

THE SIX TRIALS OF CHRIST

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Chapter 1

ON THE ROAD TO GETHSEMANE

The nearer our Lord comes to the last week of His life, the more He reveals to His disciples of what will transpire as He goes to Jerusalem for the last time. One of the reasons that this was done was because every prophet had to speak predictions that would be fulfilled in the immediate life of the people. This was the arrangement whereby Israel could know a true prophet from a false one. If these things prophesied come to pass, then the people could definitely know that this was a true prophet, and they were to give heed to all his predictions:

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him"
(Deuteronomy 18:19-22).

But if the words did not come to pass the people were to stone him as a false prophet. CHRIST, being a prophet, is no exception to the law of the prophets.

Let us trace through Matthew arranging the Scripture to reveal each time a new predictive element is added:

Matthew 16:21, **"From that time forth began JESUS to shew unto His disciples how that he must go . . .**

- (1) unto Jerusalem**
- (2) and suffer**
- (3) many things**
- (4) of the elders**
- (5) and chief priests**
- (6) and scribes**

- (7) **and be killed**
- (8) **and raised again**
- (9) **the third day."**

"But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them . . . And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry" (Matthew 17:12, 22-23).

Matthew 20:18, **"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man . . .**

- (10) **shall be betrayed**
- (11) **unto the chief priests**
- (12) **and unto the scribes**
- (13) **and they shall condemn him to death**
- (14) **and they shall deliver him to the Gentiles**
- (15) **to mock**
- (16) **and to scourge**
- (17) **and to crucify him**

. . . and the third day he shall rise again."

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

Matthew 26:2, "Ye know that after . . .

(18) **two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."**

There are only two days to go. But they said that this was the one day that they would not take him: **"Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people" (Matthew 26:3-5).** He is calling the plays, not them.

As we approach the cross we find a strange agreement of Heaven and hell. Both light and darkness are going in the same direction -- His death. Both GOD and Satan are aiming at the crucifixion of CHRIST. Righteousness and sin are going to meet each other on the cross. He has told the very day.

"Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve" (Matthew 26:20). The two days were up. The Jewish day begins at sundown. But the next sundown, CHRIST must be dead, or He is a false prophet.

Matthew 26:21, **"Verily I say unto you, that**

(19) **one of you shall betray me."**

He will be betrayed by one of His own disciples.

Matthew 26:29, **"But I say unto you,**

(20) **I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."**

He will drink nothing from the grape from this moment on until the kingdom arrives.

Matthew 26:31, **"Then said Jesus unto them,**

(21) **All ye shall be offended because of me this night."**

There will be universal departure among His disciples.

Matthew 26:32, **"But after I am risen again,**

(22) **I will go before you into Galilee."**

Galilee will be the disciples rallying place after his resurrection.

Matthew 26:34, **"Jesus said unto him [Peter], Verily I say unto thee,**

(23) **that this night**

(24) **before the cock crow thou shalt deny me**

(25) **thrice."**

It will be this night before it even begins to get light, and it will not be once nor twice but three times you will deny me.

Thus now the time has come for the grain to die:

"And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and

his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit" (Matthew 12:23-33).

Christ begins to reveal Himself to "**His own disciples**" (John 13-16).

- John 13 is preparation for CHRIST to speak to His disciples.
- In John 14 He speaks in the Upper Room.
- John 15 and 16 are spoken as CHRIST and His disciples move out through the streets of Jerusalem.
- Then in John 17, just before they all cross over the brook Cedron, the Lord prays.
- With the prayer being ended, the Lord and the disciples cross over the brook Cedron in John 18:1
- And they go up into the Olive groves on the Mount of Olives.

We need to notice that John in his Gospel does not record many of the things found in the three synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Such things as the last supper, the prophecy of the denial of Peter, the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, Peter's use of the sword, to give an example, are omitted in John. All of these things are given only in the other Gospels.

But the very fact that John's Gospel omits certain events in our Lord's life is, in itself, the key to the significance and meaning of these events.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

For instance, Matthew and Luke both refer in detail to the temptation of CHRIST. Matthew presents the temptation because CHRIST is the KING of Kings. The greatest opposing King -- the prince of the world -- comes to contest CHRIST's Kingship.

The one who is greatest will come out victorious. We might as well settle it right at the beginning -- so it appears early on in the Lord's ministry.

