

# MAN OF SORROWS

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected by men,  
A **Man of sorrows** and acquainted with grief.  
And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him;  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

We're taking a look at some of the more than 700 names and titles of Jesus Christ. Each Communion service we choose a title based on the letters of the English alphabet. Thus far we've discussed the following names, from A through L:

1. The Last **A**dam
2. The **B**ridegroom
3. The **C**omforter
4. The **D**oor
5. The **E**xpress Image of God.
6. The **F**irstborn from the dead
7. **G**od
8. The **H**ead of the Body
9. **I**ntercessor
10. **J**udge
11. **K**ing of kings
12. **L**amb of God

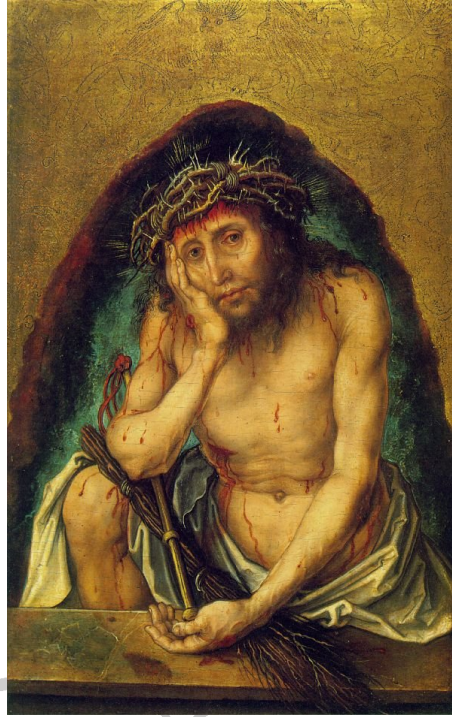
Our text in Isaiah names Jesus the **Man of Sorrows**. It's a name that has inspired different perspectives.

For example: Hymn-writer Phillip Bliss began his composition, *Hallelujah! What a Savior*, like this:

*Man of Sorrows! what a name  
For the Son of God, Who came  
Ruined sinners to reclaim.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!*

Bliss is, well, *blissful* about the name. Not everyone is so positive about the name, **Man of sorrows**. There is a famous oil painting by Albrecht Durer, *Christ as the Man of Sorrows*. It depicts Jesus slouching, with His elbow on one knee and His chin in His hand. He's

crowned with thorns. In front of Jesus are both a scepter and a threshing instrument. The thing that strikes me the most is that He appears either depressed or dispassionate.



The hymn and the painting interpret [Man of sorrows](#) quite differently. Should we rejoice? Is it depressing?

What is your reaction to the name, [Man of sorrows](#)? Would you write a rejoicing, resonating hymn? Or paint a depressing painting?

I think we generally interpret [Man of sorrows](#) to mean Jesus was brooding. A whole generation of people – believers and unbelievers – grew-up watching *Jesus of Nazareth* every Easter. It was released in 1977. I can remember, as a brand-new Christian in 1979, the people at our Sunday evening study anxious to get home on time to watch it.

Robert Powell was the actor in *Jesus of Nazareth*. He brooded. I've told you before about his eyes. Watch carefully – Jesus' eyes never blink. It projects an eerie, distant portrait of Jesus.

Some years later, Campus Crusade made and distributed the movie, *Jesus*, based on the Gospel of Luke. (It's sometimes called *The Jesus Film*). The actor who portrays the Lord blinks; He smiles; He even laughs.

Which is it? What are we to make of the [Man of sorrows](#)? It would help to read the first three verses of Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed our report?  
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?  
Isaiah 53:2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,  
And as a root out of dry ground.  
He has no form or comeliness;  
And when we see Him,  
*There is no beauty that we should desire Him.*  
Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected by men,  
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.  
And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him;  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Isaiah is the author of these words; but who is he speaking for? Himself? The Messiah? The nation of Israel? The Church?

Let's approach it this way. You'll see why in a moment. What if we are overhearing persons who have come to faith in Jesus Christ reflecting on their previous unbelief? In other words, these were things they mistakenly believed about Jesus before getting saved. They are expressing amazement at their complete misunderstanding of the person and work of Jesus prior to salvation.

Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed our report?  
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

I'm going to suggest a paraphrase from the Good News Bible. I want to be careful doing so. It has become popular lately to scour various Bible translations and paraphrases to find verses that agree you're your point. In this case, I think the context proves it out.

In the Good News paraphrase, verse one reads, [Who would have believed what we now report? Who could have seen the LORD's hand in this?](#)

They reflect on their previous unbelief. The entire nation (with a few exceptions) reacted to Jesus in total unbelief He was their Messiah. It never entered their minds that the mighty **arm of the Lord** was at work in His life and ministry.

Isaiah 53:2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,  
And as a root out of dry ground.  
He has no form or comeliness;  
And when we see Him,  
*There is no beauty that we should desire Him.*

Jesus was like a **shoot** – some small bit of vegetation growing randomly in soil. No one took any notice of Him. He seemed doomed to wither away and become of no significance.

But Jesus grew up **before Him** – before the Father in Heaven. His early years were significant to His Father, who took note of Him.

The Father introduced Him as His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased. To the nation of Israel, however, He had **no form or comeliness... there was no beauty that [they] should desire Him.** They were looking for a different kind of Messiah than Jesus.

When we get to verse three, it's like the speaker or speakers are standing at the foot of the Cross:

- *being changed to bring change* -

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected by men,  
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.  
And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him;  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

That Jesus was **despised and rejected by men** was obvious; there He was, on the Cross. He seemed to them to be **a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.** After all, He cried out, **My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?**

**And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.** In other words, He was someone you turned-away from. You thought nothing more of Him – certainly there was no hope He was the promised Savior.

Think of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after Jesus was crucified and buried. These are the kinds of things they might have said – until Jesus revealed Himself to them.

If we follow this approach, these verses are expressing the worst kind of misunderstanding that prevailed. It is what they thought about Jesus in their unbelief.

But now they know better – as expressed in verses four through six.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely...

Stop right there for a moment. The word **surely** can be translated, *but in fact...* Verses one through three record a painful misunderstanding before they were saved. **But in fact**, verses four through six reveal what they know now. It was all for us that He went to the Cross. Blinded by sin, we misunderstood His person and work.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely He has borne our griefs  
And carried our sorrows;  
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

Isaiah 53:5 But He was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities;  
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,  
And by His stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray;  
We have turned, every one, to his own way;  
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

On the right side of the Cross – the faith-side – they understand what they misunderstood. And notice that they see the **Man of sorrows** who was **acquainted with grief** bore **their** sorrow and grief – not His own!

So: How are we to understand the name, **Man of sorrows**?

1. First, let's not misunderstand it. It's not used in Isaiah to describe Jesus as a brooding, depressed person. It's not to suggest He was bummed-out most of the time.
2. Second, let's understand it. **Man of sorrows** is how He appears to unbelievers who do not comprehend His mission. They think

He was a martyr who was willing to die for what He believed. In reality, the sorrows He bore were ours! He bore them willingly, voluntarily, lovingly; I'd even say joyfully!

If you can receive it, I'm saying that the name, **Man of sorrows**, reveals Jesus as **joyful**. He joyfully bore your sorrows on the Cross.

Hebrews 12:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

