

Detained for Hours by the Police as Men Spit on the Name of Jesus: My Day in Jerusalem

I'm writing from the quiet of my hotel room in Jerusalem at midnight, but today was anything but quiet. (If you're impatient and want to jump ahead, watch this short video now. You'll see things got pretty intense.)

I was with a small team in a mixed area in Jerusalem, getting video footage to use on Christian TV. Some of the people were very religious, others more secular. But my goal was to interview the more religious Jews and, if they were interested in talking more, connect them with some local believers.

Soon enough, some of the religious Jews started yelling "Missionaries!", at which point we shut down the interviews, not wanting to create a scene.

But as we tried to leave quietly, one agitator started following me and yelling "Missionary!" in the crowded marketplace. He was then joined by other ultra-Orthodox Jews, who started to surround me and challenge me.

At that point, I decided that this was the perfect opportunity to share my faith boldly and clearly. I already had someone offering free (albeit loud and very negative) publicity. I told them that, yes, of course, I believe in Yeshua (Jesus), and yes, I'm still a Jew.

I turned to the onlookers, many of whom were not religious, asking them, "Is this illegal? Is it illegal for me to preach openly here? Is it illegal for a Jew to believe in Jesus?"

Of course, they told me it was not illegal. One of them even asked me, "Are you for Trump?"

When I said yes, he sang my praises to the onlooking crowd. Seriously. (I'll talk about this more in another article, but you'd be amazed to hear how much President Trump is respected by many Israelis.)

As for the ultra-Orthodox Jews who surrounded me and yelled at me, you have to see things from their perspective. What they read about Jesus in their own literature tells them he was a deceiver who did miracles by magical power. They believe he led people away from the one true God. And they associate him directly with the Holocaust and with Jewish suffering throughout history.

That's why one of them (captured on the video) shouted out in Hebrew, "We don't believe in Yeshua," then spat on the ground.

As for me, in their eyes, I was even worse. I was not only a missionary but also a fraud, since I still claimed to be a Jew. How my heart goes out to these men!

Eventually, after the main agitator kept harassing us, I decided the last thing he would do was drive us away. So as long as he yelled, I stayed and shared my faith.

But he had called the police, claiming (falsely) I was breaking the law. And then, when he pushed his phone right up to my face (literally) and I pushed it away, he started shouting that I attacked him. Seriously!

Finally, two policewomen arrived and because of his accusations, we had to go to the local police station. The whole process took about four-five hours, with the great majority of the time spent sitting without a phone, doing nothing. (Of course, I was praying silently and thanking God for this special day, also praying for my accuser, who sat across from me the whole time.)

The big problem for me was that I'm fluent in biblical Hebrew but weak in modern Hebrew, so I missed a lot of what my accuser was saying and was concerned I couldn't explain things clearly to the police officers.

Finally, an interrogator arrived, spending about 20-30 minutes with my accuser, then interviewing me. By this time, we had this same video up on YouTube, so he could get a feel for what was happening. And he fully understood I had done nothing wrong or illegal.

Then he asked me, "Are you a missionary?"

In the Jewish world, especially Israel, this has very bad connotations. But since I had made clear to him that I was a public, unashamed believer in Jesus and that I share my faith with my people, I answered in the affirmative.

To my delightful surprise he said, "That's OK. Missionaries are good!"

A few minutes later, with a smile and without any paperwork to take with me, he told me I could go.

Now it had been hours since my phone was taken from me, so Nancy and my family and ministry team and friends had no idea where I was or the details of what happened. But, when I walked out of the police station, before I could call home and tell the full story, I was greeted by three more ultra-Orthodox Jews. One shouted "missionary" and took my picture with his cell phone. I greeted him with a big smile.

Another said with a smile, "So Michael Brown is now violent?" (It looks like he knew me already!) I laughed with him, realizing that he knew the story was phony.

Then he said to me, "You should bring this message to Bethlehem."

I said, "I'm going there this weekend to speak at a

controversial, anti-Zionist conference as a friend of Israel!"

He responded, "I know!"

And then, asking if he could revert to Hebrew (since we were speaking in English), he said, "For this one time, I wish you success!"

What a day in Jerusalem!