Received or Turned Away

Matthew 24:40-44 is NOT The Rapture

**By Arlen Chitwood**

"Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.

"Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

"But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

"For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. (Mat. 24:40-44)

"But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luk. 21:36)

The words in the text, “one will be taken and the other left,” are often misunderstood by expositors. And through this misunderstanding, some mistakenly teach that these verses refer to the rapture, with one removed from the earth and another left behind on the earth. This though is not at all what is in view.

The mistake comes from thinking that the ones left remain in the field or at the mill, while the others are removed from these places. Reference to the Greek text, the context, and parallel Scripture though will show that this cannot possibly be the case. These verses reveal the Lord’s dealings with two Christians who will be in the field and two other Christians who will be grinding at the mill (representative individuals, places, and occupations) when He returns to reckon with His servants; and this reckoning will occur, not in the field or at the mill, but before the judgment seat of Christ in heaven following the rapture. The time and place of this reckoning are always the same in Scripture.

The word “taken” (Mat. 24:40-41) is a translation of the Greek word paralambano. This is a compound word comprised of para (“beside,” or “alongside”) and lambano (“to take,” or “to receive”). Thus, the word goes a step beyond just simply taking or receiving. It is taking or receiving the person alongside or to oneself (cf. Matthew 17:1; 20:17 where paralambano is used). This would be the word used referring to the reception of an individual as an “associate” or a “companion,” which is actually what is involved in this passage.

Then, the word “left” (Mat. 24:40-41) is a translation of the Greek word aphiemi, which is used in an antithetical respect to paralambano. In the light of the way paralambano is used, aphiemi could possibly best be understood by translating the word, “turn away.”

That which is involved in this passage has to do with Christians before the judgment seat either being received in an intimate sense or being turned away in an opposite sense.

And the parable of the Householder and His servant, which immediately follows, is given to help explain these things. These verses are not referring to the rapture at all, but to faithful and unfaithful Christians in different walks of life as they appear before the judgment seat in heaven.

Reference to the parallel passage in Luke’s account of the Olivet Discourse shows this same thing:

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. (Luke 21:36).

Some expositors have also taken this verse as a reference to the rapture (usually those attempting selective rapture); but, again, such is not correct. This verse is actually the parallel in Luke’s gospel for not only Matthew 24:40-44 but also for the three parables that follow, covering the remainder of the Christian section of the discourse (the parable of the Householder and His servant [Mat. 24:45-51], the parable of the ten virgins [Mat. 25:1-13], and the parable of the talents [Mat. 25:14-30]).

Again, reference to the Greek text, the context, and related Scripture will show exactly how this verse is to be understood. The main problems in translation and interpretation lie in the words “that you may be counted worthy” and “escape all these things.”

The words, “that you may be counted worthy,” could be better translated, “that you may prevail over [in the sense of being strong and winning a victory]”; and the words, “escape [lit., ‘escape out of’] all these things,” refer back to the immediate context, dealing with “surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life” (Luke 21:34-35). This verse is, thus, exhorting Christians to watch and pray relative to deliverance from involvement in the ways and practices of the world (Ephesians 6:18; cf. Ephesians 6:10-17).

Weymouth, in his translation of the New Testament, captures the correct thought from the Greek text about as well as any English version presently available (also see the NASB):

Beware of slumbering; at all times pray that you may be fully strengthened to escape from all these coming evils, and to take your stand in the presence of the Son of Man.

Note also Wuest’s “Expanded Translation”:

But be circumspect, attentive, ready, in every season being in prayer, in order that you may have sufficient strength to be escaping all these things which are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

The words “watch” and “pray” are in a present tense showing linear (continuous) action in the Greek text. The thought is that of Christians continually watching (always being alert, on guard) and continually praying for the strength necessary to escape out of the ways and practices of the world.

“Escape out of” is the translation of an aorist infinitive in the Greek text, showing deliverance viewed as eventual (i.e., viewed as the result of Christians continually watching and praying). And, viewed as a whole (as in Weymouth’s translation), this deliverance would occur on particular occasions at different times.

