

The Lord's Arrest and Trial; Peter's Three Denials

Luke 22:39-71

Luke 22:39-53: Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. 40 When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." 41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." 43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. 45 When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. 46 Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation." 47 And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. 48 But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" 49 When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" 50 And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. 51 But Jesus answered and said, "Permit even this." And He touched his ear and healed him. 52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? 53 When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

Background Notes

In the first half of this chapter, the Lord and the disciples celebrated the Passover. During the Passover meal the Lord's Supper was instituted. After some further teaching from our Lord, the group sang a hymn (according to Matthew's and Mark's accounts), and then went out to the Mount of Olives. The Garden of Gethsemane is located on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives, and here the Lord asked His disciples to pray so that they would not enter into temptation - the temptation to give up and forsake the Lord when the going got tough. We, too, need to pray that we will not yield to temptation and deny or forsake the Lord, in any way.

The Lord went away by Himself, about a stone's throw away, and prayed fervently. The name "Gethsemane" means "olive press," and the Lord was suffering severe pressure as He looked ahead to the cross. His agony of soul was so great that Luke, a physician states that the Lord's profuse sweat resembled great drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke is the only Gospel to give us this information, as well as the angel from heaven who strengthened the Lord.

What did the Lord mean by "this cup" when He prayed, "*Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless*

not My will, but Yours, be done.” That dreaded “cup” was more than just the physical sufferings of the cross. The cup involved **all the suffering** that was associated with the sinless Son of God taking our sins upon Himself, experiencing the wrath of God, and the terrible trauma of separation from the Father with whom He had always enjoyed perfect communion. The Lord drank the whole cup, because it was the Father’s will.

Verses 47-53 give the account of the Lord’s arrest by the Jewish authorities in the Garden of Gethsemane. (The Roman authorities were not involved yet.) Judas probably knew that the Lord and the disciples were in the Garden of Gethsemane or on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, because that was His custom. Verse 39: *“And coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him.”* Judas led the Jewish authorities to this site that was outside the city and away from the crowds, and identified the Lord with a betrayal kiss. Notice, by the way - this verse indicates that the Lord looked like an ordinary man – there was no “white robe” or “halo” to make Jesus obvious to the authorities, so a kiss was necessary to identify Him for the soldiers.

Other gospels state that Peter was the disciple who cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Peter probably aimed for the man’s head - but missed! It was not wrong for Peter to carry a sword for defensive purposes (v36-38), but the Lord rebuked him for wielding his sword in this offensive manner. No one had actually threatened their lives. In fact, the Lord told the authorities that there was no need to come with swords and clubs to arrest Him. The Lord did not intend to fight, even though the authorities were in the wrong - and clearly they were under the dark power of the evil one.

Doctrinal Points

1. Peter’s denial was predicted by the Lord

Verses 54-62: Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance. 55 Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. 56 And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, “This man was also with Him.” 57 But he denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.” 58 And after a little while another saw him and said, “You also are of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” 59 Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.” 60 But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!” Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” 62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

The trial of our Lord took place in two phases -- a religious trial and a civil trial. The civil trial before Pilate was necessary because Rome did not allow the Jews to carry out the death penalty, and the Jewish religious leaders wanted Jesus to be executed.

In verses 54-62 we have the first part of the Lord's religious trial, held at the house of the high priest. Here Peter denied the Lord three times - first to a servant girl, then to a man along with a servant girl, and finally to a bystander. According to John 18, the bystander was a servant of the high priest and a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, and whom Jesus had healed.

Peter's Galilean accent gave him away. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark add that Peter began to curse and swear with his third denial. And then the rooster crowed, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Can you imagine that look? No wonder Peter went out and wept bitterly. Peter had boldly proclaimed that he would go to prison and to death for the Lord, but the Lord had corrected Peter by predicting that he would deny Him three times before the next morning. Peter's denial was predicted by the Lord.

2. The people's derision was predicted by the Lord.

Verses 63-65: Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. 64 And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?" 65 And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.

The Lord predicted that He would be subjected to terrible, shameful treatment. Look back at Luke 18:31-33: "*Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."*

The Lord was treated shamefully by the Jewish religious leaders, and later by the Roman soldiers. Matthew 26:65-68 describes the shameful treatment by the Jewish religious authorities, and Matthew 27:27 (and following) describes the vicious actions of the Roman soldiers. So both Jews and Gentiles were guilty of shameful treatment of the Lord. The people's derision was predicted by the Lord.

3. The delegation of power was predicted by the Lord.

Verses 66-71: As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, 67 "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will by no means believe. 68 And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. 69 Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God." 70 Then they all said, "Are You then the Son of God?" So He said to them, "You rightly say that I am." 71 And they said, "What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

At the end of Luke 22, we have the second part of the Lord's religious trial before the Council - the Sanhedrin, the governing body of the Jews. It was illegal for the Sanhedrin to meet during the night. However, according to the parallel accounts in Matthew and Mark, the Sanhedrin had met and held preliminary hearings at night; they then waited for dawn to make their verdict official. Once again they asked the Lord to declare whether or not He was God – that, to the Jewish leaders, was blasphemy and worthy of death. They refused to consider the possibility that our Lord's claims were true.

The Lord quoted from Psalm 110. These religious leaders knew that Psalm 110 is a Messianic Psalm. They rightly understood that His claim to be the Son of Man was a claim to be the Son of God, which was a claim to be God Himself! Therefore they decided they had all the evidence they were needed to convict Him.

But the story was not over yet. By their earthly power, the Sanhedrin convicted the Lord, and delivered Him to Rome to be crucified. But by God's power, the Lord was resurrected! He would ascend to heaven and be seated at the right hand of the power of God - supreme above all other powers! All power on heaven and earth is given to Him (Matthew 28:18). The delegation of power was predicted by the Lord.

Practical Application

It's not wrong to pray for a cup of suffering to be removed.

The Lord prayed to the Father, *"if it is Your will [if it's at all possible], let this cup pass from Me."* He would have preferred **any other way** to fulfill the will of God and provide for our salvation without having to go through the shame of the cross, to be made sin for us and thus experience separation from His Father, and to suffer the wrath of God against sin. But **there was no other way**, and the Lord submitted totally to the will of the Father.

It's not wrong for us to pray for a cup of suffering to be removed. It's not a sign of weakness or ungodliness. Remember, as long as we add to our prayers the words "not my will but Yours be done" - and mean it - it's not wrong to pray for a cup of suffering to be removed.