

4455U

FLORIDA BIBLE SCHOOL - 1993

THE GARDEN OF GOD

Speaker: Brother Barry Van Heerden

Study 3: The Garden of Agony - Gethsemane

Reading: Matthew 26:36-46 and John 18:1-9

Good morning my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord. Good morning!

In our first two studies we have noticed, how the LORD God created the world, this beautiful environment in which we find ourselves, the heavens and the earth and everything that there is within, and after He had created this beautiful environment, He created a garden and eastward in the garden, He created a special place, a holy of holies, and in that very special place, He placed man. Man was given a simple test of obedience, and man failed, and so man was driven from the garden, from whence he was made, and there was placed eastward of the garden, cherubim with flaming swords which turned every way to **keep, to protect and to guard the way to the tree of life.**

So, from that time onwards, all Adam's descendants have inherited his nature, not his sin, his nature. They have followed his way of thinking, his way of reasoning, his way of logic, that they have inherited which is a way alienated from the way of God. It is alienated from the way of life, it is alienated from the tree of life. As man was banished from the garden of God, he was banished from the life that God gave him, he was banished from that tree, that precious tree, that special tree that gave life.

So I bring you to Genesis 5, and so we study now that long procession from the womb to the grave, that first great chapter which deals with all Adam's descendants. Genesis 5 reading from verse 5, 'And all the days of Adam that he lived were 930 years: **and he died**'. Verse 8, 'And all the days of Seth were 912 years: **and he died**'. Verse 11, 'And all the days of Enos were 905 years; **and he died**'; Verse 14, 'All the days of Cainan were 910 years, **and he died**'; Verse 17, 'All the days of Mahalaleel were 895 years, **and he died**'; Verse 20, 'All the days of Jared were 962 years, **and he died**'; Verse 24, the 7th from Adam, Enoch, the only one thus far who **had walked with God**, this solitary prophet who prophesied, 'behold, the LORD cometh with 10,000 of His saints to execute judgment upon all', verse 24, 'And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him'. It seems that at some point in Enoch's life, there was a crisis and he preached and people came against him to kill him, and he was protected at that point in time, and he was translated at that point in time that he should not see death, as we find in Hebrews 11 and verse 5, (you might find it in your margin). God translated him

so he should not see death, but **he too died**, because in the same Hebrew letter, we find that after Enoch is mentioned, 'that all these died in faith, not having received the promises'. So clearly he too, **died!**

Verse 27, 'All the days of Methuselah were 969 years, **and he died**; verse 31, 'And all the days of Lamech were 777 years, **and he died**. And if that record is not conclusive enough for us, just move on to chapter 6 verse 6, all this is as a direct result of the transgression of the first man made in God's image. Verse 6, 'It repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him in His heart. And the LORD said, I will **destroy** man from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and creeping thing and the fowl of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them'.

God did exactly that! Look at chapter 7 verse 21, just over the page, mark these words carefully, 'And **all flesh died** that moved upon the earth, both fowl, and cattle and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, **and every man in whose nostrils was the breath of life, and all that was in the dry land, died**'. What a devastating picture! anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one, knows in their deepest heart what those words mean! Death is something that is devastating, it is something that makes us feel empty inside, it is the pain of being alive when you've lost someone you loved. It's the loneliness, it's the heartache, death is devastating and in all this picture of death and devastation, in this long procession from the womb to the grave, God sent His chosen few, just one here, and one there! and these chosen few were sent to point to another way, a better way. It was the way of holiness, it was the way back to the tree of life in the garden of God.

From the time that God gave that great promise of Messiah, the seed of the woman, who would come in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemn sin in the flesh; from that time that God made that great promise, He sent **witnesses!** There was Abel, there was Enoch, there was Noah, there was Abraham, and when we read those words in Hebrews we think, 'oh, they were just here', there was 500 years between each one of those men. 500 years, then there was Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, there was Moses, there was Elijah and Daniel. 'And the time would fail to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah; of David and Samuel and of the prophets: Who through faith conquered, they **conquered** sin in the flesh, not to the full extent, not to the full extent, that was reserved for the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. 'They died in faith not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Why? why did they confess that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth? because the world that was around them belonged to Adam, it belonged to the here and now, it belonged to the world of materialism, it belonged to the things which are seen, it belonged to the world of greed, it belonged to the world that was passing away! All these witnesses believed in the day when God would send His righteous One, who would prepare and travel back that long way back to the garden of God. Against this huge tide of humanity, He would tramp that long road back to the lost paradise. And so in the process of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born

under the law, so He could redeem those who, all their lifetime were in bondage, in chains to that law, the law of sin and death. So for 3-½ long and weary years, this lonely man from Nazareth tramped the dusty paths of Israel, preaching **peace**, preaching **love**, preaching the **gospel of the kingdom of God**, preaching **the way of righteousness**, preaching **the way of holiness**, preaching **the way back to the garden of God**. But this required a battle, this required a war and it was a war against sin; and this battle and this war was to be fought in a garden.

