

LL4219

THE TRIAL OF JESUS IN WESTERN LEGAL THOUGHT

WRITTEN PAPER

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Children's Bible Stories: How is the Trial Presented?

*“Why did I decide to write a book of Bible stories when so many splendid volumes on the same subject have already been written? ... It was only that I have certain convictions about the Bible that I felt should be shared with readers and especially with young people ... My earnest desire in retelling these Bible stories is to make the greater book ever written come alive as **the handbook, the rule book, the guidebook for living now in the now generation.**”*

Norman Vincent Peale¹

The phenomenon of children's Bible stories is one that is almost as old as the printing press. Since then, they have evolved into a subgenre in their own right, exemplifying “powerfully and peculiarly purposeful storytelling by parents, teachers, and preachers”.² Texts are generally shortened and only events regarded as important to the foundations of the faith are included, with such modifications being “dictated by sensibilities about what is appropriate for children”.³

In studying the trial of Jesus and its potential impacts on Western society, it would be valuable from an epistemological point of view to examine how individuals learn about it. Since children's Bible stories are the first point of contact that many Christians and Catholics have with the content of the Passion Narrative (the “PN”), it would be apposite to examine how these stories influence perceptions of the trial. It would not be a stretch to argue that ideas of trial, judgment, justice, and punishment are imparted to children for the first time through the story of the trial.

Children's Bible stories are also a valuable sign of the values that their writers perceived as desirable to highlight and impart to young children. They serve as “[a] point of entry into changing social views” and “betray unspoken assumptions about a variety of social and moral relationships”.⁴

This paper examines twelve different Bible stories created for children and published between 1521 and 2021. It assesses the ways in which the trial was presented to children, if at all. The main focus of the analysis is on the criminal procedures instituted against Jesus before the Sanhedrin. Where other events raise related concepts relating to the justice system, such as the protection of persons under detention and imprisonment, they will also be considered. It is not the aim of this paper to assess the Roman proceedings.

¹ Norman Vincent Peale, *Bible Stories* (New York: Guidepost Associates, 1973) (“Bible Stories”) at Introduction

² Ruth Bottingheimer, “*Religion for the Young in Bible Story Collections (Kinderbibeln)*” (1991) 31 *Fabula* 19 (“Bottingheimer”) at 19

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Supra* at 22

Elements of procedural justice to be assessed

Each story will be examined for its efforts to highlight ideas of procedural justice at trial. Attention will be paid to specific elements of Mishnaic procedural law as summarised by Tomer Weismann:⁵

- Timings and sittings issues
 - Capital charges must not be trialled at night.⁶
 - Capital charges must not be concluded at night if the verdict is unfavourable.⁷
 - Persons are not to be tried on the Sabbath nor on the day of preparation.⁸
- Declaration of judgment
 - Junior judges must deliver their opinions before senior judges.⁹
- Treatment of witnesses
 - Witnesses must be admonished (i.e. cautioned that their testimonies may have potentially life-ending consequences for the accused).¹⁰
 - Evidence provided by witnesses that contradict each other must be voided.¹¹
- Location of trial
 - Proceedings must be held in the “official” court of law.¹²
- Rule against self-incrimination
 - The statements of the accused cannot be used as a basis for conviction.¹³

Two assumptions are built into this analysis:

First, that the Mishnaic procedural law was generally followed at the time (we know that this is in fact debatable).¹⁴ Second, that there was in fact a trial as opposed to a mere interrogation.¹⁵

⁵ Tomer Weissman (2009)

⁶ Mishnah Sanhedrin, chapter 4, Mishnah 1

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16:162-165

⁹ Mishnah Sanhedrin, chapter 4:2

¹⁰ Mishnah Sanhedrin, chapter 4:5

¹¹ Mishnah Sanhedrin, chapter 5:2

¹² Mishnah Sanhedrin, chapter 11:2

¹³ Sanhedrin 9b

¹⁴ Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, Volume I, 357-364

¹⁵ Ibid.

