

The End-Times Instruction Jesus Gave That Christians Often Overlook

There is one end times instruction that Jesus gave that is almost always overlooked by Christians. No one ever talks about this when discussing end times events or eschatology. I would almost guarantee that if you have ever looked into, or studied, eschatology, you have heard countless theories about the rapture, the tribulation and the return of Christ. You have likely heard ideas of how current events fit into biblical prophecy. You have likely heard theories about the mark of the beast and the nations making up the Antichrist's government. There is one thing that Jesus clearly says about the end times that trumps all of these discussions, and you probably have never put much thought into it.

What is it?

It is found in Matthew 24:3-7. There, Jesus gave His disciples a command. It is one of the most important commands in the New Testament, and yet, it is often overlooked.

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus answered them, "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled. For all these things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, epidemics, and earthquakes in various places.

This account of Jesus discussing the end times is found in

each of the Synoptic Gospels. Many read Matthew 24:1-31, Mark 13:1-37 and Luke 21:5-28, and focus solely on the signs that Jesus mentions. The most important part of this passage is not the signs of the times, but the command to not be deceived. In the ancient world, order within a list was used to highlight information. In ancient texts pertaining to doctrine and instruction, the first thing mentioned would be put first for a reason. This is because the author wanted it to be the first thing in focus. It is mentioned first so that it would not be overlooked. The first thing Jesus tells His disciples about the end times is to not be deceived or led astray. Because of the emphasis of this point, it is clear that the end times will be full of deception.

Truth is of utmost importance to God. Jesus did say that He was the way, the truth and the life. When He was standing before Pilate, Jesus said the very reason He came into the world was to bear witness to the truth. Truth is personified in Jesus Christ. Lies and deception are personified in Satan. The Bible says that Satan is the "father of lies." Hence, there are no words that can even convey the true importance of living in the truth and giving no place to lies or deception in our lives.

In modern-day America, there are countless deceptions vying for our hearts and minds. These are found in culture, media, politics and even within the American church. God is not concerned with us knowing when Christ will return or how modern events play into prophetic fulfillment. He is concerned with us being steadfast in the truth and free from deception.

Notice the second thing that Jesus says in the above passages. He warns that there will be many false christs. The word *christ* simply means "the anointed one." Jesus warns that there would be many who claim to be anointed by God, who would actually be deceivers and lead many astray. Jesus is not saying that there would be many people claiming to be the "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" who was crucified for sin and rose

from the dead. He is saying there would be many people claiming to be from God, and anointed by God, who would actually lead people away from truth.

Understanding this warning should either change, or reinforce, your understanding of why it is so important to rightly divide the Word of God and have sound, biblical doctrine. Many people claim to have anointing from God, but they are really deceivers. Jesus said that deception would escalate in the end times. He didn't mean just any deception; He meant religious deception. "Christian" deception. More than ever, we need to be on guard against spiritual counterfeit.

An honest and biblical assessment of modern American Christianity clearly shows that there is more counterfeit than authentic and genuine. More deception than truth. Most of the American church has been moved away from biblical preaching to watered down, seeker-friendly, life-coaching sermons. Many leaders in the charismatic movement seek after showy signs and wonders at the expense of truth and holiness. Many leaders in evangelical Christianity preach a powerless gospel that hampers the work of the Holy Spirit in the minds and lives of their congregations.

And even churches that preach Scripture can potentially mishandle the Scriptures. We must remember, Satan is a master at twisting Scripture. There is not one sector of American Christianity where there is not a strong pull and temptation toward deception. God commands us to "test all things" in 1 Thessalonians 5:21. Many people believe that when it comes to Christian ministries and ministers, they can "eat the meat, and spit out the bones." That doesn't work when you are dealing with deception. Deception is the equivalent of rotting meat. If you eat rotting meat and spit out the bones, you still end up sick.

More than ever, we need to realize that Jesus warned that the end times would be full of apostasy and deception. So much so,

that His disciples (us) would be the primary target of Satan's deception.

Just because someone can preach well, has a strong social media presence, shares grand stories, is praised by many, can touch the emotions of listeners when they speak and can make a convincing argument, does not mean that they are not actually a false "anointed one."

So, as we enter times unlike any other time in history, remember to "examine all things. Firmly hold onto what is good. Abstain from all appearances of evil" (1 Thess. 5:21-22) and to "take heed that no one deceives you" (Matt. 24:4).