thousands of babies each year. Other and pastors might not be so outrageous, but there are just as dangerous, **especially if they tell you that the Gospel is to imitate Christ**. Those parishioners are just as lost as those who go to a so-called "gay" church.

b. Be careful that you don't love famous preachers more than you love Jesus. This could pull you away from Jesus.

c. Christ is in heaven ruling in his humanity, but he is everywhere present on earth in his Divinity. Go to him anytime you want—at home, in church, at Walmart, or while driving on the road. You don't have to go looking for him.

Do not Believe the Deceivers even if they do wonders

22 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and **show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.**

1. Some false messiahs and false prophets would be armed with miracles to try to deceive believers into following them.

Believers knew that miracles were given to confirm the truth of what Jesus said. And they knew that these false prophets were speaking contrary to what Jesus said. But **believers, because of their suffering, would be tempted to follow the false prophets** who were doing miracles. Suffering caused them to make bad decisions. (Suffering in the home can cause girls to run off and marry someone bad!)

2. Scriptures confirmed that men would claim to be christs and attempt to do miracles to lure Christians from Jesus.

And these things would take place before the temple was destroyed...quite soon.

1Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that **in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,** 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

It would not be logical or beneficial to give people living in Ephesus a warning about people who would live 2000 years later. ("Latter times" began on Pentecost. Acts 2.)

2Timothy 3:13 **But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse,** deceiving and being deceived.

14 **But you must continue in the things which you have learned** and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them...

Hear Paul's warning to his spiritual son! Would this make sense to give this type of warning if this even were referring to something that would happen some 2000 years later?

1John 2:18 Little children, **it is the last hour;** and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

Apostle John warned of the presence of false prophets and false Christ in his life time – which was the last hour! Surely the "last hour" could not refer to 2000 years later.

1John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many **false prophets have gone out into the world.**

If these false prophets were going to come 2000 years later, why would John want to warn the people of his day?

2Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, **even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies,** even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways...

Apostle Peter also confirmed this would happen to people of his time!

3. Look at specific examples of people who claimed to be christs and prophets and tried to prove it by miracles.

Bar-Jesus. When Paul traveled through Salamis they were already people claiming to be Messiah and doing fake miracles.

"Bar-Jesus" means "son of Jesus," but he was not son of the Lord.

Acts 13:6 Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, **they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus,**

Simon. He was a pretender.

Acts 8:9 But there was a certain man called Simon, who **previously practiced sorcery in** the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, 10 **to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest,** saying, "This man is the great power of God."

Theudas. Many people followed Theudas as if he were a deliverer. He pretended he could prove it by miracles. **Theudas persuaded a large number to follow him to the Jordan river with the promise that he would divide it** for them to cross over.

He was killed with his followers. He was a fake christ.

Acts 5: 36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, **claiming to be somebody.** A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. 37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. **He also perished,** and all who obeyed him were dispersed.

One of the supposed miracles at that time was a cow delivering a lamb. This was used to convince the Jews of their liberation, and Christians would surely have heard of it.

Another false prophet pointed out that a star that was shaped like a sword was over Jerusalem and that that meant God would bring victory to the Jews and destroy the Romans. These were all lies, of course.

4. Now Jesus was not saying that the elect could be deceived; he was really warning Christians to be very careful and not allow themselves to be deceived.

John 10:28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

5. Lessons:

a. If you want to be protected against impostors, receive miracles (in the Bible) that confirm doctrines and reject so-called miracles (on TV) that collect money. The Bible is full of real miracles!

b. If you want to be protected, follow God's Word and don't turn to the left or the right. Remember the false prophet who told the true prophet that God changed his mind? He caused that true prophet to die because of his lie!

1Kings 13:18 He said to him, "**I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me** by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" (He was lying to him.) ²³So it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, the prophet whom he had brought back. ²⁴ When he was gone, a lion met him on the road and killed him...

c. Those who think that these false claims to Messiahship only happen now, are mistaken. Claims to Messiahship were far more common before Jerusalem was destroyed than now! And to add more weight to that assertion, Jesus said that those things would **take place on that generation**.

Do not believe the Deceivers for I am giving you advance warning

²³ "But take heed; see, **I have told you all things beforehand**."

1. Christians were warned to pay attention to the common deceptions that would happen 30 years later!

2. Why did Jesus give this warning beforehand?

This warning would make it easy for Christians to believe the Lord's words when the false christs appeared. After all, who would be able to accurately predict what would happen 30 years from now? And when Christians would recall what Jesus said, they would not be fooled and run after the false christs. So paying attention to the Word of God, would preserve the elect.

3. The fact is, many who were not Christians would follow these false christs to their own destruction.

2Thess 2:9-12, confirm this.

4. Lessons:

a. Watch out for those who claim to speak for Christ but don't use his Word to speak. The Scriptures are sufficient. Read them. Compare what others say to them. Reject those who go beyond the Bible.

b. Gullibility (which can be misconstrued as humility) is no mark of a saint or of piety. Learn to know God's Words so you will not be fooled by those who pretend to speak God's truth. Believing God's words will save you!

Conclusion:

Jesus warned his people not to be fooled by the many deceivers who would appear before Jerusalem was destroyed. The fact that Jesus gave this warning 30 years before it happened would further confirm that he was speaking the truth. This would give Christians confidence as they obeyed and served God in the future. He controlled the future!

Brothers and Sister in Jesus Christ:

1. There will always be those who want to undermine and destroy the church of Jesus. They would use force, like the Romans did then and like false religions and communism does now. **They would use the law,** like the Jews did then and like many of our western countries do now. **They would use deception,** like those the Lord spoke about then, and like many false men in the pulpits of churches now.

2. What will save you from deception? Listen carefully to God's Word. Believe it. Do what he says.

3. Why would God want to save you from deception? You are precious to God. He saved you with the blood of his Son.

Finally: Like the Jews and deceivers of Jesus' day, if you don't love and serve God he will destroy you. The only way out is to claim Christ as your Savior-the one who lived and died for sinners like you. Ask God to save you.