

## LESSON FIVE

# GETHSEMANE

Scriptural References: Matthew 26:30, 36-46; Mark 14:26, 32-42; Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1.

### A. **GETHSEMANE:**

About one-half mile east of the walls of Jerusalem at the foot of the Mount of Olives was located the Garden of Gethsemane. This was actually an orchard or a small farm where olive, fig and pomegranate trees grew. Gethsemane was the place of the "olive-press" where they crushed the olives and extracted the oil. It was to this place of the olive press that Jesus came with His disciples in order that He, too, might be crushed that the blessing and virtue of His life might flow forth.

The present Gethsemane is an enclosed garden containing eight ancient olive trees. It is claimed that these olive trees are the very ones under which Jesus suffered. However, this is not possible for the Romans under Titus destroyed all the trees near the city in the siege of 70 AD. Very likely the present trees had been planted by Christians later in church history.

Jesus frequently had gone with His disciples to this garden to pray. They all were familiar with this beautiful place.

After Jesus had prayed and they had sung a hymn, He led the eleven disciples out of the city gate, down into the deep gorge to the brook Cedron over which He crossed on a little bridge, and from thence to Gethsemane.

### B. **THE AGONY OF GETHSEMANE:**

Scriptural Reference:

*"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).*

Jesus met His greatest temptation, not in the wilderness, but in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the garden of the "olive-press" He was crushed. Here He encountered the moment of His greatest temptation, the time of His greatest suffering. Here He fought His greatest battle; He won His greatest victory.

Jesus said, *"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."* We may picture Him there as in agony He drops down and falls upon His face, while tears fill His eyes, intense suffering wrinkles His brow, and appalling grief quivers on His lips.

His agony was so intense that great drops of sweat dropped to the ground that seemed like drops of blood.

Many students of the Bible would look upon the temptation in the wilderness as the greatest temptation, and the death upon the cross as the time of greatest suffering. However, it was here that He encountered both His greatest temptation and His greatest suffering.

After the temptation in the wilderness Jesus was aided by an angelic visitation. Again in this struggle with Satan, an angel appeared from heaven and strengthened Him. It is the victory that He won here that helped Him to face His enemies and death on the cross calmly, confidently and victoriously.

### **C. THE CUP OF BITTERNESS:**

Scriptural Reference:

*"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6).*

Three times Jesus prayed, *"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."* What was this cup of bitterness? Let us establish in our minds, once and for all times, that it was not the physical suffering of the cross. Jesus was no coward. As thousands of martyrs have faced death by cruel and savage means, Jesus certainly was able to face death upon the cross without flinching.

In order to understand just what this cup of bitterness really was, we must remember that Jesus who was sinless became our scapegoat. The iniquity of us all was laid upon Him. The following verse will help us to understand just what took place in Gethsemane: *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (II Corinthians 5:21).*

It was this awfulness and horribleness of sin that caused the pure, sinless soul of our Lord to draw back from drinking of this cup of bitterness. The presence of sin would cause our Lord to taste of the terrible feeling of being forsaken by Deity. He drew back from the hiding of the Father's face when He "was made a curse for us."

### **D. TWO GARDENS CONTRASTED:**

It certainly is profitable to draw a comparison with the Garden of Eden. In both gardens Adam and Jesus entered sinless but both left the respective gardens under the weight of sin. Adam carried a load of sin, which he would pass on to every member of the human family with the one exception of Jesus Christ. Jesus left the garden of Gethsemane under the load of sin of the whole human family including Adam, which would be carried to Calvary where the penalty for that sin would be fully paid.

Both Adam and Christ left the respective gardens facing death - Adam to die because of his own sin and to pass the penalty of death on to all who would be born thereafter, Jesus Christ to die for the sins of others and by so doing save men and women from the penalty of death.

The great difference between Adam and Jesus is brought out in their attitude towards the will of God. Jesus submitted Himself to the will of God and said, *"Not my will, but thine be done."* Adam rebelled against the will of God and by his act of disobedience said, *"Not thy will, but mine be done."* Here lies the basic difference between our first parent and our Savior. By submission and obedience Jesus won the victory; by rebellion and self-will Adam suffered defeat.

By Adam's self-will and disobedience in the Garden of Eden, Paradise was lost to the human family; by the obedience and humility of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane; Paradise is regained to the redeemed.

## E. THE FAILURE OF THE DISCIPLES:

When Jesus entered Gethsemane He left eight of His disciples just inside the gate with instructions to watch. He took the inner circle, Peter, James and John, with Him farther into the garden. Apparently He knew that He would need encouragement and strength and wanted these three to help Him pray through to victory.

He entered the garden about a stone's throw farther and began His agony of prayer and travail. Three times He came to His disciples and each time found them sleeping. The disciples were exhausted and extremely weary. They simply could not keep their eyes open. He exhorted them to keep awake and rebuked them for their sleeping. However, he does excuse them somewhat when He said, "*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" Jesus let them know that He understood the weakness of the flesh.

We may be quick to condemn the disciples for failing in this moment of great crisis. However, there are two facts, which we must remember:

1. It had to be this way. Jesus had to suffer alone. There could be absolutely no one who could help Him in this hour of His greatest battle and suffering. Therefore, we could conclude that God had ordained that no one would be awake encouraging our Lord at this time.
2. The disciples were ignorant of the crisis of the moment. They did not and could not understand the battle that was being fought and won just a few yards away. If they had known even in a small way just what was transpiring they would have been wide awake. Slumber would have fled away.

Can it be that this is the reason why the church today is so sleepy? Few people today are aware of the grave spiritual crisis in the world and the battle that is being fought. As a result they are overcome with spiritual slumber.

LESSON FIVE

SELF HELP TEST

- A. Describe the Garden of Gethsemane.
- B. What was the cup of bitterness our Lord drew back from?
- C. Why did the disciples fail the Lord in Gethsemane?
- D. What contrast may be made with the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane?