

Fact Check: Reconsidering Popularly Misinterpreted Scriptures

Sermon #9 | Luke 13:1-5 | Repentance and the Importance of Little Words

Luke 13:1-5 is a great example of “cafeteria Bible reading.”

- Rather than read “the whole counsel of the Word of God,” we are prone to “pick and choose” the parts that have direct meaning or quick application.
- When we do this, two things happen:
 - We almost always fall into *eisegesis*, and twist the Scripture to say *what we want or need it to say* rather than what it actually says.
 - We miss out on the blessing of *exegesis*, and fail to fully know and understand the revelation of Scripture. This makes much of Scripture a “riddle wrapped in a mystery inside of an enigma.”
- Luke 13:1-9 is an example of poor Bible reading habits.
 - Verses 3 and 5 are very often pulled from their context and used in a way that is not consistent with their words.
 - Verses 1-2 and 4 are wholly ignored.
 - Verses 6-9 are not connected in any way to verses 1-5 and thus seem random.

The eisegesis of verses 3 and 5

- Almost always, verses 3 and 5 are used evangelistically to communicate the “bad news” that repentance must take place if Hell is to be avoided.
- Two examples:
 - John MacArthur: *The Lord says, "Look, if you don't repent, a kind of repentance that embraces full trust in Jesus Christ as the only one who can rescue you from your sin, you will all likewise perish," apollumi, be destroyed, lost. He's not just talking about physical death here. He's saying you will end up at God's court sentenced to eternal judgment. Jesus says, "How do you understand calamities? Is it just the bad people that get killed?" No. No. It could be anybody. It could be you. And the lesson is, you better repent or when it does come, you're going to perish. And it will come, maybe in a calamity.*
 - John Piper: *If we are going to be the kind of witness for Christ that we ought to be, we need to know and feel what is really at stake. And what is at stake is that unrepentant people are perishing.*

The actual words of verses 3 and 5

- In the KJV, both verses are translated exactly the same.
- In Greek, the only difference in the two verses is in the words translated **likewise**:
 - Verse 2: ὡσαύτως [hosautos], meaning “as them.” An adverb translated *likewise* 13 times, *in like manner* twice, and *even so and after the same manner* once each (Strong’s G5615).
 - Verse 5: ὁμοίως [homoios], meaning *the same way*. An adverb translated *likewise* 28 times and *moreover and so* one time each (Strong’s G3668).
 - An adverb gives description to the verb. In this case, **likewise** modifies **perish**.
- The clear meaning: *Jesus told every person in his listening audience that repentance was necessary to avoid a particular kind of death.*
- Since this doesn’t fit the *evangelical narrative*, many of the translations have totally dropped the word **likewise**, including NIV, NLT, CSB, NET, *The Message*.

What can these words mean?

- The word **likewise** and all the other words begin to make perfect sense when you take them in context (and leave them in context).
- Verses 1-2 speak of a time when Pilate slaughtered certain Galileans who had come to sacrifice. Jesus warned that unless the nation repented, the same death would come to them.
- Josephus writes of the destruction of Jerusalem: *insomuch that in any persons who came thither with great zeal from the ends of the earth, to offer sacrifices at this celebrated place, which was esteemed holy by all mankind, fell down before their own sacrifices themselves, and sprinkled that altar which was venerable among all men, both Greeks and Barbarians, with their own blood.* (Wars of the Jews, 5:17).
- Verse 3 speaks of a time when a tower fell and crushed 18 people.
- Josephus writes further of the destruction of Jerusalem: *Now, the stones that were cast were of the weight of a talent, and were carried two furlongs and farther. The blow they gave was no way to be sustained, not only by those that stood first in the way, but by those that were beyond them for a great space.* (Wars: 5:269)
- Verses 6-9 give a warning about the fig tree, which is universally understood as a symbol of Israel. As prophesied, the Romans retreated in AD69, delaying the destruction of Jerusalem by one year.
- “The siege of Jerusalem was probably the greatest single slaughter in ancient history.” J.E. Lendon, *Military History Quarterly*, Summer 2005.