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## Approaching Gethsemane

### Introduction

Gethsemane! What impressions it brings to the believer's mind; a cold and dark night (Jn. 18:3, 18), a weeping Christ (Heb. 5:7). While Gethsemane is not mentioned here, this is where it is understood to indicate sleeping disciples (Matt. 26:40) and a traitor in fellowship (Lk. 22:47) with satanically blinded (2 Cor. 4:4) and energized men.

The record of it is an extended invitation to ponder profound mysteries with soul-searching pondering, which ought to result in the worship of our Lord. The person and work of the Lord is too big to comprehend therefore, we must consider the Lord and His work in small sections. When Moses saw the burning bush and turned aside to see the great sight, he was told he was on holy ground (Ex. 3:5). As we consider Gethsemane, the portal to Calvary, how holy it is, and how it behooves us to enter with holy awe and solemnity.

When the Holy Spirit seeks to introduce us to our Lord in any of the Gospels, He does so in a developing manner. Gethsemane is then seen as a development of that which had gone before and the introduction of that which follows. In this perspective, Gethsemane is preceded by the upper room ministry of the Lord; His approach to the garden; crossing the Kidron; and into Gethsemane.

### The Upper Room Ministry (John 13-17)

As I write, "The upper room ministry", I recognize that this, to my mind, is possibly not accurate for the Lord said, "Arise let us go hence" (Jn. 14:31). Whither this meant for them to leave the upper room and begin the walk to Gethsemane or indicated a change of subject, is not under discussion here. Neither is the question if whither Judas was at the institution of the supper or not.

There is a beautiful distinction between the records of Matthew and Luke when the Lord and the disciples sat down.

- a) "He sat down with the twelve", that is, He sat with them, an intimation of infinite grace (Matt. 26:20).
- b) "He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him", that is, they sat down with Him, and that is infinite privilege (Lk. 22:14).
  - i) There is recorded in Ex. 24:10-11 a similar hallowed situation for the elders of Israel, "And they saw the God of Israel . . . they saw God, and did eat and drink". Then it comes to us for at that holy convocation, the Lord's Supper, we meet the risen Lord, He is our glorious Host, and we eat and drink in remembrance of Him. Profoundly sacred and holy hour, and yet, how easily it can become a mere formality.

That upper room atmosphere was indescribably solemn and sacred. No one can comprehend the emotions that filled His heart and mind as He met with the disciples and Judas, and apart from Judas, none would never forget this place. It was pungent with memories of their last few hours together before the Jewish people "slew" the Lord (Acts 5:30; 10:39). Here the Lord would:

- a) Keep the Passover which He had earnestly longed to keep (Lk. 22:15).
- b) Teach the disciples lessons in humility (Jn. 13:4-15).
- c) Unveil the betrayer (Jn. 13:18-26).
- d) Institute the Lord's Supper (Lk. 22:19-20).
- e) Teach the pathway to holiness (Jn. chapters 13-17)

What a glorious man He was despite all which lay ahead of Him.

- a) He thought of others and that which lay ahead of them (Lk. 23:28).
- b) In contrast to the loveliness of His thoughtfulness, a stark dark fact would be seen in it's greatest clarity. Dark is the attitude seen in that sacred hour when the pride of life erupted from the disciples' hearts, resulting in strife as to who should be the greatest (Lk. 24:24). This was not the first time the egotistic grasping for personal glory had been manifested (Lk 9:46). That which is amazing is that, like a suppurating boil, it spewed out it's self-centeredness at the very time when Christ is showing exceeding

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thoughtfulness. In this same time span, the devil entered into Judas, which resulted in his going out to fulfill the pledge he had made with the chief priests two days before (Jn. 13:30; Mk. 14:1, 10-11). The Holy Spirit caused it to be recorded, “and it was night” (Jn. 13:30).

