

The Mind of Christ

Gethsemane

INTRODUCTION:

- I. In our studies entitled “The Mind of Christ,” we once again turn our attention to Thursday evening in the final week before Jesus would be crucified.
 - A. Earlier this same evening, Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples in an upper room and also instituted what we now call the Lord’s Supper. But the scriptures add, *“When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”* **(Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26)**
 1. The singing of a hymn was the traditional way of ending the Passover meal.
 2. This song would have been known as, “The Great Hallel” – a song consisting of the words of **Psalm 136**.
 - a. It’s a psalm thanking God for His enduring mercy, and is filled with references of God’s grace toward His people Israel, and His deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.
 - b. But the psalm also praises the LORD OF Lords who performed all the mighty works of creation, and who delivered the people of Israel from all their enemies, and finally the God who is the One source of all blessings.

3. In reality, **Psalm 136** is a psalm about Jesus Christ – the Lord of lords and King of kings. The One of whom the apostle Paul says, *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”*
(Colossians 1:16-17)
4. Ironically, on this same night, other Jews would be singing the words of this Psalm also, not realizing that in less than 12 hours, they would be shouting for this Lord of lords, and this creator to be crucified on a Roman cross.
5. And so, it was with this great psalm of praise still lingering in His ears, that Jesus left the upper room with His disciples and made His way through the dark, narrow streets of Jerusalem to the Garden of Gethsemane.

- II. The Garden of Gethsemane, and what happened there, has come to represent so much to us today as Christians.
 - A. During the days of Jesus, the city of Jerusalem was crowded with buildings of various kinds and the homes of its inhabitants – not to

mention the great Temple, and the Fortress of Antonia, where the local Roman garrison was quartered.

1. Since there was virtually no room for gardens of any kind, those who were more affluent had gardens on the nearby slopes of the Mount of Olives which was located east of Jerusalem across the Valley of Kidron where the Brook Kidron flowed.
 - a. These weren't typical gardens, as we might think (not like a vegetable or flower garden), they were quiet, shaded areas where the landowner could go to get away from the crush of the city and refresh himself in a quiet, serene setting.
2. The Garden of Gethsemane was apparently a favorite place for Jesus.
 - a. John says, *"...Jesus often met there with His disciples."*
(John 18:2)
 - b. More than likely, some wealthy friend of Jesus had given Him permission to use the garden as a place of solitude whenever Jesus came to Jerusalem and needed to get away from the crowds.
3. To reach the Garden of Gethsemane, you would walk out of the city through the Eastern gate (the gate called "Beautiful"), and down into a ravine through which flowed the brook of Kidron.

Once you crossed over a small bridge, you would then climb the slopes of the Mount of Olives until you reached the Garden of Gethsemane.

- a. The word “*Gethsemane*” literally means “oil press,” and it was a place where olives from the surrounding groves would be taken and pressed to extract the rich olive oil.
 - b. And even though no one knows for certain where the Garden of Gethsemane was located, most believe it was somewhere in the dense olive groves near the summit – a relatively easy climb from the ravine below.
4. From this location, it would have been easy to look back into the city of Jerusalem.
- a. In fact, from the Mount of Olives you would be high enough to be able to look back into the city of Jerusalem and have a fairly unobstructed view of the Temple and its surrounding courtyards.
 - b. Ironically, during the evening hours Jesus spent in the Garden of Gethsemane undergoing such terrible agony, it might have even been possible for the Lord to the torches being carried by the very men who were also crossing the Brook Kidron and climbing the Mount of Olives to arrest Him.

5. Let's now turn our attention to the events that take place here on this particular night.
 - a. To do this, we will consider the record of these events as recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke, and then also consider some important details John tells us about this night.
 - b. Let's begin by reading **Matthew's account** of these events:
 - c. **Matthew 26:36-46** – *Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." 39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." 40 Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it,*

Your will be done." 43 And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. 44 So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. 45 Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."

BODY:

- I. There are several significant things we learn about the mind of Christ from the events that occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane.
 - A. The first thing we notice is the LONELINESS of Jesus.
 1. Although the other disciples were also present with Jesus, they were all so physically exhausted and emotionally drained that they soon fell asleep.
 - a. Even Peter, James and John, whom Jesus took aside to be close by, eventually all fell asleep as well.
 - b. Therefore, Jesus had to bear the intensity of this painful moment without the consolation of human companionship.
 2. This is often true in our own case as well.

