

Exegetical Notes, Matthew 26:36-46

“Gethsemane”

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Matthew 26:36-46

Verse 36

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

- These events happened just a few moments before Jesus’ arrest.
- These events happened in the Garden of Gethsemane. The name is Hebrew. It means olive press. It was the place to which Jesus went to prepare for his sacrifice.
- Jesus’ method of preparation was prayer. He asked the disciples to wait while he went off alone to pray.

Verse 37

He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

- Jesus went off, away from the other disciples. He took Peter, James, and John with him. Peter, Andrew, James and John are always listed first among the disciples and were apparently especially close to Jesus.
- Jesus was sorrowful and troubled as he prepared to pray because he knew what he would face in the next several hours.

Verse 38

Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

- These were Jesus’ instructions to Peter, James, and John, not to all of the disciples. He wanted them to join him in prayer.

Verse 39

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed. “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

- Jesus left the three alone to pray. He went a little way off and fell face downward on the ground. This is a stance of extreme humiliation.
- He asks God to “take this cup from him.” The cup to which he refers is the suffering of sacrifice that he is about to endure. He is about to take on himself the sin of the world and bear its consequence, separation from the Father. He asks God to spare him this if possible, but he bends to God’s will and God’s plan.

Verse 40-41

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

- After praying for an hour, Jesus returned to the disciples, Peter James, and John. He found them sleeping instead of praying. He warned them to pray that they would not fall into temptation because they were weak flesh.

Verse 42

He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away, unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

- Jesus left the three alone and went off again by himself to pray.
- His second prayer was like the first except this time he did not ask for the cup to be taken from him. He simply acknowledged that since it could not pass, he must drink it as God’s will for him.

Verse 43-44

When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time saying the same thing.

- After praying a second time, Jesus returned and found the disciples still sleeping. The flesh was strong. They had just finished a heavy meal. It was late. They could not keep their eyes open.
- This time Jesus did not even try to wake them. He just let them sleep and went off to pray alone for a third time.

- He prayed in a similar fashion to the first two times.

Verse 45-46

Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

- When Jesus returned he found the three disciples still sleeping.
- Having spent his time praying, however, he is prepared to face what is ahead. The trouble and sorrow is behind him. He is ready to be the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Calmly, he awakens the disciples to face Judas who has come to betray him.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Gethsemane*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)