

# Luke 23:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say,  
Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and  
the paps which never gave suck.

## Analysis

**For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.** This verse pronounces a shocking reversal of cultural values. In Jewish culture, barrenness was considered a curse and childbearing a blessing (Genesis 1:28, Psalm 127:3-5). The phrase "the days are coming" (erchontai hēmerai, ἔρχονται ἡμέραι) prophetically announces future judgment, echoing prophetic formulas throughout Scripture (Jeremiah 7:32, 9:25, Amos 4:2).

The triple description—"barren" (hai steirai, αἱ στειραὶ, sterile), "wombs that never bare" (koiliai hai ouk egennēsan, κοιλίαι αἱ οὐκ ἐγέννησαν), and "paps which never gave suck" (mastoi hoi ouk ethrepsan, μαστοὶ οἱ οὐκ ἔθρεψαν)—emphasizes completeness. Women who never conceived, carried, or nursed children would be called makariai (μακάριαι, "blessed")—the same word used in the Beatitudes (Luke 6:20-22). This indicates suffering so severe that childlessness would be preferable to watching children suffer.

This prophecy finds fulfillment in the AD 70 siege of Jerusalem. Josephus records mothers eating their own children during the famine, making barrenness appear blessed by comparison. Jesus' words echo Hosea 9:14—"Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts." When judgment falls on a society that rejected God's Messiah, even natural blessings become sources of unbearable grief.

## Historical Context

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First-century Jewish culture viewed motherhood as sacred duty and divine blessing. The worst curse imaginable was to see one's children suffer or die. During the siege of Jerusalem (AD 70), Josephus describes horrific scenes where starving mothers devoured their own infants (Jewish War 6.3.4). The Roman historian Tacitus corroborates these accounts, recording that 600,000 bodies were carried out of the city gates during the siege.

Archaeological excavations in Jerusalem have uncovered evidence of the catastrophe—destruction layers from AD 70, including arrowheads, burned buildings, and skeletal remains showing signs of trauma and malnutrition. The temple was burned, its treasures looted (depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome), and Jewish survivors were sold into slavery throughout the empire. Jesus' prophecy proved devastatingly accurate—in that judgment, childlessness was indeed preferable to motherhood.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What does this radical value reversal teach about the severity of divine judgment upon those who reject Christ?
2. How should the historical fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy shape our urgency in proclaiming the gospel before judgment comes?
3. In what ways does this passage challenge cultural assumptions about what constitutes blessing apart from relationship with God?

## Interlinear Text

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ὅτι	ἰδοὺ,	ἔρχονται	ἡμέραι	ἐν	οἷ	ἐροῦσιν	Μακάριαι
<b>For</b>	<b>behold</b>	<b>are coming</b>	<b>the days</b>	<b>in</b>	<b>that</b>	<b>they shall say</b>	<b>Blessed</b>
G3754	G2400	G2064	G2250	G1722	G3739	G2046	G3107
αἱ	στεῖραι	καὶ	κοιλίαι	οἷ	οὐκ	ἐγέννησαν	καὶ
G3588	<b>are the barren</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>the wombs</b>	<b>that</b>	<b>never</b>	<b>bare</b>	<b>and</b>
	G4723	G2532	G2836	G3739	G3756	G1080	G2532
μαστοὶ	οἷ	οὐκ	ἔθήλασαν				
<b>the paps</b>	<b>that</b>	<b>never</b>	<b>gave suck</b>				
G3149	G3739	G3756	G2337				

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 24:19** (Parallel theme): And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

**Hosea 13:16** (Parallel theme): Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.