

Matthew 24:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

Analysis

Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes (καὶ ὁ ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ μὴ ἐπιστρεψάτω ὅπίσω ἄραι τὰ ἴμάτια αὐτοῦ)—Agricultural workers wore minimal clothing in the field, leaving outer garments (*ímátiα, himatia*)—valuable items—at field's edge or home. The verb *ἐπιστρέφω* (*epistrephō*, "turn back") with prohibitive *μή* forbids retrieval. Even clothing, a basic necessity (more valuable than modern equivalents), must be abandoned.

The word *όπίσω* ("back, behind") recalls Lot's wife (again), Elisha leaving his oxen to follow Elijah (1 Kings 19:19-21—though Jesus says "no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom," Luke 9:62), and the Exodus generation wanting to return to Egypt. Looking back betrays divided loyalty. Jesus demands single-minded flight because milliseconds matter when God's judgment falls.

Historical Context

In agrarian Judea, farmers worked fields outside city walls daily. At siege warning, the natural instinct would be retrieving essential garments. But Jerusalem's fall came with shocking speed once Titus's final assault began—the city fell in just days after months of siege. Josephus records 500+ Jews crucified daily outside walls as warnings. Those who delayed for any reason—even necessities—risked capture, enslavement, or death.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's urgency in these verses challenge contemporary Christian complacency about end times?
2. What is more dangerous: underreacting to God's warnings or overreacting with date-setting and panic?
3. How can believers hold possessions and plans loosely while living responsibly?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ό	ἐν	τῷ	ἀγρῷ	μὴ	ἐπιστρεψάτω
G2532	G3588	let him which is in	G3588	the field	G3361	return
		G1722		G68		G1994

ἀπίστω	ἀραι	τὰ	ιμάτια	αὐτοῦ
back	to take	G3588	clothes	G846
G3694	G142		G2440	

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