



## 26. Gethsemane

Mark 14:33-42; Matt 26:37-47;  
Luke 22:40-46; John 18:1

"Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane"

"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 . . ." (Luke 22:24)

## The Importance of Gethsemane

This sacred spot, like Eden where Adam dwelt, like Sinai from whence Jehovah gave his laws, like Calvary where the Son of God gave his life a ransom for many, this holy ground is where the Sinless Son of the Everlasting Father took upon himself the sins of all men on condition of repentance.

We do not know, we cannot tell, no mortal mind can conceive the full import of what Christ did in Gethsemane.

We know he sweat great goutts of blood from every pore as he drained the dregs of that bitter cup his Father had given him.

We know he suffered, both body and spirit, more than it is possible for man to suffer, except it be unto death.

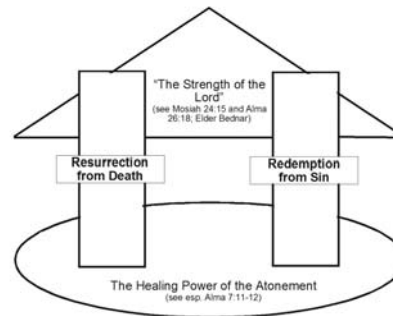
We know that in some way, incomprehensible to us, his suffering satisfied the demands of justice, ransomed penitent souls from the pains and penalties of sin, and made mercy available to those who believe in his holy name.

We know that he lay prostrate upon the ground as the pains and agonies of an infinite burden caused him to tremble and would that he might not drink the bitter cup.

Bruce R. McConkie, "The Purifying Power of Gethsemane," *Ensign*, May 1985, 9

## Gethsemane and the Atonement

- Literally “at-one-ment,” Christ enables become more like the Father by overcoming physical and spiritual death
  - Its object is to “make us one” with God in effect to bring about the goal of the Intercessory Prayer of John 17
- The Twin Pillars of the Atonement
  - **Resurrection**: overcoming physical death through the free gift of eventual immortality
  - **Redemption from Sin**: overcoming spiritual death through repentance and forgiveness
- Yet the Atonement is not limited, it encompasses all that Christ did for us
  - Includes the healing power, the transforming ability, the strengthening grace of Christ



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## Setting the Stage, Starting the Sacrifice

- Our focus in the Garden is naturally on the Redemption, but here the stage was set and the process begun for all aspects of our Lord's work
  - Following the sacrificial procedure, the sacrifice first receives the guilt and then is slain for the sins
  - Gethsemane is the beginning, Calvary the middle, and the Resurrection the finale – they are all part of the same process!
- Our understanding of the significance of Christ's experience in Gethsemane is unique and not accepted by many other Christians
  - The Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and modern revelation do much to supplement the surprisingly scanty gospel accounts, from which plain and precious truths seem to be lacking
- “With a small cup of water we remember the shedding of Christ's blood and the depth of his spiritual suffering, anguish which **began** in the Garden of Gethsemane . . .” (Jeffrey R. Holland, “This Do in Remembrance of Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 67)

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## The *Beginning* of the Atonement

- “We do not know, we cannot tell, no mortal mind can conceive the full import of what Christ did in Gethsemane. We know he sweat great goutts of blood from every pore as he drained the dregs of that bitter cup his Father had given him. We know he suffered, both body and spirit, more than it is possible for man to suffer, except it be unto death. . . . And truly he was, for while he was hanging on the cross all the infinite agonies and merciless pains of Gethsemane **recurred**. And, finally, when the atoning agonies had taken their toll—when the victory had been won, when the Son of God had fulfilled the will of his Father in all things—then he said, ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30) . . .” (McConkie, May 1985)
  - *Sometimes, because of other Christians’ focus on the cross, we mistakenly tend to substitute the sufferings of Gethsemane for the crucifixion, downplaying what was done at Calvary*
  - OT sacrificial practice: **guilt was symbolically placed on the head of the sacrificial victim, then the victim was sacrificed**
  - **Christ shed his blood twice: in the garden and on the cross** (Skinner, 77)

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## Structural Analysis

- Jesus and the Disciples Go to Gethsemane (Mark 14:32; Matt 26:36; Luke 22:39; John 18:1)
  - **John, otherwise the most theological, passes over this incident in virtual silence!**
    - Did he omit details out of reverence?
    - Were “plain and precious parts” lost or taken, awaiting the restoration of the “fulness of the record of John?”
  - Luke has more detail than the others—was John, who was there, his source?
- Jesus Prays at Gethsemane (Mark 14:33-42; Matt 26:37-47; Luke 22:40–46)
  - Jesus Prays for His Disciples (Luke 22:40)
  - Jesus Suffers and Prays that the Cup May Pass (Mark 14:33-36; Matt 26:37–39; Luke 22:41–42)
  - **An Angel Appears to Strengthen Jesus [Luke 22:43]**
  - **Jesus Sweats Blood [Luke 22:44]**
  - Finds Peter, James, and John Sleeping (three times: Mark 14:37-42; Matt 26:40–46; **only once: Luke 22:45–46**)

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## Luke, the Compassionate and Detailed Evangelist

- Luke provides us details not present in Mark and Matthew's overview of Christ's prayers and suffering
- **Prayer for the disciples** (22:40)
  - "Pray not to be put to the test" (NJB) or "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." (NRSV)
- Here and elsewhere **softens the frequent failings of the apostles**
  - Peter, James, and John need to be awakened only once, not three times, in Luke (22:45-46)
- Most of all, Luke includes details of the Savior's experiences lacking in other accounts
  - **Appearance of an angel, who supports Christ in his great hour** (22:43)
  - **Describes our Lord's agony with medical precision, noting his "bloody sweat"** (22:44)
  - These critical passages are nonetheless questioned by some textual critics, who note that they are lacking from some of the earliest manuscripts
    - Deletion may have been by those who felt that the account of Jesus' sufferings and need for strength was incompatible with his divinity (Metzger *TCGNT*, 177)
    - The style and vocabulary here, although somewhat different, are nonetheless closer to Luke than any other NT author (Brown *DM*, 180–184; Brown also gives additional credence to the possibility of a scribal deletion intended to preserve Christ's divinity in the face of suffering)

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**“And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.”** (Luke 22:43)

Carl Bloch, "Prayer at Gethsemane"

- "We know that an angel came from the courts of glory to strengthen him in his ordeal, and we suppose it was mighty Michael, who foremost fell that mortal man might be." (McConkie, *Ensign*, May 1985, 9)
- "For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. or as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor 15:21-22)
  - "The Savior's atoning work in Gethsemane is directly linked to Adam's transgression which brought about the fall of man . . . Who better than Adam to aid and assist the Savior during his time of extreme distress than he whose actions had brought about mortality? Who better to thank the Savior for paying the debt that his actions had introduced than Adam himself?" (Skinner, *Gethsemane*, 72)

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“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly . . .” (Luke 22:44a)

- *Agonia*: Greek for “apprehensiveness of mind, esp. when faced with impending ills, *distress, anguish*”
  - “Greek *agonia* often meant the kind of agony that a runner in an athletic contest experienced just before the start. *Agōn* originally meant the place of an athletic contest and then the contest itself. An athletic parallel offers an explanation for the profuse sweat that follows: The runner is tense up to begin the trial, and sweat breaks out all over his body. In such an interpretation, the *peirasmos* or great trial, which Jesus now knowingly will enter, resembles an athletic contest. . . . The Father cannot spare Jesus from drinking the cup, but the strengthening angel prepares Jesus so that he arises from prayer in tense readiness for the combat with the approaching power of darkness.” (Brown *DM*, 189–190)
- While Brown’s exegesis of Christ’s “agony” is interesting, he is handicapped by not knowing the great fundamental truth of Gethsemane: that this was where and when Christ took upon himself the weight of the sins and pains of the world

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“ . . . and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luke 22:44b)

- Syntactical question: does “as” introduce an adverbial clause or an adjectival phrase?
  - Adverbial: describes *how the sweat fell*
  - Adjectival: describes *what his sweat was*
- Some patristic writers and modern scholars, seeing it as adverbial, have suggested that this was part of the “agony” of preparation or have suggested that it is allegorical
- Medical writers have noted that this could be an instance of a phenomenon called *hematridosis*
  - “In persons experiencing extreme distress and highly emotional states . . . the small blood vessels just under the skin hemorrhage” (see Skinner, *Gethsemane*, 76-77 in the packet)

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## Scriptural Confirmations

- “And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, **blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.**” (Mosiah 3:7)
- “For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; **Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit**—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.” (D&C 19:16-19)

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## What Did He Suffer?

