

Matthew Chapter 26-28 – The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus – Part 4
Matthew 26:36-46 – In the Garden

Introduction

This section in Matthew is the final narrative of the book. This section covers the Mount of Olives to the last Passover, from Gethsemane to Golgotha, from the cross to the resurrection, and for the eleven, from being followers to commissioned apostles.

While walking to the Mount of Olives, Jesus discloses to them that they all will fail when Jesus is taken into custody. Peter and the rest of the Eleven object to the prophecy of failure, but Jesus tells Peter that he would deny knowing Jesus three times that very evening.

Now Jesus makes His way with the Eleven to the Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus in the Garden – Matthew 26:36-46

Setting – As stated before, the location is due east of Jerusalem, crossing the Kidron and heading to the Garden of Gethsemane. As the crow flies, it is about 2/3 of a mile, but walking with the topography going up and down the inclines, it's about a mile of walking. As a trek with 12 people who were talking and probably stalling, the entire walk from the inner city to this garden probably took 90 minutes to 2 hours.

Taking the location in general, since we really don't know for sure, the trees in this garden now are almost 1,000 years old and still producing olives.

Why are the Garden of Gethsemane and the Mount of Olives significant?

This was the place of camping and retreat for Jesus and the disciples when they wanted some private time when they were in the area of Jerusalem (John 18:1-2). This a possible location for the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:3) and the ascension (Acts 1:9, 12).

The Mount of Olives is also a prominent location in the life of Jesus. This is a single peak of a two-mile-long ridge that borders eastern Jerusalem, forming a barrier between the city and the Judean wilderness to the east. The top of the mountain is 300 feet over the city, giving a tremendous panorama.

This is the place where God was worshiped in David's kingdom (2 Samuel 15:30-32); Solomon performed an abomination on this mountain.

But the most significant Old Testament passage about the Mount of Olives is Zechariah 14:1-5. Here, Jesus will return and change the geography of the mountain.

Verse 36 – Jesus goes to this garden for preparation prior to the trials and crucifixion and tells the eleven to sit while He goes a little further on to pray. The word for *sit* is “καθίζω *kathizo*” – being seated is a position of ready rest, to be watchful. We also see this in the more descriptive discussion with Peter, James, and John.

Jesus goes beyond them, just outside of closeness, and prays (Luke 22:41). We learn in Matthew and Mark that there are three layers. The disciples, eight in total, are in one group. Then Jesus takes His inner circle and goes a little further, then Jesus goes a little further and prays.

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Verse 37 – Jesus becomes grieved and distressed.

Grieved – λυπέω lupeo - to cause severe mental or emotional distress (vex, troubled); to experience sadness or distress (sorrowful).

Distressed – ἀδημονέω ademoneo - to be sorely troubled or dismayed, be in anguish, agony, emotional or spiritual torture (not physical torture, but the emotion causes physical pain)

This is the beginning of emotional, spiritual, and mental turmoil and anguish that is unparalleled in human history.

This is more than the thought of leaving His friends, more than the agony of torture and death on the cross, this is also the anguish of separation (in His humanity) from the Father and bearing the sin of the world.

We will never know this anguish, but we do have a clue.

Verse 38 – My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death.

Deeply grieved – περίλυπος perilupos – The prefix peri- indicates an idea of all-encompassing, combining grief, severe emotional distress, and being afflicted beyond measure. His soul is completely grieved, and that impacts every aspect of Jesus.

He requested that His three closest disciples remain and keep watch with Him. He wanted to have their sympathy, for them to understand His plight, and be with Him (Job 2:11-13). Good friends should know how to grieve with their friends.

To the point of death – Can someone die from grief? Is this an idiom (ἕως θανάτου heos thanatos)? This phrase is only used here and Mark in a parallel passage. In the LXX, it is used in 2 Chronicles 32:24 and Zechariah 5:3, but it is also in Jonah 4:9. Jonah seems to be emotionally exaggerating.

Was Jesus hyperbolic, or is this literal? Based on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the situation, I think that this is literal. Except for God's will, Jesus, in His humanity, could die from this sadness.

Jesus also instructs them to *keep watch*.

γρηγορέω gregoreo - to stay awake; to be in constant readiness. This is the same word as in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:42, 25:13)

Furthermore, this word is used two more times in this section (Matthew 26:40, 41).

This seems to indicate to be in prayer, fully aware of the weight of the situation with the result of not being caught off guard.

Jesus' prayers (Matthew 26:39-44)

Jesus first left the multitude to be with His disciples in the upper room. There, Judas had forsaken him. He went with the remaining eleven to the Garden of Gethsemane. There, He left eight of the

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disciples and took the three inner circle prominent disciples with Him. Then He left the three and retreated more to pray. The three that were supposed to stay awake, watch with Him, and pray, fail. All this seems to indicate the solitude of Christ. Jesus took upon Himself the weight of the situation and the sins of the whole world.

Jesus cries out, “If it is possible....” This is a conditional clause in Greek. Which class would you suspect here? This is a first-class condition. This should be translated: “Since it is possible, let this cup pass from me.” Are we sure? Mark 14:36.

Jesus prays during the most distressful situation that God can do anything, but He also prays that God’s will is His greater desire.

What is the *cup*? To drink a cup can indicate to partake of something difficult, tribulation, affliction, or death (Isaiah 51:22-23; Jeremiah 49:12-13).

Jesus has already alluded to this cup (Matthew 20:22-23).

These three prayers are in the humanity of Jesus. The content indicates that Jesus is affirming that the Father is omnipotent and that all things are possible. Knowing this Jesus, in His humanity, stays the course and completely surrenders to the Father’s will.

This prayer was repeated three times. In Scripture, something happening in threes indicates something of great importance.

The Failure of the Disciples (Matthew 26:40-41, 43, 45)

If they could not even stay awake with Him for one hour, how could they stand against temptation? They obviously cannot. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

In verse 41, He instructs them saying, “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation”; what temptation? Temptation is in relation to *fall away* (skandalizo) in Matthew 26:31. They did not realize how weak they were, but by the end of this situation, they were fully aware of their spiritual frailty.

Conclusion

What do we learn from this passage?

1. Jesus goes through the pain and anguish alone, but He is also fully aware that this is necessary as He prepares to die for the sins of His people and the world.
2. Jesus, in His humanity, did not want the cross; He despised it, yet yielded to the Father's will and loved us to the end (Hebrews 12:1-2).
3. Men are weak. They needed to understand their need, and this experience will lead them to full dependence on God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

How do we learn from Jesus? How are we strong in the Lord?

Ephesians 6:10-11 - The armor of God is about the doctrines of God.