

Anguish in the Garden

After the communal meal shared by Jesus and his closest followers, during which Jesus had declared that this was to be their Last Supper together, Jesus expressed a desire to pray alone. There was a particular garden in which Jesus preferred to reflect and to pray in solitude. This garden lay at the base of the Mount of Olives and contained the olive press. For this reason, it was called the Garden of the Olive Press. The Aramaic word for “olive press” is “gethsemane”, and so today it is known to us as the Garden of Gethsemane.

From the Old Town of Jerusalem, Jesus, accompanied by some of his disciples, crossed the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane at the base of the Mount of Olives. Jesus requested three particular disciples to go with him into the garden in order to keep watch. The senior disciple was Simon, nicknamed Cephas, the Aramaic word for “rock”. In Koine Greek this word is Πέτρος (Petros), which is Anglicized to Peter. The other two were brothers, the sons of Zebedee, James, and John. John was also known as “the beloved disciple” or “the disciple whom Jesus loved”.

Jesus used to pray deep in the garden at a large rock that protruded from the ground. The three disciples were stationed a stone’s throw away.

On this particular evening, Jesus was praying most earnestly, so that his appearance was that of a man in extreme anguish, as indeed he was. The knuckles of his hands were white from gripping the sides of the stone so tightly. Replacing the sweat that had been coming from the skin pores on his face, there now came a sheen and even rivulets of blood that dripped red onto the prayer rock.

Jesus, the man, to whom the Holy Spirit had delivered The Logos, and thus had made him the Christ, was facing execution by a means most cruel on the following day. This man quite naturally was praying to God asking why this final act was necessary.

Jesus used the metaphor of a poisoned cup of liquid which he was now being asked to drink. He asked God why he had to drink this cup; he pleaded that God take the cup away.

Jesus recalled that his second cousin, John, known as “The Baptist”, had taken the role of the one who was a voice in the wilderness calling on people to prepare the way for the Christ. John the Baptist had baptized Jesus, whereupon The Word of God (“The Logos”) was made plain to Jesus.

Jesus, in anguished prayer to God, states that he had lived and taught God’s Will, and had preached His Grace. He had trained disciples to prosecute “The Great Commission”. What more was there to be asked of him?

As Jesus sobbed, an angel appeared, and this strengthened his resolve. The role that was left for the man, Jesus, to play was to be the “Paschal Lamb of God”. This required that Jesus be sacrificed by the Sanhedrin, as the body representing the entirety of second-temple Judaism, in the manner of the Passover sacrifice. Since dusk on this evening and until dusk tomorrow was the “Day of Preparation” of the Paschal sacrifice. Thus, Jesus must be executed the following day.

This ultimate sacrifice would bring second-temple Judaism to an end, and even the Temple itself would be destroyed. As Jesus heard the approach of armed guards, he accepted his destiny with dignity.

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