

EXPLORATION: BIBLE

By Chip Thompson

Jesus in Gethsemane

Gethsemane is the place where Jesus spent his final moments with his disciples before he was betrayed and arrested leading to his crucifixion. The word Gethsemane means 'Olive Press.'

Jesus spent his last evening on this earth praying. Three times Jesus prayed, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39-44). It is impossible for us to grasp the pressure that Jesus felt. It is, therefore, fitting that the Bible tells us Jesus spent his last night on earth in 'Gethsemane' or in the 'Olive Press.'



Take a minute to search online for: JESUS, THE PRESSED OLIVE – If you watch this short video, it will help you understand the extreme pressure that Jesus felt in Gethsemane. (Jesus, The Pressed Olive – YouTube > Expedition Bible – by Joel Kramer)

As Jesus prayed, he referred to the "cup" of suffering that he was about to drink. This cup was his crucifixion. In ancient Rome, the word "excruciating" referred specifically to the intense pain experienced during crucifixion. Jesus fully understood the excruciating ordeal that he was about to experience on the cross. This is how the book of Luke describes the pressure Jesus felt, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). So, how do you get olive oil out of olives? You crush them and put them into a press that forces the olive oil out. This is the pressure Jesus felt when he was in Gethsemane, in the Olive Press. Isaiah 53:5 tells us, "He was crushed for our iniquities."

The Bible describes Christ's sacrifice on the cross this

way, "For He/God made Him/Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was the perfect lamb of God who never sinned (1 Peter 1:19). But Jesus "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (2 Peter 2:24). "This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).



The olive grove to the left of this church is Gethsemane, the oldest olive grove in the world. The church on the right is the Church of All Nations. This church stands over the spot where Jesus prayed and was arrested. (Photo by Chip Thompson, 2016)

The New Testament writers never tell us Jesus 'atoned' for our sins. The Lord's Apostles always said Jesus was "the propitiation for our sins." Under Old Testament law, an innocent lamb was sacrificed so that the blood could temporarily cover or 'atone' for a person's sins. Propitiation was not a temporary covering. Propitiation permanently satisfied God's wrath against all sin. Propitiation happened on the cross when God poured His wrath for all our sins upon Jesus. In-other-words, propitiation means Jesus took our beating for us. The propitiation that took place on the cross was the just judgment we deserved. This punishment was poured out on Jesus so that we could be forgiven. Forgiveness is offered when we simply place our faith in Jesus Christ's finished work for us on the cross.

On the Solid Rock Café Israel Tours we always visit Gethsemane and the Church of All Nations. The ancient Gethsemane olive grove has marked the location where Jesus spent his last moments with his disciples for thousands of years. But the focal point of this holy site is inside the Church of All Nations. It is the rock where Jesus prayed his final prayers, where he was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, and was arrested.



The focal point of the Church of All Nations is this large rock. This rock is where Jesus prayed. (photo by Chip Thompson, 2016)

This rock was marked early in Christian history. The Church of All Nations is a modern church that is built over the ruins of an 11th century Crusader church. The Crusader church was constructed over the ruins of a 4th century Byzantine Church. The Byzantine church was built on the spot where Christians had been coming to worship since the time of Christ. Think of it this way, today we go to Israel because we want to visit the places that connect us with Jesus. We are a part of an exceptionally long heritage of Christians who also wanted to experience the same things. Where did Jesus pray? Where was Jesus betrayed by Judas Iscariot and arrested? The answers to these questions all point us to this very rock, the focal point of all the churches that were constructed on this site over the centuries.

The feeling of nostalgia that a person experiences in this place is undeniable. Here, Jesus, the Savior of the world, experienced an extreme pressure that only He could have understood. In Gethsemane, He contemplated what He was about to experience on Golgotha. Jesus knew that all the sins of humanity would soon be placed upon Him as He hung on the cross. The knowledge that the wrath of God against all sin would soon be upon Him had to have been sheer agony. Even more than this, for the first time in all of eternity Jesus was about to experience total separation from the Father. God cannot look upon sin, so when Jesus became the propitiation for our sins, when God poured His wrath against sin upon Him, God turned his back and forsook Jesus. This knowledge was the pressure and agony Jesus felt in those final moments in Gethsemane, in the Olive Press.