

Matthew 24:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

Analysis

Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house (ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ δώματος μὴ καταβάτω ἄραι τὰ ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ)—Palestinian houses had flat roofs (δῶμα, dōma) accessed by external stairs, often used for prayer, sleeping, or storage. Jesus commands: don't even descend into your house. The urgency mirrors Lot's wife, who looked back and became salt (Genesis 19:26). The verb καταβαίνω (katabainō, "come down") with the negative μή creates an absolute prohibition.

The phrase τὰ ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας ("things from the house") represents earthly possessions—valuables, necessities, sentimental items. Jesus prioritizes life over property. Luke 17:31-32 adds: "Remember Lot's wife"—a warning against attachment to material things when divine judgment looms. The principle applies beyond AD 70: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

Historical Context

Josephus describes the panic during Jerusalem's siege when people desperately tried to preserve possessions or flee with treasures. Many were killed by zealots inside the city for suspected desertion or by Romans outside. Delay meant death. Archaeological evidence from Pompeii (destroyed AD 79, close to Jerusalem's fall) shows skeletons of people who paused to gather valuables—they were buried in volcanic ash. The urgency Jesus prescribed was literal.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What modern "possessions" might keep believers from immediately obeying God's clear commands?
2. How can Christians cultivate appropriate detachment from material things without falling into Gnostic dualism that despises God's creation?
3. What is the relationship between Jesus's command here and his teaching about storing treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21)?

Interlinear Text

ὁ G3588	ἐπὶ G1909	τοῦ G3588	δώματος G1430	μὴ G3361	καταβαινέτω G2597	ἄραι G142
Let him	which is on	the	housetop	not	come down	to take
τι G5100	ἐκ G1537	τῆς G3588	οἰκίας G3614	αὐτοῦ G846		
any thing	out of	house				

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 10:27 (Parallel theme): What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.

Acts 10:9 (Parallel theme): On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

Luke 12:3 (Parallel theme): Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

Matthew 6:25 (Parallel theme): Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Deuteronomy 22:8 (Parallel theme): When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

Luke 5:19 (Parallel theme): And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

1 Samuel 9:25 (Parallel theme): And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house.