

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE WORDS

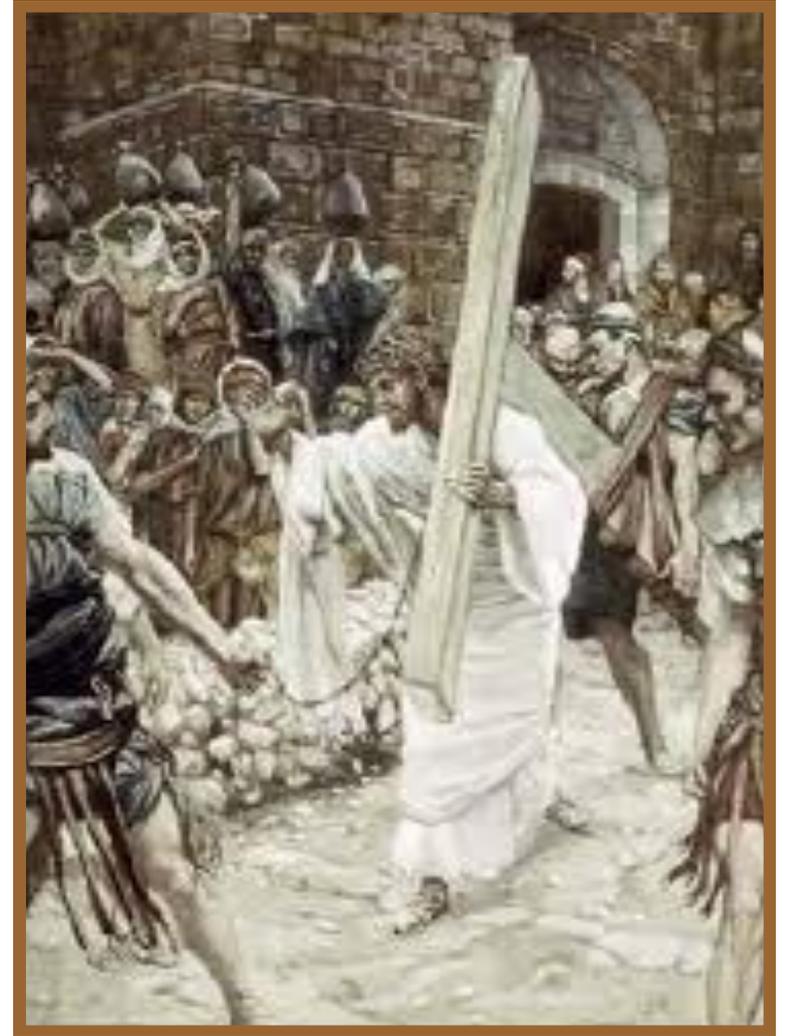
How is the cross to be preached? Jesus does not tell His disciples to get their acquaintances and neighbors together to watch His trial and crucifixion. Rather they must take the cross to the people in the preaching of the gospel. This is what the apostles do. In Acts 2, and in Peter's sermon there, he does not dwell on the details of Christ's suffering. In fact, says nothing of it, except that it happened. In verse 23, he says "whom ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," and in verse 36, "whom ye have crucified." There is the meaning of the cross, the power of the cross to bring salvation to sinners. It is not in the blood and gore and graphic visual display of His suffering, but in this, You are Guilty! In Acts 2, you read, they were pricked in their heart by that word. And they asked, "What must we do?"

The answer, Repent! Weep not for Me, But for Yourselves! Weep over your sins that nailed Him to that cross. I must weep because of my lust and evil thoughts, because of my covetousness and greed, because of my nasty and destructive words! This is why Jesus is hanging on the cross. Yes, there is an injustice! The injustice is this, we are not up there, and we deserve to be! The real issue is repentance and preparing ourselves for the day of God's wrath by weeping over our sins. Emotional appeals are not God's way of bringing men to salvation because you may get someone's interest and attention for a moment of time, but, there is no root. It never works because what happens is as the sun comes out, and tribulation and persecution arise because of the Word, they wither and die, and you never get them back! It is a manipulation of the emotions that is falsely labeled "a work of the spirit." This does not mean that emotions are bad, but it depends on their bases. Does weeping come because of a deep knowledge of sin? Are these emotions controlled by a mind that is regenerated, that understands the depravity of one's nature and depths of sin in one's soul, that understands sin and the justice of God, and in faith sees Christ as the one who suffered for that sin? The cross is not about crying, but about repentance.



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Daughters of Jerusalem



..." Weep not for Me,
but for yourselves..."

