

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
UUU. Our Need To Heed God In Disastrous Events
(Luke 13:1-9)

I. Introduction

- A. Catastrophic events periodically occur both locally, nationally and internationally, and many people try to understand why God has allowed such events to occur, and what they should do about it.
- B. When asked about a terrible atrocity that occurred by Pilate to some Galilean Hebrews in Luke 13:1, Jesus' response was unusual in its context and therefore very instructive and applicable for us today.
- C. We thus view Luke 13:1-9 for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Our Need To Heed God In Disastrous Events, Luke 13:1-9.

- A. Jesus taught that when politically disastrous events occur, our response should be to heed God, Luke 13:1-3:
 - 1. Some of the people in the crowd who were listening to Jesus reported to Him of an atrocity that official procurator Pontius Pilate performed on some Galileans, Luke 13:1:
 - a. "Though there is no other record of this incident, apparently some Galileans were slain by Pilate's soldiers while offering sacrifices at the temple, so that their blood and the blood of the sacrifices were mixed," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Luke 13:1.
 - b. Jesus Himself was from Galilee (Matthew 2:22-23), so those reporting this atrocity may have tried to elicit a negative condemnation from Jesus about Pilate to entrap Christ into being punished by Pilate for His political critique of the official. (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 319)
 - c. On the other hand, the listeners may also have tried to get Jesus to express sympathy for these fellow countrymen of His, what would put Him in the position of critiquing God since the Hebrew people believed that such atrocities occurred to people because they were somehow guilty of some sin, Ibid.
 - 2. However, Jesus replied that the slain Galileans were neither worse nor less sinful than the rest of Israel's people, but that if Israel's people did not repent, they would all similarly perish, Luke 13:2-3.
- B. Jesus added that when other kinds of disasters occur, our response should also be to heed God, Luke 13:4-5:
 - 1. Christ referred to another tragic incident that occurred likely at a workplace incident. Eighteen people had died in the construction of a tower in Siloam, Luke 13:4a; Ibid. It may have been one of Herod's building projects, and the Hebrews would have concluded that the slain had been guilty of some great sin, Ibid.
 - 2. However, Jesus added that the slain were neither worse nor less sinful than the rest of Israel's people, but that if the people of Israel did not repent, they would all similarly perish, Luke 13:4b-5.
- C. Christ then gave a parable to explain how these lessons applied to the nation Israel of His day, Luke 13:6-9:
 - 1. Jesus spoke of a man who had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, but it did not at first bear fruit, Luke 13:6.
 - 2. The owner then told his vinedresser that he had waited for three years for fruit, but since the fig tree had not produced figs, the vinedresser was to cut it down that it not needlessly take nutrients from the soil, v. 7.
 - 3. The vinedresser then asked the owner to give the fig tree one more year to bear fruit, and the vinedresser would dig around its roots and add fertilizer to it, Luke 13:8. If the fig tree bore fruit, that would be good, but if not, then the owner might have the barren fig tree cut down, Luke 13:9.
 - 4. The fig tree represented the nation Israel, the Owner of the vineyard was God the Father and Christ was the Vinedresser, Ibid., p. 320. For three years, God had led Christ to minister to Israel in hope that Israel might bear the spiritual fruit of faith in Christ as Messiah and Son of God that the Lord might establish Israel's Messianic Kingdom. However, Israel had not believed in Christ, so God was digging around the roots of the tree and fertilizing it, a reference to allowing occasional political atrocities and workplace disasters to occur to some of Israel's people as wake-up calls for the rest of the nation to repent.
 - 5. Israel never did repent as a nation, so the fig tree of that generation of Israel was removed in A. D. 70 with the catastrophic fall of Jerusalem and the temple. The Messianic Kingdom would come to a later generation that had repented during the future Great Tribulation (Romans 11:26-27; Matthew 25:1-13).

Lesson: *Jesus taught that God allowed political atrocities, workplace disasters and other similar tragedies occur to motivate people to repent regarding sin and unbelief in Christ that God might save and bless them. However, if sinners do not repent, God's discipline will eventually severely fall.*

Application: *Whenever a political atrocity, a workplace disaster or some other calamity occurs that gets our attention, may we examine our hearts and lives to see if we are disobeying the Lord, and if so, repent as needed.*