

## **35. Gethsemane and Jesus Arrested**

### **John 18:1-14**

Warm-up question: I knew that there was going to be trouble when...finish the sentence and briefly describe what happened.

Alternative question: Has anyone ever come to your defense when you were in trouble? Have you ever come to someone else's defense?

#### **Gethsemane: The Place of the Olive Press**

As we begin John chapter eighteen, Jesus had finished praying and gathered the eleven disciples to make the rest of the journey to the Garden of Gethsemane. To get there, they had to cross the Kidron Brook. The historian Josephus tells us that there was an average of more than 200,000 lambs that were sacrificed during Passover. The blood from the animals was channeled down to the Kidron Valley on the east side of the Temple Mount of Jerusalem. During the feast of Passover, thoughts about sacrifice and redemption would have been prominent in the minds of God's people and visual reminders were stark. The blood from the sacrifices would have been visible as they crossed the Kidron Brook. Passover was always celebrated during the full moon. Let's picture Jesus and his disciples crossing this brook under the moonlight and making their ascent up the Mount of Olives on the eastern side of the Kidron valley. They enter a garden. John, in his account, does not give us the name of the garden. It is the other gospel writers that reveal the name of this garden, Gethsemane. R. Kent Hughes has made some interesting comparisons between the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane:

- The first Adam began life in a garden. Christ, the last Adam, came at the end of His life to a garden.
- In Eden Adam sinned. In Gethsemane the Savior overcame sin.
- In Eden Adam fell. In Gethsemane Jesus conquered.
- In Eden Adam hid himself. In Gethsemane our Lord boldly presented Himself.
- In Eden the sword was drawn. In Gethsemane it was sheathed.<sup>1</sup>

It was at this garden that Jesus often stayed overnight with His disciples and taught early in the morning at the Temple courts. Some, perhaps, would ask why He didn't stay with Lazarus, Mary and Martha who lived just on the other side of the Mount of Olives in Bethany? After all, we know that they were close personal friends of Jesus. It could be that He sought to protect them from the judgment of the religious leaders. Jesus had already drawn the attention and disapproval of the Pharisees, so anyone who was seen associating with Jesus risked paying a high price, even to the point of being put out of the synagogue (John 9:22).

The Mount of Olives was so called because of the many Olive trees that grew on the side of the mountain. It is likely that it was a private garden with a wall around it, the owner being in the business of pressing the oil from the olives. We don't know how far up the Mount of Olives the garden was, but the smoke rising from the sacrificial altar four or five hundred yards away on the

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, John, That You May Believe. Preaching the Word Series. Published by Crossway. Page 414.

Temple Mount could be seen anywhere on the side of the slopes.

John doesn't tell us anything about the wrestling in prayer that Jesus went through, so in order to get a complete picture of the details, we have to turn to the gospel of Luke and come back to John's narrative for the arrest.

<sup>39</sup>Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup>On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." <sup>41</sup>He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup>"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." <sup>43</sup>An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. <sup>44</sup>And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. <sup>45</sup>When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. <sup>46</sup>"Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Luke 22:39-46).

In the Garden, we are able to get a glimpse of the state of our Savior's heart in those final hours of His mortal life on earth. The spiritual stress He was under was so strong that He needed an angel to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43).

How much do you think Jesus knew about what was about to happen? We can only speculate here, but what do you imagine to be His greatest concerns at this time?

This event was no surprise to Jesus; He knew how much time He had to pray and had no thought of escape or avoiding what He knew was coming. Jesus knew that His hour had come (John 17:1). In this up close and personal view of our Savior here in the garden, we can see His extreme anguish, as evidenced by His sweat, like drops of blood. It is clear that He is preparing Himself, as well as His disciples for His final hours. Jesus chose this place. This was intentional; it was not by accident that Jesus came to this garden. So let's consider the significance of this place. "Gethsemane" literally means the place of the olive press. Olive oil was used for lamp lighting. It seems significant that the Light of the World would go through a crushing and pressing experience there in Gethsemane.

Jesus told us that we also, as Christians, are the lights of the world just as Jesus is the Light of the World (Matthew 5:14). If you want to shine brightly for God, be aware that you may encounter the darkness of a Gethsemane experience. There, you will have spiritual choices to make, whether to relinquish your will to Christ, or choose self-preservation. If we say, as Jesus did; "not my will but Yours be done", then we must trust God with the journey and the outcome. In this experience of pressure and brokenness, you will be tempted to give into your flesh nature instead of yielding your will to Christ. Although the Way of the Cross is hard and will bring pain at times, it brings forth much fruit. It is also the road to great joy and triumph, as Jesus has demonstrated for us.

We may assume that the closer we get to spiritual maturity (adulthood) in our Christian lives, the easier it is to hear the voice of the Spirit. Although for the most part, I believe that to be true, there are times when even a mature believer is left by God to make spiritually minded choices

under the watchful eye of a God who is pleased by faith. The Lord often leaves us to make the choice instead of telling us what to do. Why does God leave the decision with us? Have you ever wished He would just make things crystal clear? Many of us can relate with the disciple Thomas. He was willing to believe, but he wanted proof. To him, seeing was believing. He could not believe that Jesus had been resurrected until he had visible, hard evidence. Unless he could see the nail marks in Jesus' hands and put his finger where the nails were, and put his hand into His side, Thomas would not believe (John 20:25). The Lord was very gracious to him and presented Himself in bodily form for him to do just that. **Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 22:29).**

We want evidence to base our faith on, sense evidence, something we see or experience. We are used to this way of interpreting truth, but the Lord wants to sharpen our spiritual senses so that we learn to make decisions based on faith. This is the kind of faith that pleases God. Faith that hasn't seen evidence yet still wholeheartedly trusts. In His humanity, with all the unseen forces of evil seeking to influence His choices, Jesus made the choice; **"yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42)**

**Have you gone through a painful Gethsemane experience in your life? Has something positive resulted from that time?**

### **Christ Overwhelmed With Sorrow To the Point of Death**

When they arrived in Gethsemane, he went from them a stone's throw distance and began to pray on His knees (Luke 22:41). Matthew tells us that, at times, His posture was one of lying down with His face to the ground in impassioned prayer:

**<sup>37</sup>He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup>Then he said to them, "My soul is *overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death*. Stay here and keep watch with me." <sup>39</sup>Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, *if it is possible*, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:37-39).**

The phrase "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" describes the deepest emotional state a living soul can endure. In his gospel, Mark describes Jesus as being **"deeply distressed and troubled" (Mark 14:33)**. Jesus asks his disciples to keep watch with Him.

**Why could Jesus' disciples not stay awake to keep watch? What factors do you think contributed to the disciples falling asleep when He needed them?**

This was a time of spiritual warfare as well as great distress. It could be that they were very physically tired, emotionally exhausted, or that they did not want to face what was happening. In my opinion, it was also because they were all under great spiritual attack.

Luke describes Jesus as: **"being in *anguish*, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44)**. The Greek word here is translated

*anguish* and this is where we get our English word *agony*. The Greek word is used in terms of someone fighting a battle with sheer fear.<sup>2</sup>

Jim Bishop, in his book, *The Day Christ Died*, comments on His sweat being like drops of blood:

“Medically, this is called haematidrosis. It occurs when fear is piled upon fear, when an agony of suffering is laid upon an older suffering until the highly sensitized person can no longer sustain the pain. At that moment, the patient ordinarily loses consciousness. When that does not happen, the subcutaneous capillaries sometimes dilate so broadly that, when they come into contact with the sweat glands the little capillaries burst. The blood is exuded with the perspiration and, usually, this occurs all over the body.”<sup>3</sup>

I have read of this happening during the Second World War when Germany was bombing London in what was known as the Blitz. The daily pressure of the German bombing every night brought a number of cases where this occurred. The stress of fear on top of fear caused some people to sweat blood.

Some people believe that Luke’s comments, “his sweat *was like* drops of blood,” didn’t actually mean that Jesus bled through the sweat glands. There were just large drops of sweat. With this line of reasoning, they feel that the proper interpretation is that His stress caused Him to sweat more than usual, but why is blood mentioned? Remember that later on that night, it was so cold that Peter had warmed himself by the fire among Jesus’ captors in the courtyard of Caiaphas.

My point is that Jesus was not sweating because He was hot. It is possible that He was sweating from the energy of His impassioned praying or even fear or stress. If He were indeed sweating blood, it would have been evident by the color of His tunic when He came near, which the disciples may have also observed. I leave you to decide which interpretation you find to be the most believable. Personally, I think that the scriptures mention drops of blood because He was literally sweating blood.

