

## **“WHEN NOT TO BELIEVE”**

**George O. Wood**

*“At what time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it, for false christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible, So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.” (Mark 13:21-23).*

As Jesus continues his discourse on the future while sitting on the slope of the Mount of Olives facing Jerusalem, He knows His followers’ natural desire that He deliver them when they experience the trauma of wars, conflicts, natural disasters and horrendous calamities.

He promises them that the *“days will be shortened,”* but while they are in full flower, pretenders will come and promise immediate relief.

We do want instant solutions. We want to trust someone who promises they can get us out of a mess. You see this all the time in daily life. A person comes along and offers a quick return on an investment. It’s tempting to follow after them. Or a young person is promised a short cut to education—only to discover later that the degree they obtained is worthless. At all ages in life, we can be so easily duped.

What Jesus says about the end times happens all the time. Every day there are voices—including religious voices—that cry out. *“I am the answer,”* or *“I have the solution.”*

Even in the Christian world we are quick to put our faith in leaders who promise quick cures, easy short-cuts to health and wealth, and life without pain, They all have their followers—and it’s these followers, the “anyone” Jesus talks about—who attempt to win us over.

What does the Lord want from us when we are hard pressed and someone is offering us a quick way out?” He wants us NOT to believe.

Jesus, who emphasized so much the need for faith, tells us there are times NOT to believe!” Faith must be deeper than our experience because experiences do not always tell us the truth about God. That is why Jesus warns us against putting our trust in someone with miracle working powers. Why is it that a healing ministry always draws more attendees than a prayer meeting? It’s because we want God to do something for us more than we want Him to do something in us!

The end-time and present-time deception involves persons of considerable spiritual power, but not all spiritual power is from God.

However, Jesus gives us a word of hope to His followers, the “elect.” The miracle workers would deceive them only *“if possible.”* Left unsaid is whether or not it’s possible. That’s up to us—*“by standing firm you will gain life”* (Luke 21:19). To be forewarned is to be forearmed. That’s why Jesus concludes His panoramic sweep of human history with the warning, *“Be on your guard.”* There’s nothing more about the future we need to know because He has told us everything.

The world will get progressively worse. Disciples will face increasing hostility. Religious voices and miracle workers will continue to arise and say, *“I am the way. Follow me.”* We know all of that will happen and, indeed, is now happening.

So, *“Be on guard. Don’t believe everything.”* Remain true to Him when faced with impulses, voices and advice that would take you away from Him!

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