Thus Matthew does settle it before He presents this KING to the nation of Israel. He is tested by the greatest opposing king and kingdom and was victorious, revealing once and for all He is sovereign.

Luke, on the other hand, presents the temptation of CHRIST because he is writing about the Son of man.

If He is perfect and sinless man, the Second Adam, the Seed of the woman, He will have to be victorious over the enemy and not succumb to him.

Luke's purpose in the temptation is much different from Matthew's although the events are similar.

CHRIST is found to be victorious as Perfect Man, and so may be our SAVIOUR to bruise the head of the Serpent.

Mark, however, only mentions that the temptation took place and then goes right into

the work of CHRIST following: "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him" (Mark 1:12-13).

The reason is that Mark presents CHRIST as the servant and you are interested in what the servant can do.

A servant's temptations are insignificant as long as he is victorious -- that is all that matters -- not what is involved. As long as he hasn't broken the law and is free to serve, this is all that is necessary to know. What He does -- His performance -- this is what counts, so Mark says, Let us get right into His work.

John does not refer to the temptation at all. Why?

Didn't John know about it? He most certainly did.

The reason is that John is writing about the Lord as GOD. He is Deity incarnate. Even though He was a perfect man, He was still absolute GOD.

God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13). Therefore, to have a temptation in John would destroy John's whole purpose.

JOHN DOES NOT MENTION GETHSEMANE

Let us consider one more episode before we consider Gethsemane.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all refer to the transfiguration. John does not.

The reason: In John's Gospel the Lord is always in glory as the Son of GOD, and John wants you to see that glory shining through even in His humiliation.

For this reason John does not mention his own name once in the Gospel that CHRIST might receive all the glory. GOD doesn't transfigure Himself, for this would reveal He was something less than glory.

A KING, a SERVANT, a man; Yes, he may be glorified. But may GOD be glorified more than He is? No.

Thus Matthew, Mark and Luke have a Gethsemane experience, but John does not. This, I say, opens the key to our understanding of Gethsemane.

It is related (1) to CHRIST's humanity and not His deity.
It is related (2) to temptation over which the Lord is victorious.

Luke 4:13 stated "**and when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.**"

It seems that He is doing battle against all the forces of darkness in the Garden.

Both of these areas are outside the scope of John.

John will record the High Priestly prayer, but not the Gethsemane prayer.

Certainly there is a striking difference between the two:

- The one is related to His deity; the other to His humanity.
- The one sees His glory; the other, His humiliation in suffering and agony of a cross-death.
- The one stands on the other side of Calvary on resurrection ground.
- The other stands on this side of Calvary in full view of the Sacrifice being made sin for us who knew no sin, and bearing in His own body the fires of GOD's wrath, with the Father forsaking the SON.

GETHSEMANE: THE OIL PRESS

There is no portion of Scripture that I feel we know less about than the Garden of Gethsemane. This is not only my own personal feeling, but the attitude of everyone who has dealt with the subject.

The more you study it, the less you feel you full understand. We indeed stand on very sacred ground and need to spiritually take off our shoes as we approach the Garden.

Dr. F. W. Krummacher said he felt as if "at this garden gate there stood a cherub, who, if not with flaming sword, yet with repelling gesture, refused admittance, and emphatically repeated our Lord's injunction to remain outside."

Yet we know that **"the secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever"** (Deuteronomy 29:29).

The Lord has revealed this for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying

the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me" (Matthew 26:36-46)

"And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand" (Mark. 14:32-42)

"And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from Heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke 22:39-46)

This place was called "Gethsemane" = "the oil press.

Originally among the olive trees there must have been an oil press to press out the oil from the olive berries. The name remained even though the press may have no longer been there. The name remained because under the providence of GOD it is going to have spiritual significance.

Here in this garden the Lord will labor in prayer and spiritually press out the oil from the olive which will become for many a wounded lamb and sheep.

Still today on Mount Olivet there remain eight ancient olive trees, unquestionably descendants of this original grove.

Our Lord had not spent a night in Jerusalem since He arrived in what is called the

Triumphant Entry to keep the feast of the Passover, and to die as our Passover LAMB.

Each night He had gone outside the city, but each day He was in the city teaching, as the LAMB to be sacrificed must be observed to be without spot before it was killed.

