

Exalting Jesus Christ

"Gethsemane"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. On the evening before His crucifixion, Jesus met with His disciples one last time in an upper room.
 - A. The evening began with the celebration of the Passover meal.
 1. Jesus then instituted what we now call the Lord's Supper – a memorial that would be observed by His disciples until the end of time.
 2. Jesus also taught these faithful men many things about His work – a work they would carry on with the help of the Holy Spirit.
 - B. The evening ended with the Lord's prayer in John chapter 17, and with a song.
 1. **Matthew 26:30** – *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*
 2. The singing of a hymn was always the traditional way of ending the Passover meal.
 - a. This song would have been known as, "The Great Hallel" – a song consisting of the words of **Psalm 136**.

- b. It's a psalm thanking God for His enduring mercy, and is filled with references of God's grace toward His people Israel, and His deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.
 - c. But the psalm also praises the LORD of lords who performed all the mighty works of creation, and who delivered the people of Israel from all their enemies, and praises God who is the One source of all blessings.
 - 4. With this great psalm of praise still lingering in His ears, Jesus left the upper room with His disciples and made His way through the dark, narrow streets of Jerusalem to the Garden of Gethsemane on the nearby Mount of Olives.
- II. The Garden of Gethsemane, and what happened there, has come to mean so much to us today as Christians.
 - A. During the days of Jesus, the city of Jerusalem was crowded with buildings of various kinds and the homes of its inhabitants – not to mention the great Temple, and the Fortress of Antonia, where the local Roman garrison was quartered.
 - 1. Since there was virtually no room for gardens of any kind, those who were more affluent had gardens on the nearby slopes of the

Mount of Olives – located east of Jerusalem across the Valley of Kidron.

- a. Obviously the Mount of Olives has become a holy place for many – since the mount is now cluttered with churches of all kinds.
 - b. However, in the days of Jesus the Mount of Olives was the site of numerous gardens.
 - b. They were not the typical vegetable or flower gardens, but were quiet, shaded areas where the landowner could go to get away from the crush of the city.
2. The Garden of Gethsemane was apparently a favorite place for Jesus.
- a. John says, "*...Jesus often met there with His disciples.*"
(John 18:2)
 - b. Apparently, some wealthy friend of Jesus had given Him permission to use the garden whenever He needed to get away from the crowds.
3. The word "*Gethsemane*" literally means "oil press."
- a. Olives from surrounding groves would be taken there and pressed to extract the rich olive oil.

- b. Even though no one knows for certain where the Garden of Gethsemane was located, most believe it was somewhere in the dense olive groves near the summit.
- 4. From this location, it would be easy to look back into the city of Jerusalem.
 - a. You would also have a unobstructed view of the Temple and its surrounding courtyards.
- B. As we continue our series of lessons "Exalting Jesus Christ," we come to the eighteenth chapter of the gospel of John, and to "The Garden of Gethsemane."
 - 1. To understand what happened there, we're going to look at these events as recorded by all three synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke – and then consider some important details John tells us about that night in his gospel.
 - 2. To set the stage, let's begin by reading Matthew's account:
 - a. **Matthew 26:36-46** – *Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch*

with Me." 39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

40 Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The

spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 Again, a

second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it,

Your will be done." 43 And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

44 So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third

time, saying the same words. 45 Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting?

Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being

betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise, let us be going.

See, My betrayer is at hand."

BODY:

- I. There are several important things we learn about Jesus while He was in the Garden of Gethsemane.

- A. The first thing we notice is His loneliness.
 - 1. By the time Jesus and His disciples arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane they were physically exhausted and emotionally drained.
 - a. It had been a long day, and the Lord had told them many things that worried them – mainly that He was going back to the Father and He would no longer be with them.
 - 2. So, one by one all the disciples fell asleep.
 - a. Even Peter, James, and John, whom Jesus took aside to be with Him, eventually all fell asleep as well.
 - 3. Sadly, Jesus had to bear the loneliness of this moment without any friend to console Him.
- B. In Gethsemane, we also see the mental agony of Jesus.
 - 1. Jesus was agonizing over His pending crucifixion and all that would take place.
 - a. No one looks forward to their own death, especially the kind of death Jesus was about to endure – victims would often suffer unimaginable pain for hours.
- C. But in the garden, we also see the spiritual agony Jesus endured.
 - 1. Jesus knew He must die to bear the sins of the world. **(cf. Isaiah 53)**

2. When that moment eventually came, two things would happen.
 - a. First, Jesus would experience the horror of the sins of the world.
 - (1). Some sins are so horrible we don't even want to think about them.
 - (2). It would have been the same for Jesus.
 - b. And second, Jesus would also take upon Himself the guilt of those sins.
 - (1). Try to remember the guilt you experienced over the worst sin you've ever committed.
 - (2). Now, multiply that guilt by the countless number of sins committed in the past, as well as the countless number of sins being committed today, and add to that the sins that are yet to be committed in the future.
 - c. Just look at the agony as Jesus suffered alone.
 - (1). **Luke 22:44** – *And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*
 - (4). **Mark 14:35** – *He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.*

