

Luke 11:48

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers:
for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

Analysis

Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres (ἄρα μαρτυρεῖτε καὶ συνευδοκεῖτε τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν, ὅτι αὐτοὶ μὲν ἀπέκτειναν αὐτούς, ὑμεῖς δὲ οἰκοδομεῖτε αὐτῶν τὰ μνημεῖα)—Jesus interprets their tomb-building as *martureo* (bearing witness) that they *suneudokeō* (approve, consent to) their fathers' prophet-killing. They think they're distancing from ancestral sin, but actually confirming it. The structure 'autoi men...humeis de' (they indeed...but you) presents building tombs as completing rather than repenting of the fathers' murder.

This devastating logic exposes how religious activity can perpetuate sin while appearing to repent of it. They finish the prophet-rejection their fathers began—killing the prophets, then entombing them, then rejecting the Messiah the prophets announced. Jesus will soon quote them saying, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him' (20:14).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern tomb-building often functioned as reparation for injustice—subsequent generations honored those their ancestors wronged. Yet Jesus sees no genuine repentance. The lawyers' tomb-building was nationalist pride ('our prophetic heritage') not penitential acknowledgment of ongoing rebellion against God's messengers.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How might Christian veneration of biblical heroes or Reformation figures mask ongoing rejection of their actual teachings?
2. What is the difference between honoring past saints and perpetuating the sins that martyred them?
3. In what areas might you be 'building tombs' (external honor) while rejecting the message that got the prophets killed?

Interlinear Text

ἄρα	μάρτυρεῖτε	καὶ	συνευδοκεῖτε	τοῖς	ἔργοις	τῶν	
Truly	ye bear witness	that	ye allow	G3588	the deeds	G3588	
G686	G3140	G2532	G4909		G2041		
πατέρων	ὑμῶν	ὅτι	αὐτῶν	μὲν	ἀπέκτειναν	αὐτῶν	ὑμεῖς
fathers	of your	for	their	indeed	killed	their	ye
G3962	G5216	G3754	G846	G3303	G615	G846	G5210
δὲ	οἰκοδομεῖτε	αὐτῶν	τὰ	μνημεῖα			
and	build	their	G3588	sepulchres			
G1161	G3618	G846		G3419			

Additional Cross-References

James 5:10 (Parallel theme): Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

Matthew 23:31 (Witness): Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

2 Chronicles 36:16 (Parallel theme): But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org