Luke tells us he went to the mount of Olives "**as He was wont**" or "as was His habit." Oftentimes the disciples had resorted here to spend the night.

JESUS chose this garden this night first so that Judas would know exactly where to come and find Him. John tells us (18:2) that "**Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.**"

But I feel there is even deeper significance than this:

Adam was placed in a Garden and he learned about disobedience and its consequences.

The Second ADAM voluntarily went to a Garden and He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. The victory was won in the Garden for CHRIST departs victorious. The actual defeat of Satan was not accomplished, of course, until Calvary.

Adam hid himself from GOD in the Garden; CHRIST agonized before the Lord in another Garden.

It was in the Garden when man lost his right to live, and it is in a garden when CHRIST gained His right to resurrection: "**Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared**" (Hebrews 5:7).

THE WORDS OF GETHSEMANE

The revelation of CHRIST's sufferings in Gethsemane is given to us in words. Let us examine these words, then, to find out something of the character of His sufferings.

Matthew 26:37-38, "**and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.**"

1. "to make sorrowful; to affect with sadness, cause grief; to throw in sorrow."
2. "to be troubled, distressed, deeply depressed."
3. "very sad, deeply grieved; exceedingly sorrowful."

And then is added "**even unto death**" which can only signify that the sorrow and agony were so tremendous that He was at the point of collapsing under its weight.

Mark 14:33, "**And began to be sore amazed.**"

4. "to be struck with amazement, or terror; to be thoroughly amazed, astounded."

It is used only by Mark: "**And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him**" (9:15) and "**And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy**" (14:33) and "**And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted**" (16:5).

Luke 22:44, "**And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**"

5. "agony, anguish."

Because of such agony he prayed the more earnestly. What a lesson! Do not be weary in well-doing. The more cast down we are, the more earnestly we should pray. Thus the word "agony" is akin to a struggle, trial, or contest. In this sense the word is used only once in the entire Word, and applied to our Lord in the garden.

It is never once used to describe the sufferings of a mere man.

6. His sweat was as it were great drops of blood.

Dr. Luke would certainly be the one to bring such a thing out, as it would be of primary importance to him. It would have been a cool night in the spring of the year A.D. 32, and this is substantiated by the fact of Peter warming himself by the fire: "**And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire**" (Mark 14:54), but with such intense mental and spiritual strain, the blood was forced out through the pores and falls in great drops on the ground.

Very few have ever experienced such agony; no one this severe.

Our Lord had a solitary experience never required of any other creature, and never to be repeated again.

Truly He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Here was the agony and suffering CHRIST was going through. It was a suffering of soul, even as later He will leave the garden and suffer in body. He is going through spiritual torment in the trials and crucifixion.

Are we able to probe the whole cause of these soul sufferings? No. We can only but touch the hem of His garment.

Christ suffers in anticipation of bearing the sins of the world.

He had previously said: "**I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished**" (Luke 12:50).

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour?

but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:17).

We need to keep in mind that the doctrine of the kenosis is that the Lord JESUS, in becoming man, never ceased to be GOD. But He voluntarily surrendered the use of His divine attributes as GOD to the Father in order to become the true and faithful servant of the Lord.

All of the Lord's miracles were done by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT as GOD, not by the power of the Lord JESUS CHRIST as GOD.

The Devil's temptation was "**Since you be the Son of God command these stones to be made bread.**" If He had done so the Lord would have exercised His own Deity apart from the will of the Father.

The mockers said, Come down from the cross and we will believe. Had He come down He could not have been man's SAVIOUR because it would have been an expression and use of His own Deity. He would not have been a perfect SAVIOUR without sin.

But not only was the Lord limited as to His expression of His Deity through the incarnation, He was also in subjection to the Father in everything, including the Son's knowledge of what was future.

As the Son of GOD, CHRIST knew everything -- being omniscient.
As the Son of man, CHRIST knew only those things which the Father had revealed to Him.

Notice these Scriptures:

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32)

"I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:26-28)

"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (John 12:49-50)

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me . . . I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:8, 14).

"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29).

So our Lord was in complete servitude to the Father.

He exercised no attribute of Deity except as the Father willed. This again does not say that He did not possess all the attributes, but He used none of them apart from the will of the Father.

