

Why Study Spiritual Warfare?

Deception

1. In the Gospels, the most frequent warning Jesus gives to us about the last days is **"Do not be deceived."**

Gospel	Passage	NASB wording	What Jesus warns about
Matthew	Matthew 24:4-5	"See to it that no one misleads you... they will mislead many people."	False Christs claiming to be the Messiah
Matthew	Matthew 24:11	"Many false prophets will rise up and mislead many people."	False prophets
Matthew	Matthew 24:23-25	False Christs and false prophets will " mislead , if possible, even the elect."	False Christs/prophets and miraculous signs
Mark	Mark 13:5-6	"See to it that no one misleads you... they will mislead many."	False claimants coming in Jesus' name
Mark	Mark 13:21-23	False Christs and false prophets will perform signs "in order to mislead , if possible, the elect."	False Christs/prophets and signs
Luke	Luke 21:8	"See to it that you are not misled ... Do not go after them."	False claimants announcing themselves and the nearness of the end

2. The Greek word *planao* translates to "to wander," "to lead astray," or "to deceive". It describes straying from a straight path or going off course. This concept of wandering or deception appears frequently in ancient literature to illustrate a slow, subtle drifting rather than a sudden departure.

3. The deception can become so powerful that Jesus says it could, if possible, mislead even "the elect."

Matthew 24:24 (NASB) *For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.*

Mark 13:22 (NASB) *...for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect.*

4. **Signs and wonders** are perhaps the most startling element. Jesus does not say merely that these people will be charismatic speakers. He explicitly introduces **supernatural phenomena** into the warning. And that creates an important biblical principle: **A supernatural sign, by itself, does not establish that the person performing it represents God.** That principle is consistent with other biblical warnings, particularly Deuteronomy 13:1–3, where a sign or wonder can occur and yet the person associated with it can still lead people toward false gods.

Jesus' Identity

1. Look carefully at the content of the deception. The false message repeatedly concerns **Jesus Himself**:

- "I am the Christ."
- "I am He."
- "Here is the Christ."
- "He is over here."

2. So the ultimate issue isn't simply: **"Is this person a false teacher?"** The deeper question is: **"Who is Jesus, and how will you recognize the true Christ?"** That's why biblical discernment ultimately has to be **Christ-centered**, not merely miracle-centered.

3. The possibility of supernatural deception, must be kept on the table. Jesus' warning in **Matthew 24:24 / Mark 13:22** can be compared with:

- **Deuteronomy 13:1–5** — a false prophet can produce a genuine sign and still lead people away from God.
- **2 Thessalonians 2:9–12** — the coming deception is associated with Satan, signs, wonders, and a refusal to love the truth.
- **1 John 4:1–3** — believers are told to test supernatural/spiritual claims rather than automatically accepting them.
- **Revelation 13:11–14** — the beast's prophetic agent performs signs that deceive those dwelling on earth.
- **Revelation 16:13–14** — deceptive spirits perform signs and gather people toward the final conflict.

When those passages are placed beside Matthew 24 and Mark 13, a **much larger biblical theology of supernatural deception** emerges. The striking theme is that **the Bible never teaches that supernatural phenomena automatically prove divine origin.**

How Does Deception Work?

The deception appears to operate through **four mechanisms**.

1. Authority

They come **"in My name."** They aren't necessarily presenting themselves as obvious enemies. They claim association with Jesus.

2. Information

They make claims about: who Christ is, where He is, what is happening, and when the end has arrived. **Luke 21:8** is particularly revealing: *"The time is near."* So deception involves a false interpretation of God's purposes and the prophetic timetable.

3. Persuasion

Matthew 24:11 *"Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many."*

The deception is successful precisely because **many people believe it.**

4. Supernatural confirmation

Matthew 24:24 adds: "*great signs and wonders*"

This is perhaps the most dangerous component because the miraculous can appear to **authenticate the message**. The logic becomes: "**Look at what this person can do; therefore what this person says must be from God.**" Jesus warns that this logic is invalid.

5. The deepest lesson

I think the most important conclusion from these six passages is this:

Jesus does not teach that spiritual deception will primarily come looking evil. It may come:

- **in His name**
- through **religious leaders**
- claiming **prophetic authority**
- accompanied by **signs and wonders**
- making apparently credible claims about **Christ**
- and attracting **many followers**

That's precisely what makes it deception. The danger isn't merely that someone will tell you an obvious lie. The danger is that someone will present **something false in a form sufficiently close to the truth that it becomes believable.** And that explains Jesus' repeated command: "**See to it that no one misleads you.**"