

Finishing Well

Lesson #8

Bird's Eye View Of The Kidron Valley

March 9, 2022

The Kidron Valley, also known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat, runs along the eastern side of Jerusalem between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives.

Through the valley flowed the brook of Kidron.

It extends through the Judean desert and runs all the way to the Dead Sea. [~20 miles long] Kidron or Cedron comes from a Hebrew word used to describe an ashy dark color of sackcloth which was a rough cloth made of hair usually worn by those in mourning or in sorrow.

Kidron, meaning turbid, dusky, gloomy, obscure, making black or sad, is also known as the Valley of Suffering, Valley of Death, Valley of Tombs, Valley of Decision and Valley of Judgment.

Kidron Valley In The Old Testament

The history of God's people tells us that the Kidron Valley was used in the cleansing processes for the Israelites. Israel's history was marked with idolatry. From the moment they were redeemed out of Egypt, Israel worshiped other gods. Standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, where they were to wait for God's Law, Israel made a golden calf. Ex. 32:4b These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. [gold brought out of Egypt; Ex. 12:35]

- Took God' blessings, His provision > Made an idol

Ex. 32:20 When Moses came down the mountain he burned the idol, crushed it to fine dust, and poured it into a nearby river and made the children of Israel drink of it.

Deut. 9:21 Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I cast its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.

- Your god has no power.
- Remove any possibility of the idol being restored.
- Provide an immediate judgment for their sin.

While Moses made the people drink the water into which the idol dust was thrown, he simply notes that the dust of the idol was thrown into the "brook that descended from the mountain." This sets a precedent for the actions of the righteous Kings throughout Israel's history. Every time the Lord raised up a righteous King to deliver His people from their evil practices and enemies, they would remove the pagan altars and idols and burn them in the Kidron valley to cleanse Jerusalem. Symbolically, this represented the termination or death of idolatry in Israel. During the divided kingdom, there were at least 3 cleansings of the Temple and the Jerusalem rooftops to remove the altars of idols that had been erected during times of spiritual backsliding.

I Kings 15:11-13; II Chron. 15:16 King Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father David. And he took away the sodomites out of the land and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. Also, he removed Maachah his mother from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. [~911 BC]

- Asa cut down her obscene image and burned it by the Brook Kidron.

King Hezekiah understood the Kidron Valley provided an avenue to carry idols and "everything unclean found in the Temple of the Lord" away from Jerusalem. The priests who ministered there did as Moses and the righteous Kings had done before them. [~716 BC]

II Chron. 29:16; 30:13-14 Then the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse it and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the house of the LORD to the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it out and carried it to the Brook Kidron... ¹³And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation. ¹⁴ And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron.

The Kidron Valley was the center of King Josiah's removal of idols. [~622 BC]

II Kings 23:4-6, 12 And the king [Josiah] commanded Hilkiyah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel. ⁵ And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. And he brought out the grove [wooden image] from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the common [poor] people.

¹²And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

The Kidron, the center of King Josiah's removal of idols, became a major city cemetery.

Jer. 26:20-23 And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjathjearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah: [He is found in only 5 verses.]

Urijah prophesied in Judah during the 11 year wicked reign of King Jehoiakim [609 to 598 BC]. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt; And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, [namely], Elnathan the son of Achbor,

and [certain] men with him into Egypt. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. [Kidron Valley - see II Kings 23:6]

The Kidron Valley, [Valley of the Shadow of Death] separates the city from the Mount of Olives. Its name, meaning "dark" or "shady," probably reflects its depth. [at least 50 feet deeper then, than it is today.]

Israeli archaeologists have stumbled upon the mother of all garbage dumps: a massive landfill from early Roman times that may have been the result of the most sophisticated trash collection system in antiquity. Layer upon layer of waste that was efficiently collected, piled up and buried some 2,000 years ago has been dug up on the slopes of the Kidron valley, just outside the Roman-era walls of Jerusalem. The landfill, which was excavated in 2013-2014 in conjunction with the Israel Antiquities Authority, rose to a towering 70 meters in height, from the bottom of the valley to the walls of the city. [229.659 feet]

Sign For The Shepherds: Swaddling Clothes & Lying In A Manger

Luke 2:11b-12 And this shall be a SIGN unto you;

Ye shall find the Babe Wrapped In Swaddling Clothes, Lying In A Manger.

Passages from the Mishnah

1. Ordinary shepherds were banned from caring for these special "Temple" flocks.

a. They were not trained in the religious ordinances pertaining to the sacrificial offerings.

b. Their manner of life would make it virtually impossible to abide by the strict legal and religious observances.

2. Special shepherds, taught by the Temple priests, cared for these flocks which were the male lambs destined for Temple sacrifice. ["Holding place for sacrificial lambs"]

3. Swaddling cloths were used by the priests to prepare the lambs for sacrifice.

"As soon as a lamb was born, the priests [Temple shepherds] would wipe off the newborn lambs prior to their inspection. They would wrap the lamb with strips of cloths made from old priestly undergarments. This was done to keep the lamb from getting blemished. The priests would then place the lamb onto a manger to make sure it would not get trampled."

