

WITNESSESS.

His name is One.

This isn't the name he was given at birth to signal his position in the family as a first child.

Nor is it a name he was given by his peers to acknowledge his brilliance at creating and collecting wealth.

It isn't even related to his struggle for love; how he fought for it...

And lost.

Still his name is One...

"He was from Samaria but out here that was simply another name, same as Jerusalem—it meant nothing. Even names, as he learned six years ago when he joined this group, served to remind you of who you once were and

made the pain worse. So they numbered each other, waiting for the years to roll by and death to make his call.

He had been christened One because it was the only vacant name, its bearer having died a few months before his arrival. He shook his head and scratched his bald head; he still believed, thanks to Five who was once a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin.

After a few paces, Five called out the all clear. They could rest once more in this dreary spot until someone uninfected chanced to come along that route, then they would have no option but to scramble to their feet again, shout, "Unclean, unclean" as they retreated further into the wild. But before they could sit down, Five did the unthinkable. He started walking towards the village!

"Five get back here!" Nine, the other ex-Sanhedrin in the group, cried out, fear clinging to his raspy voice.

"Why? Let us just get close enough to look. It could be the Galilean," Five countered.

And without a second thought, they all ambled to the edge of the village and stood afar from the crowd, trying

to get a clue as to what was happening. Only bits of the conversation reached their ears but they could see that this

gathering was over no ordinary man. As One was straining to stand on tiptoe on his good foot, the crowd parted and

a young man walked forward and stood in front of the crowd looking straight at him. There was no mistaking

that look. It penetrated his heart, searched for his belief crouched in a corner, and gently holding it up as if

cuddling a crying child spoke clearly to his mind:

"Challenge Me."

He still does not remember where he mustered the courage, nonetheless with his mind still in turmoil he blurted out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," and the rest of his friends took it up.

The crowd, upon hearing their plea, became angry and he heard a voice crying, "Abomination. Flog the lepers!"

Out of the corner of his eye, he could also see someone bending to the ground to pick stones.

One of his friends mumbled, "I don't want to die a premature death," and began floundering for cover but he

couldn't move; the young man was still staring at him."

Excerpts from the book

"Imagine-Encounters with Jesus"