

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

Psalm 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

ἢ	ἐκεῖνοι	οἱ	δεκα	καὶ	οκτὼ,	ἐφ'	οὓς	ἔπεσεν	ό
Or	those	G3588	eighteen	and	G3638	upon	whom	fell	G3588
G2228	G1565		G1176	G2532		G1909	G3739	G4098	
πύργος	ἐν	τῷ	Σιλωὰμ	καὶ	ἀπέκτεινεν	αὐτούς	δοκεῖτε		
the tower	in	G3588	Siloam	and	slew	them	think ye		
G4444	G1722		G4611	G2532	G615	G846	G1380		
ὅτι	οὗτοὶ	όφειλέται	ἐγένοντο	παρὰ	πάντας	ἀνθρώπους			
that	they	sinners	were	above	all	men			
G3754	G3778	G3781	G1096	G3844	G3956	G444			
τοὺς	κατοικοῦντας	ἐν	Ἰερουσαλήμ						
G3588	that dwelt	in	Jerusalem						
	G2730	G1722	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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