

Gethsemane



Recently we took our children to visit an archaeological site of the Roman era. One of the artefacts exhibited was a stone oil-press (see picture), which in Aramaic is called 'Gethsemane'. It is likely that the garden where our Lord went to pray on the night before his passion was named Gethsemane because it housed such an oil-press. The Garden of Gethsemane was itself located at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

At Gethsemane Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears. Three times he pleaded with God, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will' (Mat 26:39).

Why was Jesus so distressed and troubled? Why, as he himself said, was his soul so sorrowful, even to death? What made him fall to his face in earnest prayer? Why did his sweat become like drops of blood falling to the ground?

Could it be that he was fearful of the scourging and beatings he was about to receive? Was it the mockery and insults of his enemies? Was he dreading the heavy cross, the nails driven through his hands and feet, and the crown of thorns on his head? Was he terrified of the agony and the thirst that he was about to endure while hanging on the cross?

A stone much harder and heavier was pressing and crushing his soul. No-one ever suffered as he suffered. The death of Christ was unique.

Let us remember that Jesus is the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased. He came to the world to redeem his people from sin, but he himself was without sin. Jesus is holy, innocent and unstained. But notice now what he did.

Christ came to free us from the curse of the law. We broke the law and God's wrath rested on our heads. To free us from condemnation, Christ, the Blessed One, was cursed in our place, as the Scripture says, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree' (Gal 3:10-14). Jesus was *cursed* for us! Christ was made *sin* for us! (2 Cor 5:21).

It is no wonder that the Lord detested that awful hour, and that he prayed so earnestly to the Father to spare him the cup ... if it were possible.

But for our liberty, no, it was not possible. He had to be pierced for our transgressions; he had to be crushed for our iniquities. The lamb of God had to be sacrificed on the altar to take away the sin of the world.

There is no other way. Those who reject him will have to drink the cup of the wrath of God themselves and suffer for eternity in hell.

We who have embraced Christ by faith will not drink the bitter cup of divine wrath. Christ took the cup and drank it for us. We drink the wine of gladness and salvation which Christ obtained by the suffering of his soul. Praise his holy name!