Come then to Matthew 26, the garden of agony, the garden of Gethsemane. Because this war against sin, although recorded in all the gospels, and occupying between 10 and 20 verses in the gospels, we find that as we look at those gospels, we find that in each case they emphasize a slightly different aspect of the battle. Matthew and Mark are almost **identical** in the general sequence of events in Gethsemane, whilst Luke adds Christ's concern for His disciples being tempted in a similar way. But John seems to be more concerned in the betrayal by Judas and the arrest of Jesus. So what we will do today, we will focus our attention on Matthew and John and perhaps draw one or two details from Luke.

Matthew 26 and at verse 36, 'Then cometh Jesus with His disciples unto a place called Gethsemane, and He said unto His disciples, Sit ye here while I go yonder and pray. And He took with Him, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (that's James and John), and He began to be sorrowful and sore troubled. He said unto them, verse 38, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death: abide ye here and watch with Me. He went forward a little (and Luke adds at this point) about a stone's cast, and He fell on His face and prayed'. Just going back to verse 36, 'He went unto **a place**' (5564), if you have a RV margin you will notice that in the margin it tells you that it is an enclosed piece of ground, and if you're making notes just put in Luke 22 verse 40, because in Luke we find the word there used is the Greek word 'topos' (5117) which comes from the Hebrew which literally means 'a holy place, a sanctuary'. As in the book of beginnings so here, 'then there was Eden, and the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden', it was an enclosed portion, it was set apart, and so here in the Kedron valley, in the garden of Gethsemane, with its orchards and its vineyards and its olive groves, there was this **enclosed piece of ground**, a holy place. Notice too, that while Jesus is praying, He is **eastward** of the temple site, we are still on that same axis of God's love.

Notice also here, the divisions and the pattern. He took with Him **Peter and the two sons of Zebedee** (notice that Judas is out of the picture, remember, Judas is no longer)! We have 8 disciples, then we have 3 disciples and then we have the Lord Jesus Himself. Notice the petitions, notice the way the divisions are: we have the Holy of Holies, we have the Holy place, and we have the Outer Court. We have the people, we have the priests, we have the high priest; we have the world, we have Israel, we have Jerusalem, and in each case we can see these patterns. But the important principle to grasp here, is that some disciples are taken closer to the Lord's sufferings than others! We may not know why this is, but it is true of our life in the truth, that some

disciples have a perception and an understanding of the sufferings of Jesus more than others. This is in God's divine wisdom that this is so! It was certainly so in Gethsemane, that Peter, James and John felt the agony of the Lord, more than the others. To the eight, Jesus had said in verse 36, 'Sit ye here while I go yonder and pray'; to the three He had said, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, abide ye here and watch **with Me**'. But alone, He said in the middle of verse 39, alone, naturally speaking He said, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, **but as Thou wilt**'. So there in the pale light of the Passover moon, we see the Son of man being crushed like olives in a giant press. There in the valley of the shadow of death, with the Mount of Olives on the one side, and huge white stones of the temple Mount going up on the other, we see the son of God being pressed like grapes; and nearby was the king's winepress, nearby, and how fitting, and He was in Gethsemane, and on the side the Mount of Olives, olive oil; olive oil was used for anointing, it was also used for the lights in the tabernacle and in the temple; olive oil now for the light of the world!

Three times He would pray! three times He would kneel and fall down prostrate. Three times He would be crushed in the great oil press, because that's what the word 'Gethsemane' (1068) means; in Gethsemane, in the language that we use, we really don't get the full impact of what is being said here! The Hebrew here comes from two words, gath (1660) and 'shemen' (8081); **gath** means 'an oil press', it means a press, winepress, that's the way it's been translated, and the word '**shemen**' has been translated as 'oil', olive, ointment. So 'gath shemen' Gethsemane, is the great oil press, where the oil is to be crushed so that there would be light for the world, the light that we share, the light that we have seen, the light that we speak about! Listen to these words from Joel 3 verse 13, just the way that he uses those words, 'gath' in Hebrew. He says there, 'Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press (the gath) is full, the vats overflow; and their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision (or the valley of threshing) for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision'. Taking it from Judges 6 verse 11, look at the way the writer uses the word 'gath' here: Gideon was beating out, he was threshing wheat in the winepress, in the 'gath'. For Jesus then, **gath shemen** then, was the valley of decision. It was the valley of threshing, it was the valley of beating out, and so He would pray!

