

47 Garden of Gethsemane

Names (also known as)

Gethsemane
The garden

Etymology

Garden - Greek: κήπος *kēpos* - garden

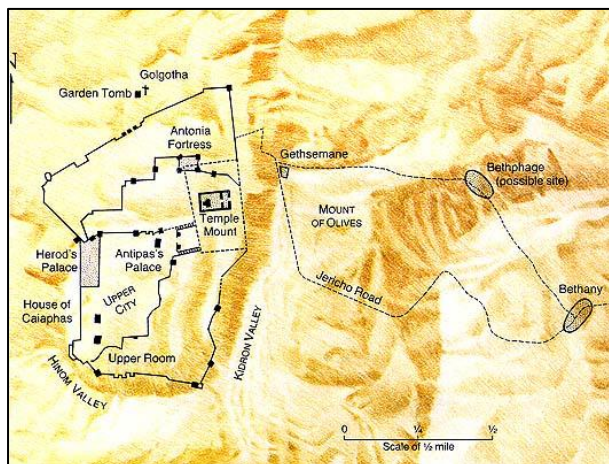
Gethsemane - Greek: Γεθσημανή, *Gethsēmanē*; Hebrew: גת שמנים, *Gat-Šmānim*; Aramiac: ܓܬ ܫܡܢܝܢ, *Gat Šmānē*; Strong's poss. Chald. *eleusis* - an advent, coming; *shemen* - oil, anointing; oil press.

The place: Greek: χωριον, *chorion* – field, parcel of ground, possession (in John 18:1).

Greek: τοπος *topos* – specific spot, locality (in Luke 22:40).

Location/Description

The exact location of Gethsemane is unknown, although circumstantial evidence from Scripture places it outside the eastern wall of Jerusalem near the Kidron Valley. Tradition locates it on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives.



Gethsemane is mentioned only twice in the Bible, both in the New Testament (Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32). In each case, it is called a "place" (Greek - *chorion*) to which Jesus Christ and his apostles retired after their last supper together. John calls the area "a garden" and notes that it lay across the Kidron brook, which flows from the north down Jerusalem's east side (John 18:1).

Luke associates the place (Greek - *topos*) with the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39).

The reference to the 'place' suggests that the location was bound up tightly with Jesus' life, his purpose and his relationship with the Father and his disciples.

It was obviously a spot that Jesus and his disciples customarily visited (Luke 22:39), foreknown by Judas as a place where a large force could be deployed and the arrest made (John 18:2,3).



Scriptural references

Old Testament connections

Joshua 11 – Gath, the Philistine town derives its name from the same word – a press.

Exodus 37 – Bezaleel made the holy anointing oil (*shemen*) as an apothecary.

2 Sam. 15:30 – David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot.

New Testament

Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32

Famous characters

David (and perhaps Ahithophel/Absalom)
Jesus and his disciples
Judas Iscariot

Brief history

It was here that Jesus agonisingly prayed to his Father for strength, while the Apostles fell asleep.

It is significant that it was in a Garden that sin first made its appearance on earth; and in a Garden where the 'last Adam' agonised to conquer it.

Gethsemane would have been where the harvest of the Mount of Olives was brought to

press and crush to supply the oil for the lamps of the Temple and the city. It is appropriate that such a site should be chosen as the place of pressure (to crush self-will) for he who declared himself ‘the light of the world’ (John 8:12).

A thousand years before, David had crossed the same brook. Rejected (by his people), betrayed (by his friend), it seems undoubtedly a prototype for the crushed but steadfast spirit of Christ, ‘Not my will, but thine be done’.

But what encouragement to know Absalom’s revolt failed. Ahithophel took his own life and the King who crossed Kidron wretched, cowed and dejected, later returned vindicated by God, triumphant into the city.

Jesus finishes a prayer to his Father and Luke records ‘there appeared an angel to him from heaven, strengthening him.’ (v.43). Jesus continues his prayer with ‘sweat as it were great drops of blood’.

Almost immediately, the reinforced temple guard arrive to arrest the Lord following the kiss of betrayal.

Peter interjects by drawing a sword and cutting off Malchus’ ear (John 18:10). Jesus performs his last healing miracle on the servant of the High Priest. Jesus states that 12 legions of angels would come at his command (Matt. 26:53); a reference to “the army of heaven” doing what he will (Daniel 4:35).

Soon Jesus Christ will stride victoriously, immortal and glorious, across the valley and re-enter his city at the head of ‘12 legions of angels’ (the saints) to overthrow the kingdom of men and establish the throne of his Father on earth in Jerusalem.

Gethsemane in our hymns

Hymn 216

Beyond where Kedron’s waters flow,
Behold the suffering Saviour go
To sad Gethsemane;
His countenance is all divine,
Yet grief appears in every line.
He bows beneath the sins of men;
He cries to God, and cries again,
In sad Gethsemane;
He lifts his mournful eyes above -
"My Father, can this cup remove?"

With gentle resignation, still
He yielded to his Father’s will,
In sad Gethsemane;
"Behold me here, thine only Son;
And Father, let Thy will be done!"

The Father heard; an angel there

Sustain’d the Son of God in prayer,
In sad Gethsemane;
He drank the dreadful cup of pain,
Then rose to life and joy again.

Hymn 222

When my love to God grows weak,
When for larger faith I seek,
Then in thought I go to thee,
Garden of Gethsemane.

There I walk amid the shades
While the lingering twilight fades;
See that suffering, friendless One
Weeping, praying, there alone.

When my love for man grows weak,
When for stronger faith I seek,
Hill of Calvary! I go
To thy scenes of pain and woe.

There behold his agony
Suffered on the bitter tree;
See his anguish, see his faith,
Love triumphant still in death!

Then to life I turn again,
Learning all the worth of pain,
Learning all the might that lies
In a full self-sacrifice.

Hymn 239

O God, unseen yet ever near,
We come to seek Thy face,
Our hearts made wiser by Thy fear,
And humbler by Thy grace.

Here may Thy faithful people know
The blessings of Thy love,
The streams that through the desert flow,
The manna from above.

We come, responsive to Thy word,
To feast on heavenly food;
Our meat the body of the Lord,
Our drink his precious blood.

So may we as we meet with Thee
Be sealed more surely Thine,
And see beyond Gethsemane
Thy kingdom’s glory shine.

Our Lord’s struggle with his own nature and his foreknowledge of the events about to unfold, make the Garden of Gethsemane an appropriate place of motivation in our self-examination and worship at the table of memorial.

Sources:

Guidebook to the New Testament (HP Mansfield)
The Day Christ Died (28th Australasian Youth Conference)

(Compiler – John Tierney)