

Matthew 24:48

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

Analysis

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming—The Greek *chronizei* (χρονίζει = delays/takes time) reveals the servant's fatal assumption: the master's absence means abandonment or indifference. This isn't mere calendar observation but heart rebellion—*en tē kardia autou* (ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ = in his heart) he concludes delay equals permission to abandon duty.

The 'evil servant' (*kakos doulos*, κακὸς δοῦλος) is not a different person but the same servant corrupted by the master's absence. The delay tests character. Peter later warns that scoffers will say 'Where is the promise of His coming?' (2 Peter 3:4)—exactly this heart attitude. The danger isn't the master's delay but the servant's response to it: using freedom for license rather than faithful stewardship.

Historical Context

By the time Matthew wrote (AD 60s-80s?), some believers were struggling with Christ's 'delay' (2 Peter 3:8-9). Jesus predicted this precise temptation. The 'delay' becomes a test: will we serve faithfully for decades, centuries, millennia without visible Master presence? The evil servant represents apostates and false teachers who use Christ's 'delay' to justify worldliness and abuse of authority.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How has Christ's 2,000-year 'delay' affected your urgency about His return and daily faithfulness?
2. What heart attitudes or behaviors in your life might indicate you're treating Christ's absence as permission for compromise?
3. How can you guard against the insidious 'in the heart' dialogue that leads to spiritual complacency?

Interlinear Text

ἐὰν	δὲ	εἴπη	ὁ	κακὸς	δοῦλος	ἐκεῖνος	ἐν	τῇ
if	But and	shall say	G3588	evil	servant	that	in	G3588
G1437	G1161	G2036		G2556	G1401	G1565	G1722	
καρδίᾳ	αὐτοῦ	Χρονίζει	ὁ	κύριος	μου	ἐλθεῖν,		
heart	G846	delayeth	G3588	lord	My	his coming		
G2588		G5549		G2962	G3450	G2064		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 18:32 (Evil): Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Isaiah 32:6 (References Lord): For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

Luke 12:45 (References Lord): But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

Acts 5:3 (Parallel theme): But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Mark 7:21 (Evil): For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

John 13:2 (Evil): And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

Deuteronomy 9:4 (Evil): Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee.

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