

Luke 21:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

Analysis

But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Jesus continues addressing eschatological anxiety: *hotan de akousēte polemous kai akatastasias, mē ptoēthēte* (ὅταν δὲ ἀκούσητε πολέμους καὶ ἀκαταστασίας, μὴ πτοηθῆτε, 'when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified'). The word *akatastasias* (ἀκαταστασίας) means 'instability,' 'disorder,' 'upheaval'—social chaos accompanying warfare. The command *mē ptoēthēte* (μὴ πτοηθῆτε, 'do not be terrified') prohibits panic.

Jesus explains why: *dei gar tauta genesthai prōton* (δεῖ γὰρ ταῦτα γενέσθαι πρῶτον, 'for these things must happen first'). The word *dei* (δεῖ, 'must') indicates divine necessity—God's sovereign plan includes these events. However, *ouk eutheōs to telos* (οὐκ εὐθέως τὸ τέλος, 'not immediately the end'). Wars don't signal the end's arrival but precede it. **Christians must neither panic at global chaos nor mistake preliminary troubles for final judgment.** History's course includes wars and upheavals; believers navigate these with faith, not fear, knowing God remains sovereign.

Historical Context

The first century witnessed extraordinary upheaval. Jewish-Roman tensions escalated into the First Jewish Revolt (AD 66-73), climaxing in Jerusalem's

destruction (AD 70). The Roman civil wars of AD 68-69 saw four emperors in one year. Christians faced persecution under Nero (AD 64) and sporadic local persecutions. Jesus' warning prepared disciples for turbulent times without succumbing to apocalyptic panic. The temptation existed then—and exists now—to interpret every war or crisis as 'the end.' Jesus corrects this: wars are preliminary signs, not the end itself. Church history shows consistent patterns of war, upheaval, and crisis; each generation must resist the temptation to assume 'this is it.' The end comes when Christ determines, not when wars suggest.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus command believers not to be terrified by wars and upheavals, and how does this command apply today?
2. What does the phrase 'these things must first come to pass' reveal about God's sovereignty over history's turbulent events?
3. How should Christians balance awareness of prophetic signs with Jesus' warning that 'the end is not by and by'?

Interlinear Text

ὅταν δὲ ἀκούσητε πολέμους καὶ ἀκαταστασίας μὴ
when But ye shall hear of wars and commotions not
G3752 G1161 G191 G4171 G2532 G181 G3361

πτοηθῆτε· δεῖ γὰρ ταῦτα γενέσθαι πρῶτον ἀλλ' οὐκ
be must for these things come to pass first but is not
G4422 G1163 G1063 G5023 G1096 G4412 G235 G3756

εὐθέως τὸ τέλος
by and by the end
G2112 G3588 G5056

Additional Cross-References

Luke 21:28 (Parallel theme): And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org