What is meant by his words, “may this cup be taken from me?” (Luke 22:42). What does the cup represent, and why would He like it to pass?

<sup>17</sup>Awake, awake! Rise up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the *cup of his wrath*, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes men stagger (Isaiah 51:17).

The cup was a picture of the wrath of God that is poured out upon sin. A curse fell on the human race when Adam sinned. The Bible is very clear about the fact that we deserve spiritual death because of our sin and rebellion against God, the wrong choices we have all made. In the Garden of Eden, God told Adam that when he ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, then he would surely die. Adam did not die physically the day he ate, but he was spiritually separated from God and a barrier between God and man existed, a state of death in the eyes of

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<sup>2</sup> The Daily Study Bible, William Barclay, The Gospel of Luke, Saint Andrew Press Publishers, Page 271.

<sup>3</sup> The Day Christ Died by Jim Bishop. Harper San Francisco Publishers. Page 169.

God. The prophet Ezekiel spoke about this punishment on sin when he said, “The soul who sins is the one who will die” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

Matthew adds the words, “if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me” (Matthew 26:39). Why was it not possible for this cup to be taken away from Jesus? After all, we know that with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). Why should Christ be refused this one prayer?

Why did Christ have to drink this cup of God’s wrath? Why was there no other way?

If there had been any other way of redemption, the Father would have chosen it. There was no other way than God’s beloved Son being sacrificed in humiliation and extreme physical and emotional pain, culminating in the torturous death of being crucified. There was no other solution. Christianity is unique in this way. God provided the answer Himself. In no other religion do we see this plan of grace. There was only **ONE WAY**, and it involved God Himself becoming the substitute. A perfect sacrifice had to be made. Jesus was the only perfect sacrifice that would be sufficient for our atonement. In all other religions, man is given a set of rules or steps to try and satisfy God’s demands and become acceptable to God.

Here we see the love of God revealed. God planned Operation Redemption. God Himself would pay the substitution ransom, the sacrificial price. The price is free but not cheap. The price of our deliverance from sin was that it cost God His Son. He would take man’s place. The judgment was firm and just, the soul that sins shall die, but Jesus, God’s Son, would take our place, the just for the unjust to bring us to God.

<sup>18</sup>For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).

The love of God said “no” to Jesus, the only time a prayer of Christ was refused. There was no other way than that He should take the cup and drink it to the dregs.

<sup>12</sup>Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

When we truly understand all that God has done for us, the only response is love for the One who has made our freedom and deliverance from sin possible.

What was it that Christ abhorred so much that He would ask Father if there was another way?

I believe that the reason was more than His humiliation at the hands of evil men and more than being crucified. What was distinctly different was that Christ would be stained with your sin and mine. God laid on Jesus all the cumulated sin of the whole human race at the cross. Paul tells us that **God made Him [Christ], who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21)**. His perfect character would be stained by sins of the blackest sort, every sin that you and I have ever committed were laid on Jesus. Not only sins committed in the present but also those of the past and future. That is why He cried out from the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

There was a spiritual battle going on in the unseen realm against Jesus. If we could have seen into the spiritual realm, we would have witnessed the greatest battle ever fought in the unseen world. Through all of this, Jesus did not waver in obedience to the Father. What seemed to be a defeat in the eyes of men, and even among His closest loved ones on earth, was actually the greatest victory ever won, the victory over sin and death.

The famous English cricketer, C.T. Studd, was born into wealth and luxury in the 1870s. He received the finest education that money could buy, attending Cambridge University, where he became captain of the English national cricket team. C.T. Studd was considered England's greatest cricketer. He had everything going for him, a huge fortune laid at his feet at the death of his father. But God had a different plan for him than wealth in this world. He went to hear D.L. Moody speak about Christ and gave his life to the Lord. He chose to give up his estate and his fortune and give all to mission work by even going himself to China, India and Africa. To many people, that decision was a rash move and a tremendous waste of intellect and ability. But to Studd and six others who went, it was using their abilities to the fullest. They laid down their will to God's call and purposes. "Yet not my will but yours be done." He once said:

"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him" (C.T. Studd).

Have you ever laid down your will to God? Is your will in your hands or the Lords? At different times when I have been near death, I have realized that I am not in control of the day of my death, but Jesus is! Christ could have chosen the easy way out and called on His angels to help Him.

### **Jesus Arrested**

With a more complete picture of what happened in Gethsemane, let us now read John's account of Christ's arrest.

