

Luke 10:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

Analysis

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. The repeated ouai (οὐαί, "woe") is a prophetic lament pronouncing divine judgment—not a curse but a declaration of impending disaster. Jesus names specific cities: Chorazin and Bethsaida, Galilean towns where He performed miracles.

The term **mighty works** (dynameis, δυνάμεις) means acts of power or miracles—healings, exorcisms, nature miracles demonstrating Jesus' messianic authority. The conditional statement *ei en Tyrō kai Sidōni egenēthesan hai dynameis hai genomenai en hymin, palai an en sakkō kai spodō kathēmenoi metenoēsan* (εἰ ἐν Τύρῳ καὶ Σιδῶνι ἐγενήθησαν αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ γενόμεναι ἐν ὑμῖν, πάλαι ἀν ἐν σάκκῳ καὶ σποδῷ καθήμενοι μετενόησαν) employs a contrary-to-fact condition: if pagan Tyre and Sidon had witnessed these miracles, they would have repented.

The phrase **sitting in sackcloth and ashes** (en sakkō kai spodō kathēmenoi, ἐν σάκκῳ καὶ σποδῷ καθήμενοι) describes ancient mourning and repentance rituals (Jonah 3:6, Job 42:6). That pagan cities would have responded with repentance while Jewish cities remained hard-hearted magnifies the latter's guilt. Chorazin and Bethsaida had maximum revelation but minimum response—the essence of unbelief.

Historical Context

Chorazin was a town near Capernaum; Bethsaida was Philip's hometown and the location of multiple miracles (Mark 8:22-26, Luke 9:10-17). Despite witnessing Jesus' power firsthand, these cities rejected Him. Tyre and Sidon were Phoenician cities representing pagan wickedness—Jezebel's homeland (1 Kings 16:31), condemned by prophets (Isaiah 23, Ezekiel 26-28). Yet Jesus declares these notoriously wicked Gentile cities more responsive than privileged Jewish towns that saw the Messiah. This foreshadows Israel's rejection and Gentile inclusion in the church (Romans 11).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus compare unresponsive Jewish cities to pagan Tyre and Sidon, and what does this reveal about privilege and responsibility?
2. What does it mean that pagan cities 'would have repented' if they'd witnessed Jesus' miracles, and what does this teach about human accountability?
3. How should churches and individuals with access to clear biblical teaching respond, knowing that greater revelation brings greater judgment for unbelief?

Interlinear Text

οὐαί σοι Χωραζίν οὐαί σοι Βηθσαϊδά· ὅτι εἰ
! woe unto thee Chorazin ! woe unto thee Bethsaida ! for if
G3759 G4671 G5523 G3759 G4671 G966 G3754 G1487

ἐν Τύρῳ καὶ Σιδῶνι γενόμεναι αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ
in Tyre and Sidon had been done which the mighty works which
G1722 G5184 G2532 G4605 G1096 G3588 G1411 G3588

γενόμεναι ἐν ὑμῖν πάλαι ἀν ἐν σάκκῳ καὶ
had been done in you a great while ago in in sackcloth and
G1096 G1722 G5213 G3819 G302 G1722 G4526 G2532

σποδῷ καθήμεναι μετενόησαν
ashes sitting repented
G4700 G2521 G3340

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