



MBS069

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



THE AGONY OF GETHSEMANE



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*And he said,
Abba, Father,
all things are possible
unto you; remove
this cup from me:
howbeit not what I will,
but what you will.
Mark 14:36*

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

This manuscript will deal with one of the greatest battles of spiritual warfare that Yeshua (Jesus) fought and one of several attempts of Satan to keep Yeshua from the cross. We will study this subject in four units: first, the background; secondly, the Agony; thirdly, the cup; and fourthly, the conclusion.

The Agony of Gethsemane is found in three of the Gospels: Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; and Luke 22:39-46. All three Gospels must be studied carefully in order to fully comprehend what happened in the Agony of Gethsemane.

I. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After the Passover was completed and the first Lord's Supper introduced, Jesus left the upper room, crossed the Kidron Valley, and went part of the way up the slopes of the Mount of Olives where the Garden of Gethsemane was located (Mat. 26:36; Mk. 14:32; Lk. 22:41). At this point, only eleven of the disciples were with Him, since by this time Judas had left to betray Him (Jn. 13:30). Eight of these disciples were left near the entrance of the garden in order to serve as the first guard. They were also instructed to be in prayer; praying for themselves, not for the Messiah. Jesus took the three remaining disciples, Peter, James, and John, further along to serve as a second guard (Mat. 26:37; Mk. 14:33a). Then He departed a bit further, "about a stone's throw" (Lk. 22:41), and began His prayer and His Agony (Mat. 26:39a; Mk. 14:35; Lk. 22:41).

II. THE AGONY

In the three Gospels, six statements are made, giving a vivid description of the Agony.

A. The Nature of the Agony

First, He was greatly amazed (Mk. 14:33b). The word amazed means “to be utterly surprised,” “to be stunned with astonishment.”

Secondly, He was sore troubled (Mk. 14:33b), meaning that He was “feeling very heavy,” like a heavy weight was pressing upon Him.

Thirdly, He said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful (Mk. 14:34). The term means, “to be pressed upon,” emphasizing the extreme pressure Yeshua was under at this point in time.

Fourthly, He was exceeding sorrowful even unto death (Mk. 14:34). In other words, the sorrow was so great, the pressure so severe, the trouble so heavy, that there was real danger of a total collapse of His physical frame.

Fifth, He was in an agony (Lk. 22:44). The word agony means “conflict.” He was in an agony in the sense of being “in a conflict.” And the sixth statement giving a description of the Agony is in Luke 22:44: ... *his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.*

The sweating of real blood implies that the small blood vessels burst under the surface of the skin. When the sweat came out, along with it came great drops of blood falling [to] the ground.

B. The Reasons for the Agony

What was the conflict about? There were two things that the Messiah agonized over and was in conflict over.

First, He was fighting with the forces of Satan, which were trying to keep Him from the cross.

A second reason for the conflict is dealt with in Isaiah 49:1-13, one of the Servant of Jehovah passages which is a messianic title. In this passage, Isaiah pictures the Messiah as being troubled, because it appeared that His mission had been a failure. He had been chosen especially by God; He came to Israel and offered Himself as Israel’s Messiah and yet Israel failed to respond. Because of Israel’s rejection of His Messiahship, He was in an agony or conflict.

C. The Message of Assurance

At this point, a message comes to the Messiah from God the Father. This message came by means of an angel according to Luke 22:43: *And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.*

While Luke does not state what the message of the angel was, the Isaiah passage does. The message of God the Father to the Son by means of

an angel was that Israel's rejection of His Messiahship was part of the divine plan and program (Is. 49:1-4). From the viewpoint of God the Father, it was "too light or too little a thing" for the Messiah to restore only Israel and to bring the dispersed of Judah together (vv. 5-6a), He was also to be *a light to the Gentiles* (v. 6b). After a period of time during which He is to be the light, then Israel will respond to Him (vv. 8-13).

According to Isaiah, the divine program was to be fulfilled in three steps. First, the Messiah would come and Israel would reject Him in verses 1-4. Secondly, at that point He would become "the light to the Gentiles" (v. 6a). This outline of God's divine program is picked up in the New Testament in Acts 15:14: *to take out from among the Gentiles a people for his name*, and in Romans, chapters 9-11: until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in (Rom. 11:25). And thirdly, Israel will turn to Him and all Israel will be saved and, at that time, He will bring back and restore Israel (Is. 49:8-13).

The rejection of the Messiah by Israel was not a failure, it was a success of God's planned program. God's program is being carried out as it was decreed in the pages of the Old Testament.

III. THE CUP

But there was a third thing He agonized over: having to drink the cup. Three different times the Messiah prayed concerning this cup. The agony over the cup is graphically described in Matthew 26:39: *And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.*

Luke 22:41 adds: *And he was parted from them about a stone's cast; and he kneeled down and prayed, ...*

Jesus walked about a "stone's throw" away from the three disciples. He then got down on His knees and began praying. As the Agony increased, the knelling position gave way to a prostrate position and He fell with His face to the ground, praying earnestly (Mk. 14:35).

A. Three Prayers

Altogether, He prayed three times. The first prayer is recorded in Mark 14:36: *And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto you; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what you will.*

The second prayer is recorded in Matthew 26:42: Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, *My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, your will be done.*

The third prayer is merely stated as being with the same words according to Matthew 26:44: *And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words.*

Three prayers are recorded but all three prayers are for the same thing: that He would not have to drink of this cup. But He is willing to drink it if it is the will of God the Father.

