

Luke 10:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

Analysis

Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. The symbolic act of shaking off dust (kai ton koniorton ton kollēthenta hēmin ek tēs poleōs hymōn eis tous podas apomassometha hymin, καὶ τὸν κονιορτὸν τὸν κολληθέντα ἡμῖν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ὑμῶν εἰς τοὺς πόδας ἀπομασσόμεθα ὑμῖν) was a powerful Jewish gesture. The verb apomassometha (ἀπομασσόμεθα, "we wipe off") indicates deliberately removing every trace.

Pious Jews returning from Gentile lands shook off dust to avoid bringing ceremonial defilement into Israel. By using this gesture against **rejecting Jewish cities**, Jesus' disciples declared them as unclean as pagan territories—a devastating judgment. The phrase "against you" (hymin, ὑμῖν) indicates the act serves as testimony against them, establishing their guilt.

Yet even in judgment, the gospel is repeated: **notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you** (plēn touto ginōskete hoti ēngiken hē basileia tou Theou, πλὴν τοῦτο γινώσκετε ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ). The perfect tense ēngiken (ἤγγικεν) emphasizes completed action—the kingdom arrived, they had opportunity, and they refused. This magnifies their condemnation: they will answer for rejecting salvation when it stood at their door.

Historical Context

Dust-shaking appears several times in Acts as apostles encountered rejection (Acts 13:51, 18:6). Paul shook his garments at Corinthian Jews who opposed the gospel, declaring 'your blood be upon your own heads.' This dramatic gesture communicated finality—the messengers discharged their responsibility; the rejectors face consequences. It also demonstrated that the disciples wanted nothing from rejecting cities, not even the dust on their feet. The symbolic act served as both testimony and warning to others who witnessed it.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does the symbolic act of shaking off dust communicate about the seriousness of rejecting the gospel?
2. How does repeating the gospel message ('the kingdom of God is come nigh') even in judgment demonstrate both grace and accountability?
3. When, if ever, should modern Christians employ dramatic symbolic acts to testify against those who reject the gospel?

Interlinear Text

Καὶ τοῦ κονιορτὸν τοῦ κολληθέντα ἡμῖν ἐκ τοῦ
Even which the very dust which cleaveth on us of which
G2532 G3588 G2868 G3588 G2853 G2254 G1537 G3588

πόλεως ὑμῶν ἀπομασσόμεθα ὑμῖν· πλὴν τοῦτο
city your we do wipe off against you notwithstanding of this
G4172 G5216 G631 G5213 G4133 G5124

γινώσκετε ὅτι ἥγγικεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς τοῦ βασιλεία τοῦ
be ye sure that is come nigh unto you which the kingdom which
G1097 G3754 G1448 G1909 G5209 G3588 G932 G3588

θεοῦ
of God
G2316

Additional Cross-References

Acts 13:51 (Parallel theme): But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

Luke 10:9 (Kingdom): And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.