- c) When the Passover and institution of the supper was over they sang a hymn (Matt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26). Singing as we normally may, we do when we are joyful, but it is very hard to sing when facing, or during, great darkness and grief. Possibly the Lord would have led the disciples in the singing, and one cannot help but wonder, did He think of a time yet to come when He would rejoice over His own with singing?  
“The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (Zeph. 3:17)
- d) In the upper room, the singing would have been with deep thoughtful contemplations and with intense personal affirmations. Would He have sung the sentiments of, “Great Hallel” (Psa. 115-118)? It is with a holy astonishment we wonder how could He have sung:
  - i) “Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield” (Psa. 115:11)
  - ii) “ I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul” (Psa. 116:1-4)
  - iii) “I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid” (Psa. 116:14-16)
  - iv) “I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day, which the LORD hath, made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee” (Psa. 118:21-28)
- e) Profound contemplations! After the singing the Lord says “Arise, let us go hence” and they leave the room for the walk to Gethsemane.

### The Approach To Gethsemane

The pathway to Gethsemane and ultimately Calvary was one that had begun in eternity past, which in its progression necessitated the journey from Heaven to earth, followed by the earthly journeys of Christ. For six days prior to the crucifixion, the Lord had been moving between Bethany and Jerusalem.

- a) Eventually the moment came when the last “free” journey was made with the walk to Gethsemane. During that walk, last words would be spoken and illustrations given.

### The Crossing of The Kidron

- 1) David the overcomer
  - a) The unpretentious crossing the brook is filled with emotion. This is David’s greater Son, following the footsteps of his illustrious father. What an overcomer David had been.
    - i) In the time of war he fulfilled the will of his father by looking after the sheep, thus overcoming an inquisitive spirit (1 Sam. 17:13-15)
    - ii) Possibly when looking after the sheep, during the night he meditated on the wonders of God and creation (Psa. 8 & 23)
    - iii) His brothers accused him wrongfully but He overcame retaliating to their ignorance and assumption (1 Sam. 17:34-37)

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- iv) The time came when he faced the lion, the bear, and ultimately Goliath. He overcame intimidation (1 Sam 17: 34-37)
- v) Then opportunity came when he could have had Saul slain, but did not. He overcame impatience (1 Sam. 24:3-16)

#### 2) Christ the Overcomer

- a) No matter how great an overcomer David was, Christ is the superior Overcomer.
  - i) He overcomes every temptation by Satan (Matt. 4:1-11)
  - ii) His saying is recorded, "I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33)
  - iii) He was soon to face the very citadel of Satan, death, but He overcame that (Heb. 2:14)
  - iv) In Revelation, as the glorious Victor, He overcomes the armies of the earth (Rev. 19:17-21)
- b) In going over the Kidron, the Lord goes over as the rejected God appointed Shepherd King, just a David did. David had crossed the Kidron weeping, and despite having shown grace to an unrepentant son, he was an outcast by the son to whom such kindness had been shown. It was an ultimate act of treason against the King.
  - i) It is so solemn to read in (1 Sam. 8:7) how that Israel rejected God as King, despite all His grace and kindness to them (1 Sam. 10:18-19).
  - ii) Soon they were to shout, "We have no king but Caesar" (Jn. 19:15), thus rejecting Christ as King despite all the Lord's acts of kindness to them.
  - iii) Even as the Lord is crossing the Kidron, Judas is working his treachery against Him.
    - 1. Is this in part why He wept in Gethsemane, knowing the sorrow of unrequited love from the nation and the horrors which lay ahead of the inhabitants and Judas?
  - iv) An indication as to David's greatness is seen in that in his rejection, he stopped to worship God (2 Sam. 15:30, 31, 32). Far superior is the greatness of our Lord in knowing that full rejection would soon be the attitude of His own. He goes over the Kidron in grief of soul, yet worships God in the fulness of His yielding to the will of God (Lk. 22:42). Thus, He passes over the Kidron.

*. . . Rowan Jennings*