

Luke 23:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

Analysis

This verse captures a poignant moment on Jesus' path to Calvary. The phrase "**there followed him**" (ēkolouthei) uses the imperfect tense in Greek, indicating continuous action—they kept following. The group consisted of "**a great company of people**" (polu plēthos tou laou), emphasizing a large multitude, contrasting with the disciples who had fled.

Specifically mentioned are "**women, which also bewailed and lamented him**" (hai kai ekoptonto kai ethrēnoun auton). The verb koptō means to beat or strike, referring to beating the breast in mourning—a traditional expression of grief. The verb thrēneō means to wail or lament aloud. These weren't silent tears but open, vocal mourning.

The identification "**of women**" is significant. When male disciples fled, these women remained faithful. Luke consistently highlights women's role in Jesus' ministry. Their mourning was genuine grief for Jesus, but also (as Jesus explains in verses 28-31) they should mourn for themselves and their children due to coming judgment. This scene demonstrates both human compassion and divine foreknowledge of Jerusalem's approaching destruction.

Historical Context

This event occurred on Friday morning, April 3, AD 33 (traditional dating), as Jesus carried His cross through Jerusalem's streets to Golgotha. Roman crucifixion

normally required the condemned to carry the crossbeam (patibulum) through public streets as humiliation and deterrent. The route likely went through populated areas to maximize public viewing.

The women's public lamentation reflects Jewish mourning customs. Professional mourners were often hired for funerals, but these women's grief appears genuine. Their presence is striking given the danger of associating with a condemned criminal. Roman authorities could view such displays suspiciously, yet these women risked public mourning. Jewish women had followed Jesus throughout His ministry, supporting Him financially (Luke 8:2-3) and remaining faithful when male disciples abandoned Him. The 'great company' suggests Jesus' impact on Jerusalem's population—many recognized the injustice of His condemnation. Historically, this scene occurred just days after His triumphal entry when crowds welcomed Him. Now, though some mocked, many mourned. Within 40 years, Jerusalem would face Roman destruction (AD 70), vindicating Jesus' words to these mourning women.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Why does Luke specifically mention women in this scene while male disciples had fled?
2. What is the significance of the public nature of their lamentation?
3. How does this mourning contrast with the crowds' earlier calls for crucifixion?
4. Why does Jesus redirect their mourning from Himself to themselves and their children?
5. What does this passage teach about faithful discipleship in the face of danger and shame?

Interlinear Text

Ἐκολούθει δὲ αὐτὸν πολὺ πλῆθος τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ
there followed And him a great company G3588 of people also
G190 G1161 G846 G4183 G4128 G2992 G2532

γυναικῶν αἱ καὶ ἐκόπτοντο καὶ ἐθρήνουν αὐτόν
of women which also bewailed lamented him
G1135 G3739 G2532 G2875 G2532 G2354 G846

Additional Cross-References

Mark 15:40 (Parallel theme): There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

Luke 8:52 (Parallel theme): And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

Luke 8:2 (Parallel theme): And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

Luke 23:55 (Parallel theme): And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.