Contextually, this deliverance is not a one-time event (as the rapture), but repeated occurrences (as in Wuest’s translation). And the goal of the entire process is Christians ultimately being privileged to “stand before the Son of Man.”

(Aorist and present tenses in the Greek text are often misunderstood and misused. In fact, a lot of false doctrine has resulted from a misunderstanding and misuse of these tenses.

The word “aorist” is simply an anglicized Greek word, aoratos, which means “unseen,” “invisible” [aoratos is the word horatos, meaning “to see,” negated by the prefix “a,” making the word aoratos mean just the opposite — “not to see”]. And this word, used relative to “tense” in Greek grammar, refers to the “action” of the verb [unseen action].

Action in the aorist tense is presented simply as occurring, without reference to its progress [which, from the verb itself, cannot be seen]. And this action, seen contextually, can be very linear [continuous, occurring over time] or punctiliar***\*\**** [occurring at one or more points in time].

[A misunderstanding and misuse of the aorist tense usually occurs by attempting to see what the meaning of the name of the tense itself clearly states can’t be seen — action occurring, which is invariably and erroneously viewed as punctiliar.

This action is represented on paper [in grammar books] by a dot, simply because it can’t be seen to describe the type of action (whether linear or punctiliar). And this dot is what often misleads people, thinking that punctiliar action is being described by the dot, which isn’t the case at all].

On the other hand, the present tense, where action is seen, serves to show both linear and punctiliar action. The general rule is that if punctiliar action is not shown by the context, then linear action is to be understood.

For example, “believes” in John 3:15-16 is the translation of a present participle in the Greek text; and, except for the context [John 3:14], the word in both verses would be understood in a linear respect. The context though shows that both words are to be understood as punctiliar — i.e., simply believe at a point in time, not keep on believing [it was look and live in the type (John 3:14), and it is, as well (it cannot be any other way) look and live in the antitype (John 3:15-16)].

Then note “believes” in Romans 1:16, also the translation of a present participle in the Greek text. But this time the context doesn’t show that the present tense is to be understood any way other than linear. Thus, the thought presented in the verse would be to keep on believing, keep on exercising faith [note, contextually, that this verse has nothing to do with eternal salvation; rather, it has to do with belief, faith, exercised by those who are already saved].)

Standing before, or in the presence of, the Son of Man in the passage from Luke’s account of the Olivet Discourse (Luke 21:34-36) is synonymous with being received in an intimate manner by the Lord in the parallel section in Matthew’s account of the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:40-44).

The thought is presented another way in Psalms 24:3-4:

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.

Psalm chapter twenty-four is a Messianic Psalm; and the expression, “to stand before the Son of Man” in Luke 21:36, is Messianic as well. Ascending “the hill [referring to the ‘kingdom’; note Psalms 2:6] of the Lord” or standing “before the Son of Man” are reserved for “associates” or “companions” who will rule as co-heirs with Christ (cf. Hebrews 1:9; 3:1, 14; “fellows” [Hebrews 1:9, KJV] and “partakers” [Hebrews 3:1, 14] are translations of the same Greek word [metochoi], which could be better rendered, “associates” or “companions”).

(A similar statement to that which is seen in Luke 21:36 is seen in God’s promise to those in the Church in Philadelphia, in Revelation 3:10 — “I also will keep you from the hour of trial.”

For information on this verse (Rev. 3:10), refer to Chapter 10, “A Pillar, A City,” in the author’s book, [Bible One - Arlen Chitwood's Judgment Seat of Christ, Ch. 10](http://bibleone.net/JSC10.htm).)

**\*\*** [Blue Letter Bible - Greek Verbs](http://www.blueletterbible.org/help/greekverbs.cfm)

[Bible One - Arlen Chitwood's Prophecy on Mount Olivet, Ch. 10](http://bibleone.net/POMO_10.htm)

[Prophecy on Mount Olivet by Arlen Chitwood](http://lampbroadcast.org/Books/POMO.pdf)

[Judgment Seat of Christ by Arlen Chitwood](http://lampbroadcast.org/Books/JSOC.pdf)[Bible One - Arlen Chitwood's Judgment Seat of Christ, Ch. 10](http://bibleone.net/JSC10.htm)