

Matthew 24:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Analysis

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left—

This famous verse is widely misinterpreted as describing a 'rapture' of believers, but context demands the opposite. The Greek *paralambanō* (παραλαμβάνω = taken) and *aphiēmi* (ἀφίημι = left/released) parallel the flood narrative: who was taken? The wicked in judgment. Who was left? Noah and his family, preserved in the ark.

Two men working together in the field (*agrō*, ἀγρῷ)—externally identical, internally different. One is taken in sudden judgment (like the flood victims), the other left to enter Christ's kingdom. This isn't about escaping tribulation but about final separation at Christ's return. The 'left behind' are the blessed ones, not those suffering tribulation. Context is king: verses 37-39 establish the pattern.

Historical Context

First-century agriculture involved field partnerships—plowing, harvesting, shepherding. Jesus uses everyday scenes to illustrate cosmic realities. The 'two in the field' echoes Cain and Abel (Genesis 4), Jacob and Esau, Israel's history of separation between elect and reprobate. The imagery appears in Jewish apocalyptic (4 Ezra, 2 Baruch) describing end-times division.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does reading this verse in context (vv.37-39) change the popular 'rapture' interpretation you may have heard?
2. What invisible spiritual differences might exist between you and the person working beside you daily?
3. How should the reality of sudden, final separation motivate evangelism and personal holiness?

Interlinear Text

τότε δύο ἔσονται ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ ὁ εἷς
Then two be in the field the one
G5119 G1417 G2071 G3588 G68 G1520

παραλαμβάνεται καὶ ὁ εἷς ἀφίεται·
shall be taken and the one left
G3880 G2532 G1520 G863

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 2:5 (Parallel theme): And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;