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## The Prayers and Postures In Gethsemane

### The Postures of The Lord In Gethsemane

The Holy Spirit tells of two, and possibly three, postures of the Lord in Gethsemane. They are postures which there is no reference to Him taking anywhere else. He knelt down (Lk. 22:41); He “fell” (Mk. 14:35) (Lit. “was falling on the ground”, Robertson’s N T Word Studies and Linguistic key to the Greek New Testament by F. Rienecker and C. Rogers); and He fell on His face (Matt. 26:39). Whither these latter two references are the same or Matthew 26:39 is an extension of Mark 14:35, I cannot tell. The man with the lunatic son knelt before the Lord (Matt. 17:14) as did the leper (Mk. 1:40). To see the Lord kneeling is astounding because there had been times when people knelt before Him as they beseeched Him in their distress. They were aware that He was the only one who could help (Matt. 17:14; Mk. 1:40). In Gethsemane, the Lord in His distress kneels to the only one who could help Him, yet God is silent. The Holy Spirit draws aside the curtain and presents an awe-inspiring sight, the Lord of glory lying prostrate on the ground. In John 11:41 the Lord lifted His eyes to God, now His face is on the earth. This is utter prostration and heart breaking imploring. No other can ever know anything of the unspeakable agony of this experience. We are entering a sphere of incomprehension when pondering the completeness of the humanity of the Lord. Being deity, He never used His deity in any circumstance but lived life as an ordinary human being. What an amazing sight that must have been to the angelic hosts, to behold the Almighty, the Lord who is God, lying in unutterable grief on the ground His hands had made.

Another realization is that the Lord’s posture of lying on the ground indicates weakness, and to help meet his need the angel was sent. This might sound wrong but the inspired writer tells why the angel was sent and that the Lord was crucified in weakness (2 Cor. 13:4). God only sends His angels on solemn responsibilities and we can be assured it was with a profound sense of responsibility the angel came to strengthen the Lord. What precious lessons we learn here. For our Lord to be fully qualified as a High Priest, He must learn the need of strengthening from on high, not using His deity to strengthen Himself, but be in a state of complete dependence on God. One wonders which is the greater wonder, the One who is the Lord God needing strengthening or the not using of His divine power to strengthen Himself. How infinite is this Gethsemane marvel, the weakness and the weeping of the Lord, yet the Lord is mighty in battle (Psa. 24:8). Human or angelic minds can never fathom the depths of such truths. The One who is, Jehovah of Hosts, the Almighty, is lying on the ground and tears are coursing down the face of deity!

In the Psalms we are prophetically given the attitude of the Lord to his adversaries, “For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love” (Psa. 109:2-5). How beautifully it says, “I gave myself to prayer”.

The scriptures are emphatic about the times the Lord prayed in Gethsemane and despite the multiplicity of the pleadings, the earnestness did not decrease as the hour progressed. It is an interesting pondering to consider, “Why did the Lord pray three times?” In the passion narrative there are multiple triplets such as:

- a) There are three disciples who are brought deeper into Gethsemane with the Lord (Mk. 14:33)
  - b) Peter denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:34)
  - c) Pilate says that he finds no fault in the Lord three times (Jn. 18:38; 19:4, 6)
  - d) The Lord prays three times (Matt. 26:44)
  - e) The Lord gave three prophecies:
    - i) The disciples would forsake Him (Matt. 26:31)
    - ii) Peter would deny Him (Matt. 26:34)
    - iii) They would see Him again in Galilee (Matt. 26:30-36)
1. Taking the scripture, “A threefold cord is not easily broken” (Ecc. 4:12), I perceive these being used in the sense of public verbal confirmation of affirmation in absoluteness.

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### The Prayers of Gethsemane

#### The example of the Lord

- a) One of the glorious truths to be learnt from the example of our Lord is, when He was facing the overwhelming experiences of being forsaken by God, He flew to, “The Rock that is higher than I” (Psa. 61:2).
  - i) At times in life we face the possibility of impending storms. It may be the imminent death of a beloved child, the major surgery of ones beloved, the loss of a business, a job, a home, or personal health. Then we, like Christ, must go to God and find the strength to honestly say, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Lk. 22:42). With the Lord it was not just a possibility, but an assured reality.

#### The prayers of the Lord in general

- a) It is a matter to be wondered at when we read of the Lord praying in Gethsemane for he, being God, was the one who heard prayers (Psa. 65:2). As a man on earth, so complete and perfect was His humanity that prayer was an integral part of His life. Thank God for the precious distinction between the prayers of the Lord and ours in that, He never presented Himself to God by the acceptability of another, a matter we must do. The people and priests of the Old Testament could only approach God by way of a sacrifice, we by the acceptability and approachability secured on the sacrifice of the Lord, but Christ never did. Blessed thought, there was never anything in Christ that necessitated a mediating sacrifice, never anything which caused a disturbance in the fellowship between He and the Father, and never the grieving or quenching of the Holy Spirit. Many denominations have a “prayer book”. The Lord also had one! As we listen to the prayers of the Lord we discover that the book of Psalms was His “Prayer Book”. He began each day as a Servant in communion with His God and Father.
  - i) “The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (Isa. 50:4). This informs us of the priority of His life, but now what He prayed the Psalmist was caused to write, “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up” (Psa. 5:3). Perfectly, this was the attitude recorded by Mark, “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mk. 1:35).
- b) It was not just in the morning the Lord prayed:
  - i) He prayed at the end of the days, “He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come” (Matt. 14:23).
  - ii) He knew what it was to spend entire nights in prayer, “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” (Lk. 6:12).
  - iii) Furthermore, His praying did not end on earth, but even now in the glory of eternal bliss He is caring for His own and praying, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).Surely, it is not something to be wondered at that when facing the darkest hours, He prayed.

There is beauty in the moral character of each gospel in that it is only in the gospels where we read of the transfiguration, that we read of Gethsemane. A further distinction is seen in the contrast between the prayer of the Lord in Gethsemane and that in John 17. In fact, the only point they have in common is the word, “Father”. In John the Lord does not say, “Abba Father or O my Father”, but, “Holy Righteous Father”. Tabulated they are as follows.

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Gospels	Reference	John	Reference
Gethsemane	Matt. 26:36	No Gethsemane experience recorded	
No High Priestly prayer, Speaking to the disciples	Jn. 13:5; 16:33	High Priestly prayer, Speaking to His Father	Jn. ch. 17
Father, Abba Father, O my Father	Lk. 22:42 Mk. 14:36 Matt. 26:39	Father, Holy Father, Righteous Father	Jn. 17:1, 11, 25
Turmoil & agony	Lk. 22:44	Calmness & serenity	There is no crying but He was in control (Jn. 18:4)
Alone	Matt. 26:36-39	With disciples	Jn. Chs. 13-17
Prays concerning Himself	Matt. 26:39	Prays on behalf of others	Jn. 17:9-24
Anticipatory of His earthly ministry on behalf of all humanity.	Lk. 23:34	Indicative of His heavenly ministry on behalf of His own	Heb. 7:25

*... Rowan Jennings*