

Luke 13:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

Analysis

Jesus cites a second tragedy: '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?' The number 'eighteen' suggests Jesus refers to a specific, known incident. The 'tower in Siloam' was likely part of Jerusalem's fortifications or water system near the Pool of Siloam. This disaster was accidental (unlike Pilate's deliberate violence), yet people still interpreted it as divine judgment on particularly wicked individuals. Jesus again challenges this theology—the victims were not 'sinners above all men.' The term 'debtors' is interesting—sin creates debt to God that only Christ's payment can satisfy.

Historical Context

The Pool of Siloam, in Jerusalem's lower city, was crucial for water supply and had religious significance (John 9:7). Towers along Jerusalem's walls provided defense and surveillance. That such a structure collapsed, killing eighteen people, would have caused public discussion about divine judgment. In ancient thought, both Jews and pagans interpreted accidents and natural disasters as expressions of divine displeasure. Jesus' teaching was revolutionary—He denies that suffering always indicates personal guilt while affirming that all humanity deserves judgment and needs repentance.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' use of two different tragedies (one human violence, one accident) demonstrate the universality of His message about sin and repentance?
2. What does the image of sin as 'debt' teach about salvation and Christ's work?
3. How should Christians interpret natural disasters and accidents in light of Jesus' teaching here?

Interlinear Text

ἡ ἐκεῖνοι οἱ δεκά καὶ οκτὼ, ἐφ' οὓς ἔπεσεν ὁ
Or **those** G2228 G1565 G3588 **eighteen** G1176 **and** G2532 G3638 **upon** G1909 **whom** G3739 **fell** G4098 G3588

πύργος ἐν τῷ Σιλωὰμ καὶ ἀπέκτεινεν αὐτούς δοκεῖτε
the tower G4444 **in** G1722 G3588 **Siloam** G4611 **and** G2532 **slew** G615 **them** G846 **think ye** G1380

ὅτι οὗτοι ὀφειλέται ἐγένοντο παρὰ πάντας ἀνθρώπους
that G3754 **they** G3778 **sinners** G3781 **were** G1096 **above** G3844 **all** G3956 **men** G444

τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ
G3588 **that dwelt** G2730 **in** G1722 **Jerusalem** G2419

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 3:15 (Parallel theme): But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David.

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