- a. There are times when we also must bear the intense painfulness of a situation completely alone.
 - b. Although we may have close friends who express a desire to offer assistance whenever needed, there are still times when they aren't there when we need human companionship most.
- B. In Gethsemane, we also see the MENTAL AGONY of Jesus.
- 1. Jesus was clearly agonizing over His pending crucifixion and all that would take place.
 - a. No one looks forward to their own death, especially the kind of death Jesus was about to endure.
 - (1). It was the most cruel and agonizing forms of execution known, and the victims would often linger for hours – sometimes for days – suffering the most intense pain imaginable.
 - b. Jesus also may have agonized over the fact that there was still much He could do for His disciples.
 - (1). From GOD'S point of view, the time was right. While on the cross Jesus prayed, "*I HAVE FINISHED the work you have given Me to do.*" **(John 17:4)**
 - (2). But from MAN'S point of view, there was still a lot that could be done.

- (3). The disciples of Jesus were so few, and still unable to fully comprehend and understand all Jesus had taught them.
- (4). They were also unreliable, especially when danger threatened.

C. In the garden, we also see the SPIRITUAL AGONY of Jesus.

1. Jesus knew He must die to bear the sins of the world. **(cf. Isaiah 53)**
2. When that moment eventually came, three things would happen.
 - a. Jesus would experience the HORROR of the sins of the world.
 - (1). Although we may become somewhat de-synthesized by the media, there are still some sins that we don't even want to think about them.
 - (2). And you could just imagine – if WE have trouble thinking about these sins, imagine how terrible it would be for Jesus to see them.
 - b. And, not only would Jesus have to experience the HORROR of these sins, He would also have to take upon Himself the GUILT of these sins.

- (1). Try to remember the guilt you have felt in the past over the worst sin you have ever committed.
- (2). Now, multiply that guilt by the countless billions of horrible sins that HAVE ever been committed by people in the PAST, as well as the billions of horrible sins committed by those living NOW, and add to that the countless billions of horrible sins that are yet to BE committed in the future.
- (3). Is it any wonder that **Luke** tells us, *“And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”* (**Luke 22:44**)
- (4). In fact, **Mark** says, *“He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.”* (**Mark 14:35**)
- (5). We don’t see Jesus praying serenely with hands gently clasped, kneeling behind a rock and a shaft of light beaming down from heaven.
- (6). Rather, we see Jesus praying face down in the dirt of Gethsemane, weeping in great agony, as He sweat profusely from overwhelming and unimaginable stress.

D. But there is also some very positive things we learn about Jesus from this experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is here that we see Jesus ACCEPTING GOD'S WILL.

1. The important thing for us to understand here is NOT that Jesus accepted God's will, but rather the WAY Jesus accepted it.
 - a. In Mark's account of these events, there is something very significant about HOW Jesus accepted God's will.
 - b. Jesus said, *"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You, take this cup away from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."* **(Mark 14:36)**
 - c. The word *"Abba"* is one of those Aramaic words that is virtually impossible to accurately translate because we have no EXACT English equivalent.
 - (1). Perhaps the closest thing we can come up with is the word "Daddy" – and even then, it doesn't accurately convey all this word *"Abba"* means.
 - d. *"Abba"* was a word spoken in Palestine during the days of Jesus by a small child to his father.
 - (1). It is a word that conveys absolute and complete trust and confidence.

- (2). It is a term of endearment that is only used by a small child when speaking to a father whom he loves deeply and in whom the child had absolutely, unwavering trust.
 - e. In using the word “*Abba*” in His prayer to God, Jesus is speaking to His Father in heaven as a little child would speak to his own father.
2. The words, “*not what I will, but what You will*” or as the KJV renders it, “*Thy will be done,*” are words that can be said in a number of ways.
- a. They can be spoken in weary resignation by someone who is simply giving up the fight – because they feel the situation is now hopeless.
 - b. Or, they can be spoken in angry defiance by someone who is still shaking his fist in the face of fate – someone who is still angry and rebellious.
 - c. Or they can be spoken in complete love and trust.
 - (1). THIS is how Jesus said, “*Thy will be done.*”
 - (2). He spoke those words in the same manner as a child would say them to his own father who he loves, trusts and respects.

