

Unparalleled Suffering

Matthew 26

The day transitioned into night; the heat of the day had been replaced by the cool of the evening. Twelve men walk from the upper room to the garden where suffering the likes of which have never been seen or will ever be seen again were about to take place. The infinite and the finite meet on the cusp of the most significant event ever to take place, anywhere. They witnessed Judas departure, the institution of the Lord's Supper, the conviction of Peter and the Lord repeat His prediction that all will fall away. All but one were unaware of the great power they would experience, the fear that would grip their souls and cause them to run in fear, confusion and apparent defeat. They walked down the hill, across the Kidron valley, on the Mount of Olives, to a garden called Gethsemane which means "oil press". Upon entering, eight were told to go over there and pray while Jesus took Peter, James and John a little further into the garden. There amidst the quiet of the evening, the illumination of the heavens and the light of the Temple, Jesus tells His companions His soul is deeply grieved to the point of death, stay here and keep watch with Me. Even though they could not bear His burden they could watch with Him and be there for Him. He went a little beyond them and prays to His Father, "if it is possible let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." It was a cup that contained far more than pain and suffering and death for in it the unimaginable price that must be paid to atone for every sin of every person who had ever or would ever walk on the face of this planet. It was a cup than contained the consequences and weight of every sin concentrated in one moment of time. Jesus returns to where He told them to keep watch only to find Peter, James and John asleep. Even though they had never seen Jesus in this situation before, even though he told them His soul was deeply grieved to the point of death, their level of concern did not exceed flesh's desire to sleep. He questions Peter, the one promised to never fall away and die for Him, "So you men could not keep watch with me for one hour?" The struggle between Christ's deity and humanity continued, ever increasing in intensity on every front. No one has experienced the supreme stress of body, soul and mind as our loving Savior. He leaves them to pray to the Father, "...if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done." Jesus returns and finds them sleeping again. He turns to go back into the recesses of the garden to pray the same thing again. Having spent hours in prayer, the stress He experienced was so extreme capillaries that fed His sweat glands burst and His sweat fell like drops of blood upon the ground.

The time for prayer was over as a band of lights like fireflies appear moving across the valley toward them. Jesus awakens his disciples saying, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; behold the one who betrays me is at hand". The torch lit faces revealed a great number of men, some from the Sanhedrin, some chief priests and elders of the people, some Roman soldiers and others temple guards armed with clubs and swords. As the two groups meet, one approaches Jesus and says, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kisses Him. The signal was complete, the deed was done, and the actions suggested by Judas came to fruition as they laid hands on and seized Jesus. As tensions increased, Peter draws his sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave. Jesus intervenes tells Peter to put back his sword, for He needs no assistance, legions of angels were at His disposal if He chose to use them, but this was not the time or the place for such action. Turning to the multitudes He calls them out, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me". The events of the evening were all orchestrated so the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled. All the disciples leave Him and flee, just as He said.

The events of the evening were not over, men driven by anger were waiting for Jesus' arrival, among them were Caiaphas the high priest, the chief priests and the whole Council. They met, in the middle of the night, to find something that would enable them to eliminate this problematic person. Finally, the chief priest stands up and says, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus unflinchingly responds, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." Never, in the history of man, did such a momentous evening transpire that so changed the course of men's destiny. The only innocent, sinless man submitted to the Father's plan to save us all. The cup would not pass, its contents had to be ingested, for there were no other options, if we were to be saved.

- 1. What were “all these words”? What reminder does Jesus provide to His disciples? What was the Jewish leadership doing behind the scenes and what were they afraid of? What do we know about Caiaphas? (Check other resources)**
- 2. After Jesus teaching and reminder of what was about to occur, where did they go? What happened when Jesus was “reclined at the table”? How did the disciples react? Explain Jesus response. (6-13) Outline verses 14-19. In these verses, what do we learn about Judas Iscariot, the chief priests, and preparations for the Passover?**
- 3. Verses 20 – 35 describe both the Passover meal and the institution of the Lord’s supper. Describe the events that led to the Lord’s revelation of the one who would betray Him. What happens after Judas leaves? (26-30)**
- 4. What conversation did Jesus have with His disciples while they were walking out of the city, through the Kidron valley to the Mount of Olives? How did the disciples respond? What did Jesus tell Peter? What happened in the Garden of Gethsemane? What did Jesus pray for? How would you describe the actions of the disciples?**
- 5. List the events that occur in the Garden of Gethsemane after Jesus completed his prayer and woke up the disciples. (47-56) Verses 57 thru 68 describe the events that take place when Jesus was taken to Caiaphas’s house. What happened and what in particular caught your attention?**
- 6. What three encounters fulfilled the words Jesus spoke to Peter in verse 34? When did Peter remember Jesus words and what did he do once he remembered?**