

# Man of Sorrows or the Son of David?

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*Good Friday; 25 March 2016*

**Isaiah 53:1-12, Mark 14:32-42**

Last year we got to visit Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

When you are travelling sometimes you just want some timeout. One day after we had been there a while I was desperate to find some space to pray and seek God that I decided to go on my own to find a quiet place.

I arranged with Wayne to meet him a bit later.

I guess I had in my mind some romantic idea that like Jesus I'd be able to find that spot to be by myself.

And if possible I wanted to get to the Mt of Olives.

Now Wayne will testify that my sense of direction is not always that spot on and I will admit I misjudged the distance. But being me I thought I could do it.

So I caught the light rail train from our apartment to the Damascus Gate ( about 2 miles) and I navigated my way from there to the Garden Tomb.

There are two sites which commemorate the burial of Jesus. One of them is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre within the Old City and the other is the Garden Tomb, just outside. The latter tends to be where most Christians come and I hoped there I would find a quiet spot.

But alas, the site is not private. Every inch is a space set up for church services and groups who come there to sing and pray, several at once. I looked around and saw the tomb. I looked over at the Place of the Skull, which again is said to be the site of the crucifixion. But there's another one inside the city.

There was not an inch of space anywhere.

So I left there and thought it can't be far to the Garden of Gethsemane, surely there I will find an olive tree to sit under.

So alone I walked down the road around the high walls of the ancient city in the Palestinian area. I looked up to see Israeli guards standing on the top of the walls. And I kept going. Down the hill. I couldn't figure my map out at all, so I stopped to ask a bus driver who was waiting for his tourists to return if I was on the right track?

After a conversation he wanted me to come into his bus and I politely declined and hurried on my way. Do you get the feeling I was doing something stupid. And did I forget to say it was really hot like 30 degrees and the bus driver had kindly given me a bottle of cold water.

Down the road I went. Remember that mountains surround Jerusalem and I was going

down into the Kidron valley at the foot of the Mt of Olives. This valley separates the Mt of Olives from the Old City Temple mount. Finally at the bottom I came upon another church. A fascinating deep staircase led into the interior of this church, which I discovered was the Church of the Tomb of the Virgin Mary. It was full of lights and deep grottoes. But I was still looking for an olive grove so I returned to the daylight.

Tantalizingly I could see olive trees behind fences. Beautiful gardens of withdrawal and peace which was exactly what I was looking for. But it was not to be. All behind locked gates and high fences, sacred to the convents and monasteries there.

I carried on and soon found across the road the reputed Garden of Gethsemane. Though modern scholarship acknowledges that the actual location of Gethsemane is unknown, it must have been somewhere near here. Eight ancient olive trees growing in this garden may be 900 years old, and are amongst the oldest known to science. DNA tests show that the trees were originally planted from the same parent plant.

But alas they too are behind a fence. You cannot stop. Instead you are channeled down a narrow path, past the ancient trees, to the Church of the Agony. This was an amazing church as you can see from the frescoes and paintings. I liked it. I flopped down on the pews, and welcomed the cool and tried my best to pray and seek the Lord. But trust me I was no longer in that space. It didn't come.

And so I left and exited past the Rock of Agony where Jesus went alone to pray, and which people lined up to kiss as they left the church. I wondered what they were doing.

Now what I thought? If I could only get onto the Mt of Olives there surely I can find a place to look out over the city and feel as though I am with Jesus. So I started up the hill but I couldn't figure out either my map or the signposts as to which road I should be taking. And there were those tantalizing trees behind fences all along the way. I was so near and yet so far.

I stopped at an icecream shop and talked to some tourists who said they had been on the Mt of Olives. They told me to go back down the road and turn to the left. So after eating an icecream, I thought I can do it. It can't be that far.

So I turned down the road and to the left and immediately found myself climbing these steps.

I had no idea where they were going. So I thought oh well, let's see.

It's hot and there were a lot of steps. On both sides there were fences and sometimes a door into the wall. But otherwise nothing and no one.

Do you get the feeling I am on my own??

Well I got a long way up when all of a sudden I found there was someone following me.

I can only think he came out of the wall somewhere.

Being my friendly self I said hello and we fell in step and talked a little.

I asked him where the steps were going and what he was doing there. He told me that if I kept on going I would go through houses and eventually come out onto the top of the Mount. He was going up there to do some shopping. He lied.