- The weight not only of our sins but also our pains, sorrows, heartbreak, disappointment . . .
- “The Father is pure, glorified, unadulterated life, and in Gethsemane the Savior had to experience *all* things, even descend *below* all things to satisfy justice, **[including] spiritual death . . .**” (Skinner, 72)
  - Spiritual death: separation from the presence and influence of God and the spirit (see 2 Nephi 9:12; D&C 29:40-41)
- “**In Gethsemane, Jesus was left alone by the Father . . .** The shock of the spirit’s withdrawal, the withdrawal of light and life was overwhelmingly traumatic and plunged Jesus into hell.” (Skinner, 73)

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## The Extent of Our Lord's Sufferings

- “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And **he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people,** that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance . . .” (Alma 7:11-13)

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## “Began to be sore amazed . . .”

- “Later, in Gethsemane, the suffering Jesus began to be ‘sore amazed’ (Mark 14:33), or, in the Greek, ‘awestruck’ and ‘astonished.’ **Imagine, Jehovah, the Creator of this and other worlds, “astonished”!** Jesus knew cognitively what He must do, but not experientially. He had never personally known the exquisite and exacting process of an atonement before. **Thus, when the agony came in its fulness, it was so much, much worse than even He with his unique intellect had ever imagined!** No wonder an angel appeared to strengthen him!
- The cumulative weight of all mortal sins—past, present, and future—pressed upon that perfect, sinless, and sensitive Soul! **All our infirmities and sicknesses were somehow, too, a part of the awful arithmetic of the Atonement.** The anguished Jesus not only pled with the Father that the hour and cup might pass from Him, but with this relevant citation. ‘And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me.’ (Mark 14:35-36.)” (Neal A. Maxwell, “Willing to Submit,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 70ff.)

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## Jesus and the Olive

Review Brother Skinner's chapter from his book *Gethsemane* (in the course packet) to note some of the important symbolism

- Gethsemane was an olive grove *and* the site of an olive press
  - *Gethsemane* means "oil press"
  - Israel is represented by the Olive Tree (see Jeremiah 11:16; Jacob 5)
- Jewish tradition identifies the olive tree with the Tree of Life
  - *The Book of Mormon* identifies Christ with the Tree of Life, the fruit thereby being his Atonement
- Rabbinical tradition calls the olive tree a "tree of light" and the symbol of "the light of the world"
  - Christ is "the Light of the World"
- Olive oil first runs red when it is beginning to be crushed
- Olive oil was used as a healing agent
- Olive oil was used to anoint Israel's prophets, priests, and kings

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## Possible Site of Gethsemane

- Site Currently Maintained by Franciscan Friars – The Church of All Nations
- Church property contains a modern "garden"

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## A Site like Gethsemane



The Church of All Nations garden includes two very old olive trees

(although olive trees live extremely long, all those of the time of Jesus would have been cut down at the time the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70)

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## Olive Processing Symbolic of the Suffering at Gethsemane



Step 1:  
Olives harvested from the nearby orchard

*This and succeeding photos by Matthew J. Grey*

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## Olive Processing Symbolic of the Suffering at Gethsemane



Step 2:  
Harvested olives gathered into a large basin and then crushed with a massive grinding stone turned by manual or animal labor. This creates an olive mash to be gathered into several rope bags.

Matthew 26:37  
"[Jesus] began to be sorrowful and very heavy"

Jesus began to be crushed by the weight of our sins and infirmities

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## Olive Processing Symbolic of the Suffering at Gethsemane

Step 3:  
Rope bags containing the olive mash are gathered and stacked under an oil press ("Gethsemane"). The pressure exerted upon these bags by the press causes each individual pore of the bags to open up and ooze out the oil, initially dark red. The oil pours over the white limestone base into the collecting basin.

This is a powerful illustration of what happened to Jesus as He was pressed by our sins and infirmities. He also bled from every pore as do the bags oozing the olive oil.



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## Olive Processing Symbolic of the Suffering at Gethsemane

Uses of the Olive Oil in the Ancient World:  
Cooking (Nourishment)  
Healing of Wounds  
Lighting the Oil Lamps

These are the very things provided to each of us through Jesus' Gethsemane experience – Nourishment, Healing, and Light.

