

from front

Jesus said, “*Take heed* that no one deceives you” (Matt. 24:4). This is very similar to His warning in Matthew 16:6. The context is Jesus comments on the temple; that it would be destroyed. He is warning His disciples not to get caught up in the hype of the tumultuous times surrounding the fall of Israel once and for all. Many rumors would be flying around and they were not to be carried away by them. The same is true today. The various natural disasters, political unrest, and wars taking place over the past few years have made people jittery. The televangelists have had a field day getting people anxious over what is “imminent.” Thankfully, we do not need to be so disturbed. Yes, the Lord is coming. However, He said we do not know when (Matt. 24:36-44). Rather, by living a faithful life, we have the calm assurance that when He does return, He will take us home with Him (1 Thes. 4:13-18).

It is wise for us to take heed to the words of Jesus.

- Steven F. Deaton

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**Take Heed**

To heed is to listen to, take notice, or give regard. It is to beware. The Lord admonishes us to take heed for many different reasons; four times in Matthew alone.

Jesus said, “*Take heed* that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven” (Matt. 6:1). We are to do good works for the sake of helping others, not honoring ourselves. If we do it to receive the praise of men, Jesus said we have our reward, earthly praise—at the expense of heavenly treasure. However, if we do it out of a genuine heart, one that seeks to bless others, then our “Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matt. 6:4).

Jesus said, “*Take heed* and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees” (Matt. 16:6). After some upbraiding by the Lord, the disciples understood this to mean to beware “of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt. 16:11). So, Jesus tells us to be on guard when it comes to the doctrines of men. When we follow them, our worship is vain and we will fall into the ditch (Matt. 15:7-14). In other words, our souls will be lost if we follow the “leaven” of men. We wonder why some people are anemic to this part of the Lord’s teaching. They do not want to be warned and become upset when others warn them, especially if it includes naming the ones promoting the error. Yet, Jesus said to take heed of the “Pharisees and the Sadducees.”

Jesus said, “*Take heed* that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10). This was said in the midst of a lesson on the character of those who would be citizens of the kingdom of God—those who are humble and submissive. God is very serious about despising His children. Our human eyes may not see the value and worth of them, but God does. He sees that they have a soul; one that was bought with the blood of the Lamb. If we look down on His children, we will give an account for it in the Day of Judgment.

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## Love & Commandments

Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14:15). Love of the Lord is not just a feeling or emotion, it includes action. It is not enough to only acknowledge Him as the Messiah; we must also serve Him as our Master.

Some people want to separate love for God from the commandments of God. Their point of view is that the emotion of love is all you need and the insistence on keeping commandments is too “strict” and “legalistic.” However, the Bible declares over and over that love and commandments go together.

When the Israelites were first brought out of Egypt God told them to love Him and keep His commandments. He said, “showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Ex. 20:6). Before they entered Canaan, Moses admonished them to “...shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always” (Deut. 11:1). After they conquered the land, as the two and a half tribes were returning home, Joshua said, “But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Joshua 22:5).

Hundreds of years later, when the Jews were in captivity, Daniel noted, “O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments” (Dan. 9:4). When they returned from captivity, Nehemiah said, “I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments” (Neh. 1:5).

Thus, we understand that throughout Old Testament history, love of God and keeping His commandments went together. In fact, they were inseparable. With love of God and obedience to His commands came God’s mercy. The same is true today.

As noted above, Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14:15). When discussing the “first commandment,” He said, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your

God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.” (Mk. 12:29, 30). It is interesting to note that love of God is a commandment. Those who rebel against “commandments” as “legalistic” cannot love God, because it is a commandment. If they reject “dos” and “don’ts,” “strict” commands, then they necessarily reject the command to love God.

John summed it up for us. He said, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 Jn. 5:3). We not only love God by keeping His commandments, but also the children of God. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments” (1 Jn. 5:2). Without commandments, and keeping them, there is no love of God or the children of God.

- Steven F. Deaton

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## Motherhood

The other day on one of the morning news shows, we heard a snip-it about Kelly Ripa, of *Live with Regis and Kelly*. She is also involved in other projects. The comment was made that during an interview she revealed that her children asked her why she worked so much. She told them that she had to work in order to buy them toys. Her son said he would give up his toys if his mommy would stay home.

Motherhood is of God. He gave the woman the capability and desire to have children. He ordains that mothers “love their children,...be discreet, chaste, homemakers...” (Titus 2:4, 5). Too many mothers ignore this for the sake of career and toys for their children—or toys for themselves. What children need, as Kelly’s son well knows, is a mother, not a money machine.

We urge young mothers to consider what they are truly sacrificing when they go to work and leave it to others to raise their children. The opportunity to bond, see your children grow, and bring priceless delight will soon be gone forever. Children do not consider the sacrifice of your time with them as an act of love. All they know is that it hurts not to have mommy around. Yes, sometimes circumstances necessitate the woman working outside the home. However, often if sacrifices were made in other areas, the woman could stay home and give her children what they need—a mother.

- Steven F. Deaton