Then he said, it's a long way up, why don't we stop and rest a little and I agreed and we sat on the step.

Well trust me things went downhill from there and as this is church I won't be too explicit Suffice to say when he tried to touch my leg I was out of there like a shot.

I said I'm off but in my haste I made the mistake of going up instead of down!!

I kept walking real fast and when I stopped to look back the man had gone.

I kept on going, keen to get to the Mt of Olives, until I came into an area of houses, Palestinian houses build along the sides of the stairway. You couldn't see any view.

And people and children started to come out and stare at me,

And more young men.

And I thought. This is not a good idea.

I didn't know how far away from the top I was, I reasoned it can't be far

But it seemed interminable.

And so I thought

I need to get out of here fast and so I turned down again.

I called Wayne and said, Can you please get yourself down to the Garden of Gethsemane Because I have had enough. I don't think I am in a good place.

He was on his way and I told him where to go through the Old City and down the hill.

We found each other soon after. And I was relieved. And then we caught a taxi out of there.

I never made it to the Mt of Olives, nor did I find a place to sit and pray.

I felt quite disconsolate that day.

I may have had someone watching over me though!

I've thought about this day often and how Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray.

I just wanted to be there to identify with Him.

I guess what I found was a reality I wasn't happy with. No privacy, no space, layers of religiousness and people with dubious motives.

Jesus was no stranger to any of that throughout his public ministry and often He sought the solace of His Father, many times still not finding space as people followed and begged Him to teach them or heal them.

But my little comedy of errors is paltry in comparison to what Jesus was facing in that Garden that night. From the heights of the Palm Sunday coronation now we enter a garden of agony, the Rock of agony so named.

The name Gethsemane itself is a clue for a 'gethsemane' is an oil press. Olives are crushed as the round millstone rolled over them in the stone trough. When the enormous pressure of the limestone pillar bore down, the steady stream of oil ran golden, clear and clean, no sediment...what we call the virgin oil.

This oil was sacred. So often set apart for the anointing of kings, prophets and priests. One day the Jews believed the Anointed One would appear at Passover. And he did, but they did not recognize Him because the Man of Sorrows was not what they envisaged a Messiah would be like despite their reading of Isaiah 53. This word picture of the Suffering Servant

or Messiah, was written long before Jesus was born, not understood by the Jews of that time, it described exactly what kind of Messiah who would live amongst them.

But in the time of Jesus there was no expectation of a suffering Messiah. A Man of Sorrows just did not compute in an age where powerful deliverance was expected. Rather it was the title: Son of David that inspired the crowds. ***Blessed is the Coming Kingdom of our father David. This nationalistic cry points to an earthly kingdom. But Jesus came with an entirely different perspective.***

So we find Jesus, the true Anointed One, in the Garden of Gethsemane, the garden of crushing that night, where He felt overwhelming sadness and anguish, saying "Abba Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it." Three times he prayed this prayer. "If this cup cannot pass by, but I must drink it, your will be done!" ([Matthew 26:42](#)).

Further this sorrow was so crushing him and pressing on Him "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground". ([Luke 22:44](#)). An angel came from heaven to strengthen him.

Why such agony? **Such an agony I can barely imagine.** To sweat drops of blood is to be so completely and utterly involved with every fibre of one's being- on every level, with an absolute engagement of body and soul, mental anguish, pushed to the point of death, '*my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death*'.

So contrasted by the disciples who exhausted with weariness and maybe sorrow too, could not keep engaged, could not find the capacity to watch through the agony of their Lord.

As I try to understand this agony, I can only attempt to think from my human perspective what this might have been like. Another paltry effort I am sure.

When Jesus says: Can this cup pass from me? Will I yield to the Father's will?

I would be saying:

Do I trust that the Father has a better way, a better future for me than I can imagine?

That if I yield and put everything into your hands: My whole life. My physical comfort and well being. My right to justice and vindication. If I let go of my control over all of that, will you bear me up?

Do I have the ability within me to submit to the physical horror of the knife of the sacrifice and the relentless infliction of the whip of pain, the hatred of the tormenting and sneering when I could flatten the lot of them and take them out?

If I yield to the cliff to fall in absolute abandonment do I trust my Father, my Abba, enough to know that His arms will come underneath me and hold onto to me and provide for me? Resurrection. Vindication. New life. Victory. Accomplishment. Relationship. I did what you wanted. Father walks with me. He holds my hand. He's pleased with me.

HEBREWS 5: 7 –8 tells us that *during the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience*

*from what he suffered.*

Jesus, did not fall mindlessly into obedience. He learned it as he asked that question three times. As each time he chose the Father's will, surrendering everything else, He learned obedience to the Father and His relationship sustained him.

*This obedience is a learned, struggled-for, and prayed-for obedience ...it's utter trust that when you can't see why, when the pain is relentless and unjust and has no sense or meaning, my relationship with the father is bigger. We place our life in God's hands and trust him for the outcome.*

I pray for the grace to honestly say, Father, I am indifferent to every outcome except your will. I want nothing more or less than your desire for what I do. And I will trust when I cannot see.

## **THE MAN OF SORROWS**

**The title is the clue to the agony.**

**Isaiah describes him in these words.**

<sup>4</sup> He was despised and rejected by men,  
A Man of sorrows *and* pain and acquainted with grief;

**It is one of extreme physical suffering. Jesus was so marred by the physical beating that**

Is 52 says: *many were astonished and appalled at you;*

Is 53 says: *His appearance was marred more than any man*

*He has no stately form or majestic splendor*

*That we would look at Him,*

*Nor [handsome] appearance that we would be attracted to Him.* Not the glamorous movie star we know.

***He is One from whom men hide their faces.*** They turn away.

But I don't think this is the only reason for the agony nor the sorrows.

**No it is more like spiritual sorrow, mental pain.**

*He was despised, and we did not appreciate His worth or esteem Him.*

*But [in fact] He has borne our griefs,*

*And He has carried our sorrows and pains;*

*5 But He was wounded for our transgressions,*

*He was crushed for our wickedness [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing];*

*The punishment [required] for our well-being fell on Him,*

*And by His stripes (wounds) we are healed.*

Jesus, love incarnate, comes to woo the human heart with love unfathomable, but finds a refusal to accept His salvation, a complete rejection of his claims.

He comes with love and redemption, but he is ridiculed and spat on with contempt. They charged him with every crime that they could conceive and treated him as an animal, a common criminal.

Yet his sorrow was not because he was wronged, but because in their rejection, they forsook the only One who could give them true life.

We have heard this sorrow:

*Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I have longed to gather you, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings. But you would not have it. Matt 23: 37.*

**We have seen it in the compassion for the crowds who followed him to remote places which he described as 'sheep without a shepherd' and gave his all to them; in the groan of outrage at the death that took Lazarus' life and his weeping over Jerusalem's destiny because they refused to see what would bring them peace and did not recognize the day when God's anointed one visited.**

He knew more clearly than any the nature of sin and its results. He saw what man might be if he chose and what in fact he was. The horror of his suffering lay in the rejection not of himself, but in their own loss of opportunity.

**We think of sorrow as the feeling that results when some wrong is done to us but**

There is no element of selfishness in true sorrow. The deepest thing about true sorrow is its end result in love that can be experienced for another; the deep concern for a person who, when threatened with disaster, rejects what love desires to do for him.

**Man of Sorrows or Son of David? Both are true.**

But it was not the romans or the religious teachers who were the real problem, it was sin that was the enemy. A revolution such as the Zealots sought would not sort this agony. Only the suffering of the Son of Man would firstly atone for and truly conquer the hearts of humankind.

That is what the agony was about that night. When this rejection finally culminated in no escape from a destiny that none could bear except the righteous, sinless Son of God totally yielded to the will of Abba God.

In His sorrow I find my comfort.

**Is sorrow a privilege I too must bear?**

When you are caught in that olive press and wonder why you suffer so; when you find no peace though you seek it day after day, but the walls press in and down til you feel as though your life is crushed and can bear no more.

Remember that this is what Jesus yielded to

And when the sacrifice was made

What remained was the rich, golden oil

Running clear and clean

And the triumphant resurrection judgment of the Father placed Christ seated at his right hand.

We will suffer for our nearness to Jesus

We should expect no less.

But in that sorrow we too will know fellowship and joy.

For the joy set before him Christ endured the cross.  
Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners  
And do not grow weary or lose heart.