3. Jesus was not COERCED, INTIMIDATED or PRESSURED into doing something He didn't want to do.
 - a. Although, from a purely HUMAN PRESPECTIVE, Jesus didn't want to undergo the suffering of such a painful and horrifying death, He nevertheless trusted in the Father completely, and was willing to place Himself in the hands of God.
- II. No sooner had Jesus finished praying, the quietness of the garden was suddenly shattered by the trampling of feet, the clanking of armor, and the shouts of angry men.
- A. Those who came to arrest Jesus came fully prepared – expecting some kind of confrontation.
 1. This is suggested by two things: one is the fact those who came to arrest Jesus were WELL ARMED, and the other is the SIZE of the force that intended to arrest the Lord.
 - a. Matthew, Mark and Luke's account say these men were armed with "*swords and clubs.*" (**Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43, 48; Luke 22:52**)
 - b. And while Luke describes the number of men who came to arrest Jesus as a "*multitude,*" both Matthew and Mark

describe them as a “*great multitude.*” (**Luke 22:47; Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43**)

2. However, John’s account adds even more information about the size of the arresting force.
 - a. **John 18:3** – “*Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.*”
 - b. John calls them “*a detachment of troops,*” along with “*officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees.*”
 - c. The NASB calls this detachment of troops a “Roman cohort.”
 - (1). What is a cohort? The footnote in most NAS Bibles defines cohort as a detachment that is “normally 600 men; a battalion.”
 - (2). Vincent (Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament) says: “The ‘band, or cohort,’ was from the Roman garrison in the tower of Antonia.”
 - (3). Robertson (Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament) says: the word here “was used for a military cohort... a small band secured from the Tower of Antonia.”

- (4). Strong (Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary) defines the word as, “a mass of men (a Roman military cohort...).
 - (5). Thayer (Thayer's Greek Lexicon) says the word refers to “a military cohort... i. e. the tenth part of a legion (i. e. about 600 men (i. e. legionaries), or if auxiliaries either 500 or 1,000.”
 - (6). Vine (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words) says this word, “was also used for a larger body of men, a cohort, about 600 infantry, commanded by a tribune.”
3. Does this mean that there were 600 fully armed Roman soldiers that came to arrest Jesus, PLUS officers (temple guards, or temple police) who had come under the authority of the chief priests and the Pharisees?
 - a. The truth is that we don't really know the exact number of Roman soldiers and temple police that made up this “great multitude.”
 - b. We DO know the number was “*GREAT*” – Matthew and Mark say so.
 - c. The Roman soldiers may have consisted of a detachment from the cohort that was garrisoned in Jerusalem. But the

smallest detachment of Roman soldiers was called a “Centuria,” a detachment of 100 men led by a Centurion. A cohort consists of six centuria, or total of 600 soldiers.

- d. So this would mean that AT LEAST 100 fully armed, combat ready Roman soldiers would have been in the arresting party; PLUS an undisclosed number of, “officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees” (temple police).

- 4. Obviously this “*great multitude*” of arresting soldiers and others came expecting some form of resistance from Jesus and His disciples.

B. As the arresting soldiers break into the Garden of Gethsemane, several things happen in quick succession.

- 1. First, there was the traitor’s kiss. (**Matthew 26:58; Mark 14:45; Luke 22:47-48**)
 - a. The kiss was meant to identify Jesus to the soldiers who had come to arrest Him.
 - b. But there’s something very significant in the word “*kiss*” found in Matthew and Mark’s account.
 - c. They use a Greek word that doesn’t simply mean “to kiss,” but rather a word that means, “to kiss tenderly.”

- d. The word describes not so much the PHYSICAL aspects of the kiss, but more so the EMOTIONAL aspects – a kiss that is linked with feelings of tender affection and love.
 - (1). This suggests that even though Judas was a thief and a betrayer, he may have still loved the Lord.
 - (2). This would also explain the great sorrow and guilt Judas experienced after Jesus had been condemned to death.
In fact, Matthew says he was, “*remorseful.*”
 - e. Even though Judas was intentionally placing Jesus into the hands of His enemies, perhaps he wanted to let Jesus know that he still loved the Lord deeply. And so, he kisses Jesus with a kiss of tender love and affection.
2. Next comes the sudden reaction of Peter. **(Matthew 26:51-54; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10-11)**
- a. He was ready to lay down his life to defend Jesus – his Lord and friend.
 - b. Peter was outraged by what was happening, and as the soldiers and others moved forward to arrest Jesus, he pulled out his sword and struck a man nearby, cutting off his ear – the man just happened to be Malchus, the servant of Caiaphas, the high priest.

- c. Jesus orders Peter to put away his sword, because the Lord had every intention of willingly surrendering to the soldiers who had come to arrest Him. This was all part of the eternal purpose of God that Jesus had come to carry out.
- d. And in one final act of compassion, mercy and forgiveness, Jesus heals the severed ear of Malchus. I've often wondered what Malchus' reaction to this might have been. Quite honestly, I think Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of The Christ" accurately captures the reaction of Malchus – stunned into silence and great awe over both the divine power of Jesus, as well as the tenderness and compassion toward a man who had come to capture the Savior and turn Him over to the hands of His enemies.