Daughters of Jerusalem by Rev. Rodney Kleyn

On the way to the cross, Jesus is led by a band of unfeeling Roman soldiers, men to whom the life of another was a trifle. The proud scribes and Pharisees and priests follow too, delighted at last that Jesus was under their power, glad that the eloquent tongue which had exposed their hypocrisy was now to be silenced by death. Then too, there was the angry mob following, shaking their heads, crying out "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Amongst all these were some, a group of women identified by the text as the "daughters of Jerusalem," weeping, or as the text says, "bemoaning and lamenting" the soon-to-come death of Jesus.

Up until this time, Jesus has been silent. Silent in His sufferings. This is the first time that He utters words from the time of His trial before Pilate until now. He has said nothing to His tormentors. He has been silent as the mob cried out, Crucify Him! He has given His back to those who smite Him. He has kept silent through it all. Now, He breaks that silence by turning to these weeping women and speaking. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days are coming in which..."

The text describes a group of women, the daughters of Jerusalem, as following Jesus to the cross, bemoaning and lamenting Him. These women are identified as women who live in the city of Jerusalem. They are not the honorable women of Galilee who were Jesus' disciples and of whom we read later also followed Jesus in His Passion. We also notice the text uses strong language to describe their behavior. The words used are "bemoan" and "lament". These two words emphasize their behavior. They were not just mourning; they were weeping uncontrollably and wailing and crying out loud.

This weeping is not just a show. There was real and genuine sympathy in this crying for Him. The women knew Christ and had heard His teaching in the Temple. They have seen Him healing the multitudes of sick. Perhaps some of them were even the personal beneficiaries of His miracles. These women had now witnessed His trial, heard the false witnesses accusing Him, Pilate's injustice in condemning Him and now seeing Him led to be crucified. They could not believe this was happening because nothing He did deserved this. They wanted Him to know that they felt for Him in His suffering.

Jesus turns and rebukes them for their weeping. His words are not a gentle reminder but, a rebuke that is almost sharp and is forceful. He corrects their behavior He is saying, are you doing something that you ought not to be doing. It is wrong for you to weep for Me! Stop doing it, and don't do it ever again!

Jesus does not condemn expressions of emotions as witnessed by the tears He wept at the grave of Lazarus, but He rebukes their weeping because they weep for Him. The problem is the women's weeping is motivated only by emotional and

personal disappointment. They did not understand who Jesus is and why He must suffer. They have missed the significance of the cross.

The cross explains Jesus' rebuke of these women. It is His suffering for us, on behalf of His people. In His suffering, He is doing exactly what He came to do. Also, we must not weep because in the cross, in His suffering in our behalf, He is demonstrating His love for Us.

Why did Jesus tell the women to weep for themselves? Jesus says that the days are coming, in which they will say, Blessed are the barren, and the womb that never bore, and the paps that never gave suck. Why would someone say that? How can someone without children be happy, be called blessed? Do you remember Hannah? She wept. It says in 1 Samuel 1:10, "She was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." You must notice that Jesus is speaking of something in the future. "The days are coming..." What days? Days when according to Luke 23:30, men will "begin to say to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us." Jesus' is quoting here from Hosea 10:8. Hosea is speaking of the destruction that will come on Israel in the Old Testament through their captivity. In Hosea 10:10 God says, "it is My desire that I should chastise them." Why then will they say to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us? Because God will come in chastisement against them. Now in Luke, why must the women weep for themselves and their children? The answer is because God is going to chastise them and their children.

Jesus is speaking of the soon coming destruction of Jerusalem under the Romans. A time when the women who were childless would be considered blessed because it would be so painful for the mothers to watch their children suffer. A time when suffering would be so great that men would cry out to the hills to cover them. A time when God's judgment would come on Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans. This is what Jesus means in Luke 23:31, "for, if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?" Jesus says to the Jews, if they (that is the Romans), will put me to death innocently, then think what they will do to you who are not innocent. If God will use the Romans to do this to me... then think what God will use the Romans to do to you who have not believed.

Why would God do this to the Jews? This takes us back to the weeping of the women. He will bring this desolation because they missed the cross of Christ and its significance. God will chastise them because the tears are not over sin, but out of sympathy, are tears of unfulfilled dreams, are tears because everyone else is crying. God will do it because, not only did they miss the cross, but they led their children down the same path. They have missed the cross and will go to hell for it. This is what the text is saying. Some people will go to hell, crying for Jesus. Just because they wept at the sight of the cross does not mean they are saved. The issue is not about weeping. It is not about how many tears you can shed at the sight of the suffering Savior. The issue is repentance.