

Matthew 24:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

Analysis

Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains (τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη)—The adverb τότε ("then") connects to v. 15's "abomination of desolation," signaling the moment for immediate evacuation. The imperative φεύγω (pheugō, "flee") demands urgent escape, like Lot fleeing Sodom (Genesis 19:17). Judaea specifically refers to the region around Jerusalem where danger will be most acute.

Eusebius (4th century) records that Christians in Jerusalem, remembering Jesus's warning, fled to Pella in the Transjordan mountains when they saw Roman standards (the abomination) surrounding the city. During Cestius Gallus's failed siege (AD 66), there was a brief window for escape before Titus returned (AD 70). Those who heeded Jesus's words survived; those who remained perished or were enslaved. Obedience to this specific command saved the early church.

Historical Context

When Roman general Cestius Gallus inexplicably withdrew from Jerusalem in AD 66 after breaching the walls, Christians recognized the providential escape opportunity. They fled to Pella, a Gentile city in the Decapolis east of the Jordan River. When Titus besieged Jerusalem in AD 70, no Christians were trapped inside. Josephus reports that famine, infighting, and Roman assault killed over one million Jews—but the church survived by heeding Jesus's prophecy.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does this passage teach about God's providential care for his people even in judgment?
2. How should believers balance engagement with culture and readiness to separate when God commands?
3. Are there modern situations where Christians should practice strategic withdrawal rather than standing their ground?

Interlinear Text

τότε	οἱ	ἐν	τῇ	Ἰουδαίᾳ	φευγέτωσαν	ἐπὶ	τὰ
Then	G3588	let them which be in	G3588	Judaea	flee	into	G3588
G5119		G1722		G2449	G5343	G1909	
ὄρη							
the mountains							
G3735							

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:7 (Parallel theme): By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Proverbs 22:3 (Parallel theme): A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