Middle of verse 39, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me'; this cup of pain, this cup of sorrow, this cup of rejection, this cup of self denial, this cup of death! 'I am the Son of man, I don't want to suffer, I don't want to endure pain, I need to be needed, I need to be wanted, I need to be loved', as we do, b&s. Luke add, 'And there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him'. Verse 40, 'He cometh unto His disciples, and findeth them sleeping', terrifying words! those that had been closer to the Lord's suffering, sleeping! 'What, could you not watch with Me one hour?' That's how long Jesus had been praying, how long do we pray? have we ever prayed for one hour? Verse 41, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation', and in Luke He begins the Gethsemane ordeal with 'praying that they enter not into temptation', but now again here in Matthew, after the first agonizing prayer, He now adds in the middle

of verse 41, 'the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'. It needs, b&s, to be part of our daily armour against the wiles of the devil, to pray constantly that God will lead us not into temptation. That was the Lord's prayer, that was the Lord Jesus's prayer, 'Lead us not, lead Me not into temptation, but deliver us, deliver Me, from evil. This is His prayer, it is His personal prayer.

I saw some time ago, a car sticker on the back of a car, and it said, 'Seven prayerless days make one weak', I found that a helpful little sticker (I'm not great on stickers, but that particular sticker I found pretty helpful) because if we do not pray, that's exactly what we become, we become **weak**! The reason the Lord asked us to pray lest **we** enter into temptation, is because the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Try for example, abstaining from something that you love, I love my wife's food, and if I have to abstain from my wife's food, I can tell you that's an agonizing experience for me! I don't know what you particularly enjoy doing, but try abstaining for a short while from doing something that you particularly enjoy, and it doesn't take long to find out that, indeed, the spirit might be willing but the flesh is extremely weak! Besides which we find in Romans, 'for they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace', Romans 8 verses 5 and 6.

Matthew 26 verse 42, 'And He went away again the second time, and He prayed saying, Oh my Father, if this cup cannot pass away except I drink it, thy will be done', and Luke adds at this point in verse 44 of Luke 22, 'and being in **an agony He prayed more earnestly** and His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling upon the ground. In paradise lost, Genesis 3, when the ground was cursed with thorns and thistles, man was to **sweat to eat**; but now instead of the sweat of perspiration we have **sweat like blood**. Instead of thorns upon the ground, we now have thorns that are to be thrust upon His head. Instead of Abel's blood crying from the ground, now the sweat of Jesus that **seeps into the ground like blood**, speaks to us from the foundation of the world. There in Eden it was the blood of an innocent lamb, and now in this garden, it is to be the blood of a sinless man. It was not literally blood, we are told specifically, as it were, it was like, it was a figure of speech, a simile; Luke in his descriptive way is telling us that the crucifixion started in Gethsemane. **The battle was fought and won in Gethsemane in a spiritual sense**, it was fought and won on Calvary in a natural sense!

So after the second agonizing prayer, He returns to His disciples to find them sleeping again. Verse 43 of Matthew 26, 'And He came again and found them sleeping for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away again, and prayed a third time saying the same words'. Many years before, that great man Daniel would look towards the east and he would pray 3 times on his hands and knees; sometime after this event the apostle Paul would pray 3 times that the Lord would remove that little thorn in his side, and here the Lord Jesus Himself prays 3 times! Three times the battle had to be fought against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and 3 times those temptations were conquered. They had been there in the beginning of Christ's ministry and the devil had left Him for a season, and through the life and the ministry of

the Lord Jesus the devil was there, in different forms and different ways. Here he was again, to be conquered finally and forever. Verse 45, 'Then cometh He to His disciples and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.'