III. The arrest of Jesus reveals two very important facts.

A. First, Jesus went voluntarily.

- 1. It's clear that Jesus could have called down 12 legions of angels.

(cf. Matthew 26:53)

- a. A full Roman legion consisted of 6,000 soldiers and 726 horsemen – over 6,800 soldiers and cavalrymen.

- b. Jesus said He had at His disposal 12 legions – more than 80,700 angels!
 - c. So the song, “He could have called ten-thousand angels,” should be more like, “He could have called more than 80-thousand angels.”
2. Rather than resist, Jesus was willing to voluntarily go with those who had come to arrest Him.
3. Anticipating that Jesus and His disciples MIGHT put up an armed resistance explains the “great multitude” of at least 100 fully armed, combat ready Roman soldiers, PLUS the temple police who would have likewise been armed with swords, and others who came armed with clubs.
- a. This anticipated resistance may also explain the initial reaction of those coming to arrest Jesus.
 - b. **John 18:3-9** – *Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" 5 They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them.*

6 Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. 7 Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8 Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," 9 that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

- c. When Jesus identified Himself as the “*Jesus of Nazareth*” they had come to arrest, **verse 6** says, “*they drew back and fell to the ground.*”
- d. While some commentators suggest these troops were overpowered in some miraculous way, there is nothing in the text to suggest any divine power being displayed here.
- e. However, if these troops were expecting resistance, they would have fallen back into a defensive position as soon as Jesus boldly identified Himself as the one they were seeking.
- f. Remember, it was going on toward midnight and dark, and they were on the Mount of Olives in the middle of a grove of olive trees; a perfect place for Jesus to position His followers to launch a counter-attack from out of the darkness.

counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain.” (Acts 2:23)

2. No matter how it might have looked to the disciples, GOD WAS STILL IN CONTROL – and SO WAS JESUS!

IV. With the arrest having been completed, the disciples of Jesus fled for their lives.

A. We can only speculate what went through their minds. But we can be fairly certain, they apparently never thought it would end like this.

1. Jesus had offered no resistance in His own defense.
2. He was now bound and being led away to be crucified.
 - a. I feel certain that the disciple’s whole theological view of Jesus came crashing down all around them.
 - b. From the very beginning they held an erroneous concept of Jesus’ Messiahship – one in which Jesus would lead a victorious conquest.
 - c. But now, Jesus had clearly failed to meet those expectations of power and victory, and so, perhaps fearing their OWN arrest, they did what we probably would have done under similar circumstances – they *“forsook Him and fled.”*

(Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50)

- B. There's one final bit of irony in the events of this night.
1. On their way back into the city of Jerusalem to deliver Jesus to His accusers, the party would have escorted Jesus back over the bridge spanning the Brook Kidron.
 2. The blood of some 256,000 sacrificial Passover lambs that had been slain in the temple courtyards earlier that day would have been washed from the pavement in the temple and into drains that would empty into the Brook Kidron.
 3. The brook would have still been red with the blood of all those Passover lambs when Jesus crossed the bridge, but in the darkness the blood stained water would appear black.
 4. I've often wondered if Jesus might have glanced at the blood-filled brook as He passed by, knowing that as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, He was about to shed His own blood.

CONCLUSION:

- I. The end had come for Jesus.
 - A. From this point on, Jesus would walk alone.
 1. What He had to accomplish now was something that no man could possibly help Him with.

- a. He had been abandoned by His closest friends.
- B. But even in this terrible moment of blackness and bitter agony, Jesus maintains control.
 - 1. If we had been there to witness Jesus being led away from the Garden of Gethsemane, I'm certain we would have seen something very significant in the face of Jesus.
 - a. There would have been no fear in His eyes, nor would there have been any dread.
 - b. Rather, we would have seen His face reflecting complete confidence and assurance.
 - 2. Jesus was not a helpless victim, but rather the MASTER of the situation.
 - a. This story never reads like the arrest of a criminal – unwillingly hauled before a judge, and then to his execution.
 - b. Rather this story reads like the willing sacrifice that He was – willingly laying down His life for His friends.
- II. But the most important thing you need to remember at this moment is, Jesus willingly placed Himself in the hands of His executioners for you.
 - A. He died for you, so that you may live with Him.

1. If you need to come to Jesus Christ at this moment in faithful obedience, to be baptized into Christ for the remission of ALL your past sins, then it's our prayer, and the Lord's desire, that you do that today.
2. And if you are a Christian but have sinned, then this same Jesus – your compassionate and loving Savior – sits on His throne waiting to hear your prayer to God confessing your sins.
3. If you need to come to Christ, why not come now as we stand and sing.