

WESTERN WISDOM BIBLE STUDY

Culmination of the Ministry

CORINNE HELINE

The Testing of Peter (Cont.)

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

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.

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

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

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

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

And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy.

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

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

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.

And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter Simon, Sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour?

Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready but the flesh is weak.

—*Mark 14:26-38*

To the sincere neophyte, Gethsemane becomes a familiar place, watered with tears for suffering, sorrowing humanity. He, too, becomes a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, for whosoever goes forward upon the way toward high spiritual attainment becomes increasingly responsive to the hurts of all living things about him and feels their suffering as his very own.

Finding the Garden of Sorrows is a very necessary step upon the path, for it is pain only 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 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 lesson has been learned. We must drain the cup to the very dregs, until by the cumulative pain which well nigh bursts the heart, we die to the personal self and 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 passion becomes changed into compassion and into a divine understanding whose very power enables one to soothe and heal. We can no longer blame others, judge harshly, criticize or 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 all must find before the final liberation from Gethsemane.

After the Supper, Christ Jesus and the Eleven passed through one of the open gates of the city, crossed the Kedron and ascended the steep slope of the Mount of Olives. Taking with Him Peter, James, and John, He asked the other Disciples to remain beneath the trees. The three who accompanied Him had been with Him at the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and had witnessed the Transfiguration. Peter and John had made the preparation for the

Triumphal Entry and also for the Last Supper. These events have reference to certain spiritual developments of the Disciples.

The phrases "greatly amazed" and "sorely troubled" mean, in Greek, 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 heavenly records and to understand the esoteric meaning of His mission, that they might 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 so given to disputing about the high places they should receive in the New Kingdom, that they were unable to follow Him: "they were asleep" to these high spiritual truths. Christ Jesus knew now that the path must be trod alone. Humanity must remain yet for a time 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 fully 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 of Judas, and the realization that the cup must be drained to the last drop in misunderstanding and loneliness.

Judas had been made the treasurer of the

band. His personal ambitions were thwarted by Christ Jesus' refusal to lead an army against Rome. He had expected the Master to proclaim Himself as king and that he, Judas, should receive a high place among officials. As the Christ gave deeper and more spiritual truths, Judas became more hopelessly confused. Having no understanding of the deeper work, his confusions turned into baffled rage and hatred, culminating in the betrayal.

The powers of Christ, or 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."

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ASTROLOGY'S TRIPLE CROSS

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In appearance the fixed type of people is usually outstanding in some way. Often "massive," giving the impression of great strength and solidity. Their movements are deliberate, unhurried—languid or lazy; their manner and bearing, quiet and staid. In the higher types we may find a certain ponderous dignity and regal stateliness. A good many of these people move about with a preoccupied air, seeming to live within themselves or be engrossed in thought.

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READERS' QUESTIONS

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tion he requires. If he thinks that he can better equip himself to work in God's vineyard by obtaining similar information about himself, he would also be justified in consulting the Memory of Nature. The ability to read the Memory of Nature, however, must never be used to gratify idle curiosity or serve the purpose of self-aggrandizement.