I bring you now to John's gospel and we'll continue the narrative there. John 18, because here now, John focusses his attention on the betrayal of Judas and the arrest of Jesus. Verse 2, 'Now Judas also which betrayed Him, knew the place, for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples. Judas then, having received the band of soldiers and officers from the chief priest and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons'. Notice that Judas knew the place because Jesus had been there, many times before and He had taken His disciples with Him. Notice too, in verse 3 that Judas having received the **band** of soldiers, that is, **a cohort** or 600 men, not only that but they came with the officers and the officers there are the **temple guard** and we don't know how many there were, but perhaps there might have been a 100 of them, and the Pharisees. We've got maybe 700 people coming here to arrest the Lord Jesus. Why so large a contingency of people coming to arrest the Lord Jesus? One man! perhaps they had been reading their scriptures, perhaps these Pharisees who knew the truth, (by the way, everything they say you must do, because they sit in Moses' seat, but don't do what they do!) Maybe these people that know the truth so well, had been studying their bibles, and they'd come across this little passage in the Old Testament, about the 50 that went to go and arrest Elijah, and what happened to them? fire down from heaven! then there was the second group of 50, and then finally the 3rd group, and then they said, 'please if you don't mind, sir, king Ahab would like to speak to you!' Maybe that 's why they took so many, but it is more probable that they were going to arrest the disciples as well.

Look at the irony here as well! The olive oil had just recently been crushed, and there was an abundance of oil for the light of the world. Brighter than at any point in history and these unenlightened men come into this garden with their little lanterns; the brightest light that ever shone, was shining there, but they come with lanterns because they couldn't see; because they didn't ask questions, they didn't knock, they didn't ask, so they were unenlightened. Notice also that they come with weapons; Jesus had preached **peace**, and told them even if their enemy gave them a hard time, you should love your enemy. They're coming in with weapons! Verse 4, 'Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said unto them, whom seek ye? and they answered, Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus said unto them, I am! (the 'he' there is in italics) you'll notice that! Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. When therefore He said, I am, they went backwards and fell to the ground'. Again, notice the contrast with the first man Adam, who **hid in the garden**, when Jesus was threatened in this particular way, He came out into the **open**, He didn't hide Himself at all. Someone suggested that they fell back here, because Jesus used the divine name of 'I am'; that argument cannot be sustained, simply because He has used this term many times before in John's gospel; John 4 verse 26, just for the record, 6 verse 20, 8 verse 24, 28, 58, so many times He has used this title before. But it is more probable as I've

already suggested, He shone because of the glory, because He had overcome sin in the flesh, and here was the light shining brightly, brighter than it ever shone before, in all of human history. We've seen a token of it in Moses, but then it was to be veiled, now it was to be unveiled and we see the glory in the face of Jesus Christ here in the valley.

Verse 7, 'Then again He asked them the second time, whom seek ye? Then said Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus answered, **I told you that I am**, if therefore, ye seek Me, let **these go their way**', and here we see the support for the idea that this huge company had come to take the disciples as well! 'let these go their way!' But Jesus, you see, had already prepared for His disciples, He already knew that this situation would occur; He had already prayed for them; let's go back to chapter 17. Chapter 17 that great prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ at the last supper, in the middle of verse 11 He says, 'Holy Father, keep them in thy name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them I kept them in thy name which Thou hast given Me; **I guarded them**, remember that? the cherubim were to guard the garden, Adam was to guard the garden; here Jesus says, 'I guarded them and not one of them is lost, but the son of perdition' (that was Judas Iscariot). Again in verse 24, 'Father, that which Thou hast given Me, I will that where I am, they also may be with me. That they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me'.

Now come to chapter 18 and verse 8, 'Jesus answered, I told you that I am, if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way that the Word might be fulfilled which He spake, Of those whom Thou hast given Me, I lost not one'. If you think I'm being clever, I'm not, it's in your margin and there's a reference back to John 17 verse 12; Jesus had prayed for the disciples, He knew it was coming and He had already guarded them, He had already protected them. So the words spoken in prayer by the Lord Jesus Christ was fulfilled in all its glorious details here in the garden. Jesus had protected His disciples from being apprehended. They had also seen His glory, as the soldiers fell to the ground, while He had protected them with the armour of faith, **they** had tried to protect Him with the armour of flesh! So Peter the brave, in the face of this huge multitude of soldiers, 700 perhaps, certainly not less than 600, Peter the brave alone, **alone**, tried to defend his Lord and his Master with a sword of flesh. The Lord Jesus says to him, 'Put up your sword into its place, for they that take the sword shall perish by the sword', and they did! In AD.70 under the hand of Titus, they certainly did! Luke adds that Jesus said, 'suffer ye thus far, and He touched his ear and Malchus was healed'. So the last miracle of Jesus was to put right this impetuousness, this blundering act of an apostle; and they take Jesus away alone, because the disciples have fled.

But the victory was won! Self-will was crushed, self-will was overcome, God's will had prevailed over Adamic nature. It was fought and won in this garden of incredible agony, and by God's grace, tomorrow we will see the victory in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea.