

Mark 13:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Analysis

Jesus commanded: 'Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is' (Βλέπετε, ἀγρυπνεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε· οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ κατιρός ἔστιν). Three imperatives: 'take heed' (blepete, Βλέπετε, be alert), 'watch' (agrypneite, ἀγρυπνεῖτε, stay awake), 'pray' (proseuchesthe, προσεύχεσθε, maintain communion with God). These spiritual disciplines prepare for Christ's return. The reason: 'ye know not when the time is'—uncertainty demands constant readiness. This isn't anxious fear but alert expectancy. Christians live between Christ's comings—inaugurated kingdom awaiting consummation. This 'already-not-yet' tension requires vigilance, prayer, and faithful service. Knowing Christ could return any day transforms priorities and motivates holiness (1 John 3:2-3).

Historical Context

Early church lived in imminent expectation of Christ's return. Paul expected it in his lifetime (1 Thessalonians 4:15, 'we which are alive and remain'), though later recognized he might die first (2 Timothy 4:6-8). As centuries passed, some mocked delayed return (2 Peter 3:3-4), prompting Peter's explanation that God's timing differs from human perception (2 Peter 3:8-9). Jesus' exhortation to 'watch and pray' became standard Christian practice. Church fathers warned against both presumption (knowing the time) and neglect (losing expectancy). Reformed theology emphasizes that not knowing the time serves God's purposes—keeping believers alert and motivated. Augustine taught that each Christian's death is personal 'day of the Lord,' making readiness urgent regardless of timing.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does not knowing the time of Christ's return serve God's purposes in keeping believers alert and faithful?
2. What does the threefold command—take heed, watch, pray—teach about maintaining spiritual readiness?

Interlinear Text

βλέπετε ἀγρυπνεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε· οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ
Take ye heed watch and pray not ye know for
G991 G69 G2532 G4336 G3756 G1492 G1063

πότε ὁ καιρός ἔστιν
when G3588 the time is
G4219 G2540 G2076

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 6:18 (Prayer): Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Luke 12:40 (Parallel theme): Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Revelation 16:15 (Parallel theme): Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Matthew 25:13 (Parallel theme): Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

1 Peter 4:7 (Prayer): But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

1 Peter 5:8 (Parallel theme): Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Revelation 3:2 (Parallel theme): Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Mark 13:23 (Parallel theme): But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

1 Corinthians 16:13 (Parallel theme): Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Hebrews 12:15 (Parallel theme): Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;