

# Matthew 24:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

## Analysis

**Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not** (τότε ἔάν τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ, Ἰδοὺ ὡδε ὁ Χριστός, ἢ, Ὡδε, μὴ πιστεύσητε)—The adverb τότε ("then") connects to the tribulation period. The interjection ιδού (idou, "behold, lo") suggests urgency and attention-getting. False messiahs will claim location: "here" (ωδε). The imperative μὴ πιστεύσητε ("believe not") commands skeptical resistance.

When suffering intensifies, desperate people grasp for deliverance—making them vulnerable to deception. During Jerusalem's siege, multiple zealot leaders promised divine intervention and military victory, leading thousands to stay in the city and perish. Jesus's warning anticipated this psychological vulnerability. The command "believe it not" doesn't mean general skepticism but specific discernment: the true Christ's return will be unmistakable (v. 27, "as lightning"), not localized rumors requiring investigation.

## Historical Context

Between Jesus's prophecy and AD 70, Josephus catalogs numerous messianic pretenders who attracted followers with promises of deliverance: an Egyptian false prophet (mentioned in Acts 21:38), Theudas, and various zealot leaders during the revolt (AD 66-70). After AD 70, the pattern continued: Bar Kokhba (AD 132-135), acclaimed messiah by Rabbi Akiva. Throughout church history—Sabbatai Zevi, David Koresh, Sun Myung Moon—the pattern Jesus warned against has repeated.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. Why are people especially vulnerable to false messiahs during times of crisis and suffering?
2. How can believers maintain discernment when longing for Christ's return without falling into cynicism or date-setting?
3. What specific characteristics should make any "messiah" claim immediately suspicious?

## Interlinear Text

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τότε	ἐάν	τις	ὑμῖν	εἴπῃ	Ίδού,	Ωδε,	ὁ	Χριστός,
<b>Then</b>	<b>if</b>	<b>any man</b>	<b>unto you</b>	<b>shall say</b>	<b>Lo</b>	<b>here</b>	<b>G3588</b>	<b>is Christ</b>
G5119	G1437	G5100	G5213	G2036	G2400	G5602		G5547
ἢ,	Ωδε,	μὴ	πιστεύσητε.					
<b>or</b>	<b>here</b>	<b>it not</b>		<b>believe</b>				
G2228	G5602	G3361		G4100				

## Additional Cross-References

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**Luke 21:8** (References Christ): And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

**Mark 13:21** (Faith): And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: