

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE CROSS (Pt 1)

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When reading about what took place before our Lord was nailed to the cross, one is amazed at the fact that He was able to sustain life to make it to the cross. Jesus was fatigued mightily, treated shamefully and beaten unmercifully. All of this took place before the first hammer blow to the spikes that went through His wrists.

Before Jesus was ever taken captive, He spent time with the apostles. The conversation is recorded in John 13-17. No doubt this was a stressful time for Jesus. He instituted the Lord's Supper at a table that was occupied by the one who would betray Him and cause His physical death. There was also the matter of the apostles not understanding the events that were about to take place. During this conversation it was revealed that, at least on Philip's part, there was still a misunderstanding of exactly who Jesus was (John 14:8-11). The grief shown by the apostles because of His imminent departure must have weighed heavily on the mind of Jesus as well. Added to all of these things was the knowledge that those closest to Him would deny Him at His time of greatest need (Luke 22:33-34).

Jesus left that upper room with the apostles and then went to the Mount of Olives. On this mount was the Garden of Gethsemane, a place often visited by Jesus in order to pray. Eleven of the disciples were with Him, Judas having already left to gather the mob to arrest Jesus. Three of these, Peter, James and John, went further with Jesus. These three would fall asleep while Jesus prayed. Three times Jesus prayed that the cup of anguish that was coming His way might be turned aside if it be the Father's will. All three times Jesus would say that the Father's will must be done and not that of the Son.

Luke reveals an amazing physiological event that took place: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). The word "agony" means "severe mental struggles and emotions" (#74, Online Bible Greek Lexicon). "Earnestly" carries the idea of intensity. Thinking of His impending death, the weight of the sins of the world on His shoulders, the separation from the Father and all of the things that were involved in His death, our Lord burst blood vessels in His forehead. This is a medical event called hematidrosis. This is defined by Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary as "the excretion through the skin of blood or blood pigments." It is a very rare event that takes place in only the most extreme mentally agonizing situations. Jesus has now suffered from extreme mental anguish and blood loss.