- d. The paintings we often see of Jesus kneeling, serenely praying with His hands gently clasped is not what we see in the gospel accounts.
 - e. Instead, we see Jesus praying face down in the dirt of Gethsemane, weeping in great agony, as He sweats profusely from overwhelming and unimaginable stress.
- II. But we also learn some very beautiful things about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- A. First, we see Jesus accepting the will of God.
 - 1. But more important than Jesus simply accepting God's will, is the way He accepted it.
 - a. **Mark 14:36** – *"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You, take this cup away from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."*
 - b. The word "*Abba*" is an Aramaic word that is very difficult to translate – we have no exact English equivalent.
 - c. "*Abba*" was a word a small child would use when speaking to his father whom that child loves deeply.
 - (1). It's a term of endearment – a word that conveys absolute and complete, unwavering trust and confidence.

- d. In using the word "*Abba*" in His prayer to God, Jesus is speaking to His Father in heaven as a little child would speak to his own father.
2. The words, "*not what I will, but what You will*" – or as the KJV renders it, "*Thy will be done,*" – are words that can be said several ways.
 - a. They can be spoken by someone who is simply giving up the fight – someone who feels the situation is hopeless.
 - b. Or, they can be spoken in anger and defiance – as though they were spoken by someone who deeply resents their circumstances.
 - c. Or, they can be spoken in complete love and trust.
 - (1). This is how Jesus said, "*Thy will be done.*"
 - (2). He spoke in the same manner as a child who was speaking to his own father whom he loves, and trusts, and respects.
3. It's important that we understand Jesus was not coerced, intimidated, or pressured into doing something He didn't want to do.

- a. Jesus obviously didn't want to suffer such a painful and horrifying death while at the same time bearing the sins of the world on the cross.
- b. But despite all that, He still trusted the Father completely, and was willing to place Himself in the hands of God to do His will.

III. Just as Jesus finished praying, the quietness of the garden was suddenly shattered.

A. Those that came to arrest Jesus that night had come fully prepared – apparently they were expecting some kind of confrontation.

1. This is suggested by two things:
 - a. One is the fact those who came to arrest Jesus were well armed.
 - b. And the other is the size of the force that came to arrest the Lord.
2. Matthew, Mark and Luke's account say these men were armed with "*swords and clubs.*" (**Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43, 48; Luke 22:52**)
3. And while Luke describes the number of men who came to arrest Jesus as a "*multitude*" (**Luke 22:47**); Matthew and Mark describe them as a "*great multitude.*" (**Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43**)

4. However, the gospel of John adds even more information about the size of the arresting force.

a. **John 18:3** – *"Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons."*

b. John called them *"a detachment of troops,"* along with *"officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees."*

c. The New American Standard Bible says this detachment of troops was a "Roman cohort."

(1). What is a cohort? The footnote in most Bibles defines cohort as a detachment that is "normally 600 men; a battalion."

(2). Vincent (Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament) says: "The 'band, or cohort,' was from the Roman garrison in the tower of Antonia."

(3). Thayer (Thayer's Greek Lexicon) says the word refers to "a military cohort... i.e. the tenth part of a legion (about 600 men (legionaries), or if auxiliaries either 500 or 1,000."

(4). Vine (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words) says this word, "was also used for a larger body of men, a cohort, about 600 infantry, commanded by a tribune."

5. Does this mean there were 600 fully armed Roman soldiers, in addition to a number of armed Jewish temple guards?
 - a. Quite possibly.
 - b. The truth is we really don't know the exact number – except that Matthew and Mark say the number was "great."

IV. As the soldiers break into the Garden of Gethsemane, several things happen in quick succession.

A. First, consider the reaction of those who came to arrest Jesus.

1. **John 18:3-9** – *Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" 5 They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. 6 Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. 7 Then He asked them again, "Whom are you*

seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8 Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," 9 that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

- a. The phrase, *"Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none,"* comes from the prayer of Jesus (**John 17:12**).
2. When Jesus identified Himself as the *"Jesus of Nazareth"* they had come to arrest, verse 6 says, *"they drew back and fell to the ground."*
 - a. While some commentators suggest these troops were overpowered by miraculous power, there is nothing in the text to suggest any divine power was being displayed.
3. These troops were obviously expecting resistance.
 - a. And so, when Jesus boldly identified Himself as the one they were seeking, they *"fell back"* into a defensive position.
 - b. Remember, it was dark, and they were in the middle of a grove of olive trees on the Mount of Olives – a perfect place for Jesus to position His followers to launch a counter-attack from out of the darkness.

