

Will Many of the Elect Really Be Deceived by the Antichrist?

The most sobering and troubling statement in the Olivet Discourse is where Jesus says, "For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24).

This statement cries out for an explanation. What does Jesus mean when He says, "to deceive, *if possible*, even the elect?" Would it be possible for Satan to deceive genuine Christians into following and worshiping the Antichrist?

No.

Satan cannot deceive true Christian believers. He can tempt us to sin. He can tempt us to discouragement. He can tempt us to fear. And sometimes, we yield to these temptations. But Satan could never deceive us into switching sides and worshiping the Antichrist if we are genuine followers of Christ.

The Eternal Security of the Believer

Jesus said in John 10:27-28, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand." Here, Jesus assures us of the eternal security of the believer.

Once a person comes to Christ in full, sincere surrender, no one—not even Satan himself—could ever snatch that person out of the Lord's hand. From cover to cover, the Scriptures make this principle very clear. Genuine believers will not be deceived or destroyed on the day of judgment because our Lord sovereignly protects them.

In Matthew 24:29 Jesus says that the sun and moon will be darkened, the stars will fall, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. All this will take place as the earth is shaking and millions are dying from disease and starvation. And in the midst of this chaos, false messiahs will continue to deceive the masses.

Undoubtedly, many believers who undergo the pressures and terrors of that day will experience anxiety and their confidence may be shaken. They may experience discouragement and fear—but their faith will weather the storm. They will not be deceived. Their salvation will not be lost. Their trust in God will not be destroyed.

Prepare Yourself for His Return

How can you prepare now for this uncertain and threatening future? I would urge you to get involved in a small-group Bible study through your local church. Join together with committed believers who will pray with you, study God's Word with you, support you in your struggles and hold you accountable. Share meals with your group. Go on retreats with them and bond with them. Belonging to a Christ-centered loving community is not a luxury or an option, it's a necessity in the Christian life. It will be the key to standing strong and immovable during times of chaos and upheaval.

In Matthew 24:25, Jesus says, "See, I have told you ahead of time." In other words, "I have given you plenty of warning. Make sure you are ready and prepared. Don't let that day take you by surprise. Make sure you and your family are ready for the end times."

Jesus also says, "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:27). Here, Jesus says that His return will not be stretched out over days or weeks. His return will be sudden, startlingly glorious and visible to the entire world.

How Should We Respond?

How should we respond to this message from Jesus, the Lord of history? I would urge you to take these two actions:

First, be alert to the “birth pains” of history. Talk to your friends and family about this message of Jesus from Matthew 24. When events in the news align with the events Jesus predicts as the beginning of labor pains that foreshadow His return, point them out to the people around you. Urge your family and friends to be constantly, spiritually ready for the Lord’s return.

Second, pray for revival. The late Christian leader Stephen Olford, whom Billy Graham called “the man who most influenced my ministry,” has called revival “an invasion from heaven that brings a conscious awareness of God.” Do you and I really want to experience that holy invasion of our lives by God’s Spirit? Do we want that holy invasion more than we want wealth, success, status or our secret sins? When we truly desire God more than any other treasure in our lives, and we pray earnestly for revival, then God can bring about a radical transformation in our lives—and the lives of people around us.

You and I live in the here and now, the time God has allotted to us in which we can serve Him faithfully every waking moment. Yet we also have one foot in the world to come, in eternity. As we live and serve in the “here and now,” we need to keep our hearts focused on the “yet to come.” We need to live each moment as if Jesus were returning in mere seconds.

His coming will be sudden and unexpected—but those who are prepared for His return will not be caught by surprise. They will not be dismayed. They will be full of joy when, like a flash of lightning, Jesus returns to take us home.

Dr. Michael Youssef was born in Egypt and lived in Lebanon and Australia before coming to the United States, where he fulfilled a childhood dream of becoming an American citizen.

He holds degrees from Moore College in Sydney and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and a doctorate in social anthropology from Emory University in Atlanta. He founded The Church of the Apostles, which was the launching pad for his Leading The Way television and radio international broadcast ministry. Dr. Youssef has authored more than forty books, including popular titles such as Saving Christianity? and Hope for This Present Crisis. He and his wife, Elizabeth, reside in Atlanta.