

In the Garden of Gethsemane

Before referring briefly to the circumstances of the occasion, we must recall the fact that we are told that after the Temptation, “the devil... departed from Him for a season” (Luke 4:13). It is clear from this reference and our Lord’s statement, “the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me” (John 16:30), that Satan returned at Gethsemane to make his final and most desolating assault upon Christ in order, if it were possible, to prevent Him from finishing the work of Redemption He had come into the world to accomplish. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to realize that in Gethsemane our Lord is to be seen enduring Satan’s direst assault and coming out of it in triumph, but only through His perfect submission to His Father’s Will, and after a conflict so terrible that “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

It is clear from the Gospels that after entering the Garden our Lord left the eight Apostles and advanced further with Peter James and John whom He besought to tarry and watch, while He went ‘about a stone’s cast’ ahead to pray, because, said He, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”. These words might have stirred the three Apostles into the realization that their Master was about to pass through a supreme test; and the more so, when they saw that He fell with His face toward the ground and was lying prostrate in an agony of prayer.

It was at that moment when the Savior was faced with sin and death as His portion, that Satan, the prince of this world, came upon Him with untold fury in an assault upon His spirit. In the Temptation our Lord had met Satan and thrice, by the skilful use of “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”, had triumphed over him. We must face the fact that in Gethsemane our Lord Jesus Christ had to decide whether He would undo the evil wrought by “the first man Adam” and thus accomplish the Redemption of the whole human race. In Gethsemane our Lord was brought face to face with the terrific cost of obedience, namely, that He should be made sin for us and that He should then go down into the dark and terrible waters of death and thus atone for our sin. So in Gethsemane our Lord counted the cost of our Redemption. So He leaves the Garden holding the cup His Father had put into His hand, and this He carries with Him until He has emptied it and the last drop of blood has flowed out of His sacred veins, on behalf of those whose sins He had now expiated.

Not to understand Gethsemane is to be unable to appreciate the true nature of the Sacrifice of Calvary, where He was crucified and brought “as a lamb to the slaughter” for the salvation of the whole world.

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