- c. I think these soldiers were stunned by Jesus courageously identifying Himself - fearing they were about to be attacked by His followers.
4. Ironically, Jesus had to actually urge them to arrest Him. He said:
John 18:8 – *"I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,"*
 - a. No man can say that Jesus' life was taken from Him. He willingly laid it down!
- B. Next, Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us about the traitor's kiss – a kiss intended to identify Jesus to the soldiers who had come to arrest Him.
(Matthew 26:49; Mark 14:45; Luke 22:47-48)
 1. But there's something very significant in the word *"kiss"* found in Matthew and Mark's account.
 2. They use a Greek word that means, "to kiss tenderly" – meaning a kiss of tender affection and love.
 - a. Even though Judas was a thief and a betrayer, perhaps he still loved the Lord.
 - b. If that's true, then it explains the sorrow and guilt Judas experienced after Jesus had been condemned to death.
Matthew says he was, "remorseful."
- C. Next, came the sudden reaction of Peter.

1. **John 18:10** – *Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.*
 - a. Peter, who had once said he would lay down his life for the Lord, was obviously outraged by what was happening.
 - b. In one swing of his sword, he cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest Caiaphas.

2. **John 18:11** – *So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"*
 - a. Jesus commanded Peter to put away his sword because the Lord had every intention of surrendering to the soldiers who had come to arrest Him.
 - d. This was all part of the eternal purpose of God that Jesus had come to fulfill.

3. And, then in one final act of compassion and mercy, Jesus healed the severed ear.
 - a. **Luke 22:51** – *But Jesus answered and said, "Permit even this." And He touched his ear and healed him.*
 - b. I've often wondered what Malchus thought at that moment.

- c. He was probably stunned into silence, and stood in great awe over the divine power of Jesus, as well as the tenderness and forgiveness Jesus showed toward an enemy.

V. The arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane reveals two very important facts.

A. First, the arrest of Jesus shows that He went voluntarily.

- 1. Jesus went voluntarily simply because He had come to fulfill God's eternal purpose to redeem mankind.

- a. When Peter severed the servant's ear: **Matthew 26:52-53** –
But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"

- a. Jesus could have easily defended Himself – He could have called down 12 legions of angels.

- 2. How many angels would this have been?

- a. A full Roman legion consisted of 6,000 soldiers and 726 horsemen – about 6,800 soldiers and cavalrymen.

- b. But Jesus said He had 12 legions of angels at His disposal – more than 80,700 angels!

3. Rather than resist, Jesus gave Himself voluntarily to those who had come to arrest Him.
- B. The second important fact we learn about the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane is that it was the fulfillment of Scripture.
1. **Mark 14:48-49** – *Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? 49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."*
 - a. This means the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was not some situation that had gotten terribly out of control.
 - b. Rather this was an event that the Scriptures had been pointing toward since the beginning of time.
 2. There are literally hundreds of Old Testament prophecies about the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus.
 - a. Probably the most notable of all would be Isaiah chapter 53 – Isaiah's portrait of the suffering Servant.
 3. But in just fifty days from this night, Peter will stand on the day of Pentecost before some of these same people and boldly proclaim:
 - a. **Acts 2:23** – *"This Jesus, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain."*

b. This was all done by *"the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God."*

4. No matter how it might have looked to the disciples, God was still in control – and so was Jesus!

VI. With the arrest of Jesus completed, the disciples fled for their lives.

A. We can only imagine what went through their minds.

1. But we can be fairly sure the Lord's disciples never thought it would end like this.

a. Jesus had offered no resistance in His own defense.

b. In fact, He even allowed Himself to bound and led away like a common criminal.

2. I feel certain their whole theological view of Jesus came crashing down all around them.

a. From the very beginning they held an erroneous concept of Jesus' Messiahship – one in which Jesus would lead a victorious conquest.

b. But now, Jesus clearly failed to meet their expectations of power and victory.

- c. And so, no doubt fearing for their own lives, they did what we probably would have done under similar circumstances – they *"forsook Him and fled."* (**Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50**)

CONCLUSION:

- I. For Jesus, the end was only a few hours away.
 - A. From this point on, Jesus would walk alone.
 - 1. What Jesus had to do from this point on was something He would have to do alone.
 - 2. But even in this terrible moment of blackness and bitter agony, Jesus maintained control.
 - a. Jesus was not a helpless victim, but rather the Master of the situation.
 - b. This story never reads like the arrest of a criminal – unwillingly hauled before a judge, and then to his execution.
 - c. Rather this story reads like the willing sacrifice that He was – willingly laying down His life for His friends.
- II. But the most important thing you need to remember is Jesus willingly placed Himself in the hands of His executioners for you.
 - A. He died for you, so that you may live with Him.

1. Do you want to live with Him?
 - a. If you do, and yet you have never come to Jesus Christ in obedience to the gospel, then come now – believing in Him to be the Son of God, repenting of your past sins, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins.
 - b. And if you are a Christian but have drifted away from the Lord, then know that this same loving, compassionate Savior longs for your return – come back home by truly repenting of your sins and confessing those sins to your Father in heaven.