

John 20:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

Analysis

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping (Μαρία δὲ εἰστήκει πρὸς τῷ μνημείῳ ἔξω κλαίουσα, Maria de heistēkei pros tō mnēmeiō exō klaiousa)—the pluperfect 'stood' (εἰστήκει, heistēkei) suggests she had been standing there throughout the disciples' visit, a statue of grief. **Weeping** (κλαίουσα, klaiousa)—strong emotional weeping, not quiet tears. The present participle shows ongoing action: she kept weeping.

As she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre—repeating John's earlier action (v.5) but with different motive: not investigating evidence but mourning loss. Her persistence where others departed positions her for greater revelation. Love's tenacity exceeds curiosity's engagement—she cannot leave while her Lord's body remains missing. This devotion, not intellectual superiority, makes her the first resurrection witness.

Historical Context

Jewish mourning customs included loud lamentation, especially for honored dead. Mary's weeping wasn't merely emotional but culturally appropriate ritual expression. Women often performed mourning roles professionally. Her status as a former demoniac (Luke 8:2) whom Jesus healed may have intensified her devotion—she owed him everything. Culturally, her testimony would carry no legal weight, making Jesus's choice to appear to her first a radical reversal of social hierarchies.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Why does persistent, emotional devotion position Mary for revelation that theological investigation (Peter and John) did not produce?
2. What does Jesus's choice to appear first to a woman—whose testimony was legally inadmissible—teach about God's values versus culture's?
3. When has your refusal to leave a place of grief or confusion prepared you for unexpected encounter with Jesus?

Interlinear Text

Μαρία	δὲ	είστηκει	πρὸς	τὸ	μνημεῖον	ἔκλαιεν	ἔξω
Mary	But	stood	at	G3588	the sepulchre	she wept	without
G3137	G1161	G2476	G4314		G3419	G2799	G1854

ὡς	οὖν	ἔκλαιεν	παρέκυψεν	εἰς	τὸ	μνημεῖον
as	and	she wept	she stooped down	and looked into	G3588	the sepulchre
G5613	G3767	G2799	G3879	G1519		G3419

Additional Cross-References

John 20:5 (Parallel theme): And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.