

Esoteric Bible Studies

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STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST JESUS

IX.—*Gethsemane, and Betrayals.*

TEXT

26. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

27. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

28. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

29. But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

30. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

31. But He spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

32. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

33. And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;

34. And saith unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

35. And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.

36. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

37. And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?

38. Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter

into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

—*St. Mark 14:26-38.*

INTERPRETATION

To the sincere neophyte, Gethsemane becomes a familiar place, watered with his tears for the suffering and sorrows of humanity. He, too, becomes a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief; for as one goes forward upon the way toward high spiritual attainment, he becomes ever increasingly responsive to the hurts of all living things about him. He feels every pang as his own hurt and stores it up within his heart.

The finding of the Garden of Sorrows is a very necessary step upon the path, for it is only pain that unbars the gates of glory. "Before the feet can stand in the presence of the Masters, they must be washed in the blood of the heart."

The supreme lesson of Gethsemane is learning to stand alone and to say, "Not my will but Thine be done." Many times we must follow Christ Jesus to drink of the cup of sorrow upon that lonely mount until this, the supreme lesson, has been learned. We must drain this cup to the very dregs, that by the cumulative pain which well nigh bursts the heart, we die to the personal self and only live that we may give ourselves unreservedly and completely for healing and helping the world. When one learns to do this, by a sort of divine alchemy all passions become changed into compassion, a divine understanding whose very power enables us to soothe and to heal. We can no longer blame others, judge harshly, criticize, nor hate. We ask only that we may become a living sacrifice upon the altar of humanity, expecting no favors, no gratitude, not even understanding from those who are nearest and dearest to us. Our only desire is to live that we may serve. This is an extremely high ideal of attainment,

but it is one which we must all find before we receive our final liberation from Gethsemane.

After the Supper, Christ Jesus and the eleven passed through one of the open gates of the city, crossed the Kidron and ascended the steep slope of the Mount of Olives. Commanding the other eight disciples to remain beneath the trees, He took with Him Peter, James, and John, who were the most spiritually advanced among His followers. These three had been with Him at the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and had witnessed the Transfiguration. Peter and John "prepared" for the Triumphal Entry, and also for the Last Supper. These things all have reference to certain spiritual developments of the disciples.

"Greatly amazed" and "sorely troubled," in Greek mean an awful isolation, a mental agony. At the time of the Temptation, Christ was tempted through pleasure and power. In Gethsemane He was tempted through pain and sorrow. The neophyte who learns to follow Him must pass through these same tests, their severity depending upon his own particular state of development. The higher we ascend the harder become the tests. Very true it is that whom God loveth He chasteneth.

Christ Jesus was endeavoring to have Peter, James, and John leave their bodies and follow Him into the World of Life Spirit, there to read the eternal records and to understand the esoteric meaning of His mission, that they might come to know that His great Passion and death were not the end, but only the beginning of His work. But they failed Him. They betrayed the Christ within themselves, as well as the great Master, for they were yet so engrossed in the material, still disputing about the high places they should receive in the New Kingdom, that they were unable to follow Him, and so the Bible states that they were asleep. Christ Jesus knows now that the path must be trod alone. Humanity must remain in darkness as to the real meaning of His work. He must

continue to be misunderstood and betrayed, even by His own best-beloved, until the very end.

The disciples never really understood the inner meaning of His work until that blessed day of illumination which we know as Pentecost.

The testing of Christ was threefold: The Temptation in the Wilderness, Gethsemane, and the Crucifixion. Of these, the agony of Gethsemane was likewise threefold: the failure of the beloved disciples, the betrayal by Judas, and the realization that the cup must be drained to the dregs in misunderstanding and loneliness.

Judas represents the lowest nature in man, that nature which is constantly seeking to betray the higher self. The kiss of Judas represents the subtlety of that lower nature and its efforts for self-mastery.

Judas had been made the treasurer of the band. (Luke 23:3). His personal ambitions were thwarted by Christ Jesus' refusal to lead an army against Rome. He had expected the Master to proclaim Himself King and that he should receive a high place among the officials. As the Master gave deeper and more spiritual truths, Judas became more hopelessly confused and puzzled and having no understanding of the deeper work, his confusion turned into baffled rage and hatred and he began to plot the betrayal. The 30 pieces of silver (about \$20 in United States money) has a deep esoteric significance, referring to the fall of the feminine pole in man. Judas, the man of Kerioth, belonged to the tribe of Judah, which was ruled by Leo, the sign of the Heart. Humanity must all rise or fall through the love nature which is centered in the heart.

The powers of Christ, of John, and of Judas, all represent powers within ourselves. It is for us to transmute the force of Judas into that of John and so awaken the divinity of the Christ within. We may well ponder the axiom of the ancient Greeks: "Man, know thyself."