

Matthew 24:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

Analysis

Take heed that no man deceive you (βλέπετε μή τις ύμᾶς πλανήσῃ)—Jesus's first warning in the Olivet Discourse addresses deception (πλανάω, planaō—to lead astray, the root of our word "planet" for wandering stars). The imperative blepete (take heed, watch) demands vigilant discernment. Deception, not destruction, is presented as the primary danger for disciples navigating the end times.

This warning brackets the entire discourse (repeated in vv. 11, 24) and identifies spiritual discernment as essential for endurance. The passive voice ("be deceived") indicates vulnerability—deception happens to believers unless they actively guard against it. Paul later echoes this concern in 2 Thessalonians 2:3: "Let no man deceive you by any means."

Historical Context

Between AD 30-70, numerous messianic pretenders arose in Judea. Josephus catalogs several: Theudas (Acts 5:36), an Egyptian false prophet who led 30,000 to the Mount of Olives, and various zealot leaders promising deliverance. This was also the period when the apostolic church had to contend with early Gnostic heresies and Judaizers. The disciples needed this warning for their immediate future.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What forms of religious deception are most prevalent in your cultural context today?
2. How can believers develop the discernment necessary to recognize false teaching when it's often mixed with truth?
3. Why does Jesus prioritize warning against deception even before warning about persecution?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Βλέπετε μή
And answered G3588 Jesus and said unto them Take heed that no
G2532 G611 G2424 G2036 G846 G991 G3361

τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ·
man you deceive
G5100 G5209 G4105

Additional Cross-References

1 John 4:1 (Parallel theme): Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 (Parallel theme): Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Jeremiah 29:8 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

Colossians 2:8 (Parallel theme): Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Ephesians 5:6 (Parallel theme): Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Ephesians 4:14 (Parallel theme): That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Mark 13:22 (Parallel theme): For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

Luke 21:8 (Parallel theme): 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.

Colossians 2:18 (Parallel theme): Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,