Swaddling Cloths:

1. These cloths were also used to wrap the dead. They would wear these linens under their clothing when they traveled so they could be buried in their own linens in case they died on the trip. [Custom of Middle Eastern women in Jesus' day]

a. If swaddling linens were customarily burial linens, then the Messiah, the Christ Child, was wrapped in burial cloths immediately after His birth. This would be another unmistakable sign to the temple shepherds that the Messiah who would sacrifice His life for His sheep would be wrapped in burial cloths - perhaps even the swaddling clothes of His mother.

2. Swaddling clothes were cut from worn out priestly garments. Many were braided together and used as WICKS for the four great four-branched menorah placed in the Temple courts during the Feast of Tabernacles.

These giant lamps were so tall that priests had to lug buckets of oil up 30-foot ladders to keep them burning, and it's said that the light they produced illuminated the entire city. These linen cloths were the first earthly garments to adorn our High Priest, the Light of the World. During the Feast of Tabernacles at night, four enormous oil lamps burned in the Temple courtyard. Each lamp had four large bowls of oil on tall stands, with wicks made from worn-out garments of the priests. It is written that "there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light" (Mishnah, Sukkoth 5:3). The lights could be seen throughout Jerusalem. However due to the depth and angle, the Kidron Valley remained in shadow; hence, it was called the "Valley of the Shadow of Death."

Significance Of The Kidron Valley In Life Of Jesus

Jesus Christ traveled through the Kidron Valley many times to and from Jerusalem.

- Jesus traveled from Jerusalem to Bethany through the Kidron Valley to visit Lazarus and raise him from the dead [John 11-12].
- Jesus also rode the foal of a donkey up the Kidron Valley from the Mount of Olives through the gates of Jerusalem during his "Triumphal Entry" [Luke 19:28-44].
- A few days later, after the "Last Supper" with His disciples, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley to go pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He was betrayed and ultimately arrested [John 18:1-11].

John 18:1 "When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron [Cedron], where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.

Interesting: None of the other gospel writers mention Jesus crossing the Brook Kidron.

- The apostle John is presenting Jesus as the New Passover Lamb in his gospel.

John 1:29 "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Contents of The Kidron Valley

- A place where destroyed idols and the bodies of the rebellious were crushed & burned.
 - Kings Asa, Hezekiah & Josiah; Became a cemetery

MacArthur: When Jesus walked through the Kidron Valley on the way to Gethsemane, [John 18:1] it was at the time of Passover. [would have been spring > Nisan]

William Barclay: "All the Passover lambs were killed in the Temple, and the blood of the lambs was poured on the altar as an offering to God. The number of lambs slain for the Passover was immense.

MacArthur: The afternoon before Passover would have been the sacrificing of the lambs on the altar of the temple. "Historical records of Jesus' time indicate that as many as $\frac{1}{4}$ million lambs were slain in a typical Passover season. This would require hundreds of priests to carry out the task. There would be a lot of blood from 250,000 lambs along with the water used in the ritual cleansings." Where does all that go?

- There were drains from the altar which formed a channel down to the Kidron Valley just outside the Temple mount walls.

- Through that channel the blood of the Passover lambs drained away.

Matthew Henry noted this in his comments on John 18:1.

"The godly kings of Judah had burnt and destroyed the idols they found at *the brook Cedron*; Asa, II Chronicles 15:16; Hezekiah, II Chronicles 30:14; Josiah, II Kings 23:4,6.

Into that brook the abominable things were cast. The pattern of crushing idols and idolatrous altars, and throwing them into the Brook Kidron, was symbolic.

It represented how God would permanently remove idolatry from the lives of His people.

Christ, *being now made sin for us*, that He might abolish it and take it away, began His passion by the same brook."

Cleansing of The Kidron Valley

- It ran past the place where the sacrifices were offered.
- Contents were blood and water

Kidron means "black brook" or "gloomy brook" = crimson-stained banks

MacArthur: When Jesus crossed the brook Kidron, it would still be red with the blood of the lambs which had been sacrificed; and as He did so, the thought of His own sacrifice would surely be vivid in His mind."

Consider: Surely, He was moved by the symbolism the valley held in terms of the sin of mankind: the false idols and the sacrificial lambs' blood. It was a fresh reminder of the cup He was about to drink and the purpose for which He came: to die as the perfect sacrificial lamb for our sins that we might be reconciled to God.

Gen 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins and clothed them.

Gen 22:8a And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering:

Ex. 12:3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month [Nisan] they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:

COURSE of the Brook Kidron

- It ran past the place where the sacrifices were offered.
- It went through the wilderness of the scapegoat.

Lev.16:7-8 And he shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

Lev. 16:21-22 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

Isa. 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

II Cor. 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

- Scapegoat = to remove or go away = removed and gone away goat

Ps. 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.

The CEASING of the Kidron Brook

- A place where destroyed idols and the bodies of the rebellious were crushed and burned.
- It ran past the place where sacrifices were offered.
- It went through the wilderness of the scapegoat
- Into the Dead Sea.

Micah 7:19 He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

The Connection Of The Kidron Valley To The Mount Of Olives

When Jesus was heading to the cross to tear down our idols once and for all, He crossed over the Brook Kidron [John 18:1]. Almost 1000 years before, righteous King David had crossed that brook with his men. He was being pursued by his betrayer, just as the Son of David was.

II Sam. 15:30a And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: [1st mention of Mt. of Olives]

- David, the rejected king, leaves Jerusalem, and with his faithful men he crosses the Brook Kidron and goes weeping up to the mount.

His closest advisor Ahithophel betrayed him and allied himself with Absalom.

II Sam. 17:1-2 Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only:

II Sam. 17:23 And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

WEEPING on the Mountain

Luke 22:44 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, exceeding sorrowful.

Mark 14:34-35 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.

It was at Gethsemane the Lord felt the full force of His upcoming death.

Here we see displayed the Lord's perfect unselfish submission to the will of His Father.

The Kidron Valley and its brook: It is simply a redemptive-historical marker of the destruction of idolatry. The destruction of idolatry is completely and utterly dependent upon the Person and work of Christ at Calvary. He is the supreme solution to our idolatrous attachments. Idolatry is, in its essence, "worshiping and serving the creature rather than the Creator." In order to cure us of our evil attachments, the Creator created a body and soul for Himself so that He could die and save us from our sin. The incarnation is the solution to idolatry.

It is interesting to note the way the apostle John ends I John which is really a discourse about the central importance of the doctrine of Christ—the two natures of Jesus Christ and His atoning death on the cross. It is an explanation of the abiding significance of the incarnation. At the end of the epistle John abruptly charges, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." How can we make sense of this abrupt conclusion? Read it in light of John's emphasis on the incarnation. How are we to keep ourselves from idols? Abide in the doctrine of the Son of God.

The Future of The Kidron Valley

Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus and His disciples went to Mount Olivet, near Jerusalem. There, Jesus promised His followers that they would soon receive the Holy Spirit, and He instructed them to remain in Jerusalem until the Spirit had come.

Then Jesus blessed them, and as He gave the blessing, He began to ascend into heaven.

Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.

"The Valley of The Shadow Of Death & Tombs"

The Kidron Valley is important to Christians, Jews and Muslims who believe the resurrection will begin there. These views of the "end times" have caused all three religious communities to build huge cemeteries throughout the Kidron Valley. [Valley of the Tombs]

Christians believe Jesus Christ will return to earth on the Mount of Olives, cross over the Kidron Valley, and reenter the City of Jerusalem as King of Kings.

Jews believe the Messiah will come from the East, pass over the Mount of Olives and through the Kidron Valley before arriving on the Temple Mount.

- The thousands of white Jewish tombs that slope into the Kidron Valley give testimony to the hope that when the Messiah comes, "His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives" [Zech. 14:4.] Those buried there presume they'll stand first in line for blessing.

Muslims have their own account where the prophet Jesus will return in a similar way.

- The valley's western slope has Muslim graves, purportedly to defile the Jewish Messiah when He tries to enter the bricked-up eastern gate.

Valley Of Jehoshaphat - Valley of Decision

Joel writes it will be the judgment and winepress of God at Christ's 2nd Coming.

Joel 3:2 I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgement with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land..

Joel 3:12-14 Let the heathen be wakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. ¹³ Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

The CONQUERING on the Mountain: Zechariah 14:4 "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

The Kidron Valley is a place related to mourning, sorrow and death.

Jer. 31:38, 40 provides a prophecy of the complete renovation of the Kidron Valley.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. ⁴⁰ And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more forever. The valley will be made holy unto God and set apart for His use forever. It will no longer be associated with death and sorrow, but now with holiness and God's glory. This prophecy will be fulfilled at the Lord's 2nd coming and the establishment of New Jerusalem on a New Earth.

The Lord Jesus Christ will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem. The environment and longevity will be restored. Water will flow from out of the Temple both to the Mediterranean Sea and be connected to the Dead Sea healing the waters.

Isa. 35:1-2 The desert and the parched land will be glad, the wilderness will rejoice and blossom... they will see the glory of the Lord and the splendor of our God.

For those who have never received His gracious salvation into their lives...

The area of Kidron which was associated with sorrow, darkness and death is a picture of fallen humanity's condition without the Lord Jesus and the salvation that He offers to them.

The Lord's end times renovation of Kidron is a beautiful picture of saving us permanently from the darkness of sin to the light of His holiness....

Col. 1:12-14 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated [us] into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood, [even] the forgiveness of sins:

How great is our God who is able to make an area associated with mourning, sorrow and death, become a place eternally alive with His glory and honor. The very area that is closely associated with our Lord's death will be in the future, clearly associated with the results of His death.... An eternity set apart from all sadness, mourning and sin.