

Beware of deceivers

When the disciples told Jesus how much they marvelled at the splendour of the Temple in Jerusalem, he told them that the time would come when none of its stones would be left standing upon another.

Imagine their amazement! When they asked Jesus when would this happen, they linked this unbelievable event with "the end of the age".

"Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" [1]

Before he answered, Jesus warned them against deceivers: "Watch out that no one deceives you." [2] This seems fair enough; in fact this idea of being on the watch for deceivers runs through Jesus' answer. He continued: "For many will come in my name, claiming 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." [3]

He continued, telling them that "you will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed." Deceivers would come, claiming to speak as Christ, alarming people about wars. Jesus warned his followers not to be alarmed by such deceivers.

Instead of being signs, such things must happen. Nations and kingdoms were going to fight one another, and there would be famines and earthquakes in various places, but these were not indications of an end. [5] Rather, his disciples were to see them as being "the beginning of birth pains". [6]

When looking at these calamities, Jesus did not point to their size, extent or to the number of casualties. Rather, he pointed to deceivers who would use these as signs of the end.

Did Jesus answer his disciples' questions? Of course he did!

After warning them to beware of deceivers, Jesus gave his disciples the sign that would tell them when the Temple of Jerusalem was about to be destroyed: "When you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation' spoken of through the prophet Daniel, let the reader understand, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." [7]

And he gave very clear indications about his coming at the end of the age: "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ... At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."

References

[1] Matthew 24:3, New International Version

[2] verse 4

[3] verse 5

[4] verse 6

[5] verse 7

[6] verse 8

[7] verses 15-16 (see also Mark 13:14 and Luke 21:20-21)

[8] verses 27, 30

Matthew 24:1-8 (New International Version)

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

MARK 13:1-8 (New International Version)

As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

"Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

LUKE 21:5-11 (New International Version)

Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."

"Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?"

He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them.

When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away." Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

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