B. The Meaning of the Cup

The question then is, what is the cup that He prayed He would not have to drink? There have been three suggestions as to precisely what that cup means.

1. Physical Death

The first suggestion is that this cup represents physical death: that Yeshua was praying that He would not have to die physically or that He suddenly developed a fear of physical death. But this is not a good answer for several reasons. In Luke 19:10, Jesus said that He came for the purpose of dying physically. Furthermore, Philippians 2:8 talks about His obedience, which included the death of the cross. Hebrews 10:5-9 states that the whole purpose of His coming was to die. Since He came for the purpose of dying, for Him not to die now would render His purpose for coming null and void. Would Yeshua really pray now for that purpose for which He came to be removed? That is somewhat preposterous; Jesus would not ask for a cancellation of the divine program and the whole purpose of His coming. Finally, Yeshua clearly said that He would never ask not to die physically in John 12:27: *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour.*

Thus, for Jesus to ask not to die would make Him a liar, and that would make Him a sinner.

2. Premature Death

The second suggestion is that this cup represents premature death: that Yeshua was afraid of dying before He could make it to the cross. If He died apart from the cross, there would be no atonement. This is not a good answer, because there was never any danger of that either. In the account of His arrest, it becomes very apparent who is in control. It was not the Jewish leaders who were in control; it was not the Romans who were in control; it was not Satan who was in control; rather, Jesus was in total control.

Furthermore, in John 18:6 when the Roman soldiers and Jewish officers came to arrest Him, He forced them all to the ground, clearly showing that it was Yeshua who was in total control. As many as there were of them, not one of them was able to arrest Him until He permitted Himself to be arrested.

In Luke 23:46, at the point of His death, the Greek states that “He dismissed His spirit” from His body. If Jesus had wanted to, He could have hung on that cross alive forever! He would die only at the point He chose to die and so it was He who dismissed His spirit from His body.

Finally, in John 10:18a Yeshua Himself said: *No one takes it [My life] away from me, but I lay it down of myself.*

Ultimately, no one could take the life of Jesus away from Him. He laid down His own life and so it was He who dismissed His spirit from His body. Therefore, the second suggestion is not a good solution as to what the cup represents.

3. The Wrath of God and Spiritual Death

The third suggestion for the meaning of the cup is in keeping with the symbolic use of the word cup in the Old Testament: that this cup represents the wrath of God and spiritual death. In the majority of the cases when the word cup is used symbolically, it was always a symbol of the wrath of God. When the wrath of God is poured out, it means that those suffering the wrath of God are those who are spiritually dead. While the Old Testament made it very clear that the Messiah would have to die physically for the atonement, never did it say that spiritual death was necessary for the atonement. While physical death was necessary—*for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin* (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22)—spiritual death was not necessary for the atonement. Therefore, Yeshua could not possibly have asked not to die physically. However, He could ask not to have to die spiritually.

It is hard for us who were born spiritually dead to appreciate what this meant to Jesus and why He was so much in an agony over it. We were born spiritually dead and although we are now spiritually alive, even that spiritual life is not a totally sinless life; fellowship is broken with God the Father in a believer's life by sin. Not so with Yeshua! For all eternity past, He was in continuous fellowship with God the Father. But the moment the sins of the world were placed upon Him, God the Father turned away; and for the second three hours on the cross Jesus, was spiritually dead. At the end of those three hours of suffering spiritual death—suffering the wrath of God, which this cup represents—then He cried out, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mat. 27:46)

What He was asking for and agonizing over was not to have to die spiritually and to suffer the wrath of God. While that was His desire, He coupled His desire with the will of God. Yeshua said, “not my will but thy will be done.” Indeed, it was the Father's will for Him to drink of this cup and He was willing to drink it. During the arrest when Peter tried to save Him from being taken, Jesus said in John 18:11: *... Put up the sword into the sheath: the cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?*

Three times Yeshua prayed that the cup would be removed. Three times God the Father said He must drink it. Because Jesus wanted to do the Father's will and not His own, He was willing to drink it and said that He would drink the cup.

IV. THE CONCLUSION

Sometimes people teach that we should not couple our prayers with the statement, “If it is Your will,” because this is expressing doubt. Remember, Yeshua never doubted the Father; there was never any lack of faith on the part of Jesus. Yet He prayed, “if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me, yet not mine but let thy will be done.” It is not wrong to couple our requests in the same way.

Secondly, it is also wrong to teach that if we have enough faith, anything we ask, without exception, will be answered the way we want it. If the prayer is not answered, then it is because we lacked faith. Yeshua lacked no faith. If He did, He was a sinner, because that which is *not of faith is sin* (Rom. 14:23). Yet He asked for a specific thing in all faith three times, and three times He was told, “no.” Sometimes a “no” does not mean a lack of faith, but simply that it is not God’s will. Years earlier in one garden, the first Adam learned disobedience and brought death.

Years later in another garden, the last Adam learned obedience, suffered the full wrath of God for our sins, and brought life.✠

NOTES

**IF YOU ENJOYED THIS
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RECOMMENDS:**

*MBS009, 016, 020, 028, 031,
032, 035, 036, 040, 043, 044,
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075, 076, 094, 099, 127, 134,
183, 185.*