He has known why He came into the world from the beginning. It was to suffer and die. The cross was ever before Him.

But now as CHRIST stands before the cross in full view of it's cup that He must drink and the baptism with which He must be baptized: **"But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able"** (Matthew 20:22), the Lord is experiencing the full anticipation of Calvary.

The cup He must drink is that of being made sin -- He, the Sinless One who knew no sin. He comes within full consciousness of its awfulness and He is tormented in soul.

Only true holiness can possibly feel the full effects of iniquity and sin. It is abominable to Him. He feels Himself as a culprit before GOD. He experiences something of the distress of the damned and the abandonment of GOD and man.

He prays, but experiences no relief of soul. God is not answering Him, immediately. His disciples give Him no satisfaction. He seeks in desperation for some help from His disciples, but all in vain. He is going this road alone -- all alone.

Not only did the Lord have a cup, He had a baptism. The cup is one thing; the baptism is another.

He was to be identified with our sins, and drink the cup of GOD's wrath against sin without mercy in order that we might drink the cup of mercy without any wrath whatever. **"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"** (Romans 8:1) To bear sins is one thing; to bear the wrath of GOD for sins is another.

Someone might well ask, how can the disciples enter into this same cup and baptism? **"And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father"** (Matthew 20:23)?

They can only enter into it the same as Paul desired to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings: **"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death"** (Philippians

3:10).

They did experience the sufferings from man and were identified with death for the Lord's sake, but what they suffered was not efficacious.

In this experience CHRIST is experiencing what it is to be accursed. As the accursed One, CHRIST will have the Father to forsake Him. Never has the Son experienced this before. This seems to be more than He can possibly stand.

It seems His heart would break and His grief is even to the point of death -- a grief so intense that it produces a blood-letting through the pores of His skin. Physical suffering is bearable. Soul suffering is bearable. But His SPIRIT suffering is nigh unbearable.

Remember that the Lord JESUS was perfect body, soul and spirit in His humanity. In spirit there is a perfect GOD-consciousness, so that experiencing what it is to be made sin and to be accursed from GOD is something He feels to the point of infinity. Because of His suffering in spirit, CHRIST suffers in soul and in body. The reason is because man is one being, and these categories are interrelated.

Since there was no other way for man to be saved than for CHRIST to bear man's sin and punishment, CHRIST surrenders to the Father and His will completely, gains the victory in prayer, and rises to go about the Father's will to Calvary confident in the Lord.

The very intensity of the Lord's suffering proves the completeness of His obedience.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted with me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Psalm 43:5).

When CHRIST comes to His disciples the third time, the agony and struggle is over. He no longer needs them. He has the victory of the Lord's grace being sufficient. The Lord has answered Him and He knows what the Lord's will is, and goes about to do it. Not once from the garden to the cross is the Lord tempted to despair. His spiritual torment is over -- for now. His physical torment is about to begin.

But with all that we have said, we seem not to have exhausted the entire truth of the Gethsemane experience.

To read a more in-depth study concerning our Lord's travail in Gethsemane - Please read this study on this board by a missionary to India, Robert W. Cumming.

We have previously seen that the Garden is related to CHRIST's humanity, not His Deity and to temptation in His humanity over which the Lord is victorious. For these reasons it is not included in John's Gospel.

Dr. Luke has stated following the temptation of CHRIST, **"And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season"** (Luke 4:13). There is no other experience in the Gospels that corresponds to a temptation if Gethsemane is

not such an experience. I believe we have to say that it was, for several passages of Scripture seem to indicate this.

Luke 22:53, "**This is your hour and the power of darkness.**" Darkness was ruling under the plan and program of GOD. "**The prince of this world cometh . . .**" (John 14:30).

Satan before had brought before CHRIST the glories of the kingdom of this world to tempt the Lord. Could it not be that GOD was permitting him to bring before the Lord the horrors and agonies of being a lost soul?

Remember that the demons knew all about this suffering and asked the Lord if He had come to torment them before their time.

These horrors may have been so great that CHRIST in His humanity suffered unto death, or was tempted by Satan to take His own life and thus escape the agony He was going through. Remember, however, the doctrine of the impeccability of CHRIST. As the GOD-man it was impossible for CHRIST to sin, but the temptation was real.

~ end of chapter 1 ~
