

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"** (ēkolouthēi) 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

Ἦκολούθει	δὲ	αὐτόν	πολὺ	πλῆθος	τοῦ	λαοῦ	καὶ
there followed	And	him	a great	company	G3588	of people	also
G190	G1161	G846	G4183	G4128		G2992	G2532
γυναικῶν	αἷ	καὶ	ἐκόπτοντο	καὶ	ἐθρήνουν	αὐτόν	
of women	which	also	bewailed	also	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.