

Luke 13:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?

Analysis

Jesus challenges the assumption that these murdered Galileans were worse sinners than others. The Greek phrase 'hamartōloi para pantas' (ἀμαρτωλοὶ παρὰ πάντας, 'sinners above all') indicates the people's belief that exceptional suffering proves exceptional guilt. This reflects the common ancient view (still prevalent today) that tragedy signals divine judgment for particular sins. Jesus categorically rejects this theology, which His disciples also held (John 9:2). The question expects a negative answer—'No, these Galileans were not greater sinners.' Universal human sinfulness means all equally deserve judgment; suffering does not correlate directly with individual guilt. This teaching prepares for the gospel truth that Christ suffered not for His own sins but as substitute for all.

Historical Context

Ancient Jewish theology, influenced by Deuteronomic covenant blessings and curses, often interpreted suffering as punishment for sin and prosperity as reward for righteousness. The book of Job challenges this simplistic theology, as does Jesus here. The Pharisees particularly emphasized the equation of suffering with guilt, which led them to avoid sinners lest they share their punishment. Jesus' teaching here undermines this entire worldview, establishing that all humanity stands equally guilty before God (Romans 3:23) and that God's grace, not human merit, determines salvation.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' teaching here relate to His statement that God 'makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good' (Matthew 5:45)?
2. What false comfort might people derive from believing that suffering always indicates personal guilt?
3. How should Christians respond to tragedy without either blaming victims or denying sin's reality?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Δοκεῖτε ὅτι
And answering G3588 Jesus said unto them Suppose ye because
G2532 G611 G2424 G2036 G846 G1380 G3754

οἱ Γαλιλαίους οὗτοι ἀμαρτωλοὶ παρὰ πάντας τοὺς
G3588 Galilaeans these sinners above all G3588
G1057 G3778 G268 G3844 G3956

Γαλιλαίους ἐγένοντο ὅτι τοιαῦτα πεπόνθασιν
Galilaeans were because such things they suffered
G1057 G1096 G3754 G5108 G3958

Additional Cross-References

John 9:2 (Sin): And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

Acts 28:4 (Parallel theme): And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

Luke 13:4 (Sin): Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

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