<sup>1</sup>When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it. <sup>2</sup>Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. <sup>4</sup>Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" <sup>5</sup>"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) <sup>6</sup>When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said. <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." <sup>9</sup>This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me." <sup>10</sup>Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) <sup>11</sup>Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" <sup>12</sup>Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander

and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him <sup>13</sup>and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. <sup>14</sup>Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people (John 18:1-14).

Judas knew the place where Jesus often slept through the night, so he brought a detachment of Roman soldiers and officials from the religious elite. The Greek word *speira*, translated as “detachment,” is a term to designate a specific subgroup of Roman soldiers sent from the Antonia Fortress situated on the northwest side of the Temple Mount where Pilate had his residence and the Roman garrison. This subgroup consisted of 450 fighting men. This was in addition to those sent from the Chief Priests and Pharisees. Some have estimated that there may have been as many as six hundred soldiers.

Why so many? It was likely that they were expecting a fight and that there might be more of Christ’s disciples in the garden with Him. They brought lanterns, perhaps because they were expecting Jesus to hide. Jesus didn’t wait for them to come looking for them, He took the initiative; He went out of the garden to them (John 18:4). His concern was for His disciples so that His prayer of protection in John 17 would be answered during the arrest. He was in control of the whole situation. He asked them, “Who is it you want?” <sup>5</sup>“Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) <sup>6</sup>When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground (John 18:4-6).

#### Why did the soldiers fall to the ground?

These soldiers came with swords and clubs ready for any eventuality. Roman soldiers were not known to be fearful about anything, and they certainly were not known to fall on the ground easily. They were ready for anything as they approached the garden. Imagine the scene, as this vast group falls to the ground under the heavy presence of the Lord. It is at the precise moment that Jesus utters the Greek form of the name of God, “I AM” (*egō eimi*), that these Roman soldiers fall to the ground. (The word “He” is absent from the Greek text and added by the translators to make the statement easier to understand in English.)

Again and again through the Book of John, we have seen Jesus adding the name of God, to different aspects of His character. I am the Gate; I am the Good Shepherd, I am the Light of the World, I am the Way, etc. I personally think that this was a display of raw spiritual power before these soldiers. Jesus was letting those before Him know that He was willingly giving Himself into their hands. What a picture it must have been, hundreds of men terrified of one Man and His eleven disciples, and only one of them is using a sword in defense. Twice Jesus asks them “Who is it you want?” before winning the freedom of His disciples. John tells us that it was at this point Peter lashes out with his short sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant.

<sup>10</sup>Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) <sup>11</sup>Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (John 18:10-11).

Peter, in his customary rash behavior, slashes at the Roman soldier named Malchus with his

sword, severing the soldier's ear. This was an invitation to fight. Why don't the 450 men attack Peter and the disciples? Although the scriptures are not clear on this point, it seems that the presence of the Lord had unnerved the soldiers. Again, the Lord Jesus was in complete control of the situation, reminding Peter that it must be this way, that there is a cup of suffering that He must drink to put away sin for all men. Notice that the healing was instantaneous. There was no hunting around for the ear so that Christ can heal the man by putting the ear back on and for it to be bandaged up. Luke tells us that Jesus put His hand to Malchus' ear, and it miraculously sprouted another ear—"he touched the man's ear and healed him (Luke 22:51).

Matthew states in his account, that Jesus tells them that it must be this way:

<sup>53</sup>Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup>But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (Matthew 26:53-54).

Jesus was in control at every point. He didn't run away. He confronted the armed soldiers. I choose to believe that it was the power of God that put them on the ground. We can also trust that supernatural power will be unleashed on our behalf when we say, "not my will, but yours be done." God can move when He gets the glory!

Have you ever been in a life-threatening situation? How did you handle it, and how did it change your perspective on life?

We do not know where the road will take us when we say "Your will be done." This can be challenging at times because one never knows how God will lead us or where He will take us as believers, but there is a peace that passes all understanding when our lives and will are given into His hands.

Many of you are at the cross roads of Gethsemane. Submitting to God's will is the big question: will you submit to His purpose for your life? Will you lay down your will and place your life into His hands? God's word tells us to...

*"fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2)*

Prayer: Thank you for the choice you made in Gethsemane, Lord. You looked forward and saw each of us, and joy came to your heart, which strengthened you for what you endured. Help each of us to place our will and lives into Your hands and trust You. Amen.

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