Analytical Approach

Each story will be examined for “[a]lterations in several categories – wording, illustrations, and internal commentary” so as to “provide analytic access points”¹⁶ for assessing the relative significance given by each writer to concerns of procedural justice.

The following analytical questions were asked where appropriate to each medium and format:

Additions/deletions

- What has been deleted that is found in the biblical text?¹⁷
- What has been added that is not found in the biblical text?¹⁸

Amplifications/reductions

- What aspects have been lengthened and/or emphasised compared to the biblical text?
- What aspects have been shortened and/or downplayed compared to the biblical text?
- How does the diction of the text load content with emotion and tone?

Comparisons

- How does the treatment of the trial compare with that of events immediately preceding and following it, viz. Jesus’ arrest in the garden and his beating, mockery, and scourging?

Overview of Analysis

Section 1 reviews three texts written in the early beginnings of printed literature.

Section 2 steps forward (admittedly, rather rapidly) into the 20th century and reviews three books written between 1945 and 1973.

Section 3 explores the introduction of modern multimedia to children’s Bible stories since 1990. It examines a book, a website, an animated children’s film, and a mobile game.¹⁹

Section 4 is a standalone section. It investigates stories written in non-English languages with the assumption that this analysis would be a valuable indicator of how the trial is presented in various regions. One Spanish girls’ Bible and a Mandarin Sunday School textbook will be assessed.

¹⁶ Bottingheimer at 27

¹⁷ Sharon Warkentin Short, *Book Review: Text, Image, and Otherness in Children's Bibles: What is in the Picture* (2015) 12(2) *Christian Education Journal* 470 at 473

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Comics will not be considered “modern” material since there is evidence to suggest that they have been published since the 1930s. For more, see Andrew Coates, *The Bible and Graphic Novels and Comic Books*, in Paul Gutjahr, *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Findings

It will be shown that surprisingly little attention was paid to the trial of Jesus by writers of children's Bible stories. In fact, in a significant number of accounts that were examined, there was no mention of the trial at all. As far as conceptions of justice are concerned, it will emerge that the treatment of Jesus while he was in custody was, by far, the more dominant concern of writers.

Despite great efforts to prevent repetitiveness in the following analysis, so similar are the structures and choices of writers (similarities that span across time and languages) that the above finding will be seen repeatedly.

Implications will be discussed in the "Discussion" section below.

SECTION 1: EARLY EXAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S BIBLE STORIES

Texts examined

1. The first ever known Protestant collection of Bible stories for children (Germany, 5 of 25): Martin Luther's *Passionalbüchlein* (1529)²⁰ (the "*Passional*") – a collection of fifty full-page woodcuts illustrating selected Bible stories and events.
2. The French Catholic account in Nicolas Fontaine's *L'histoire du Vieux et du Nouveau Testament* (1671)²¹ ("*Histoire*")
3. Giulio Aleni's *Sizizingwen* 四字經文 (the "*Four Character Classic*")²² (1642), published for Chinese children (chosen for the purposes of accounting for differences in language and locale during this time period).

Findings

Even at this early stage, writers placed disproportionate emphasis on the treatment and abuse of Jesus during the proceedings, as compared to issues of procedural justice.

Analysis

Passional

In the *Passional*, where each selected story is presented in on a single page with an accompanying illustrative woodcut, only one page is allotted to the proceedings (illustrating Jesus before Caiaphas)²³ while three times as many were allotted to each of the following events: the scourging, the crowning with the crown of thorns, and a dedicated section titled "the mocking":

²⁰ Martin Luther, *Betbüchlein: A Personal Prayer Book* (Morrisville: Lulu, 2010) ("*Passional*") at 138

²¹ Nicolas Fontaine, *L'histoire du Vieux et du Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Pierre Le Petit, 1671) ("*Histoire*")

²² Anthony Clark, *A Chinese Jesuit Catechism: Giulio Aleni's Four Character Classic* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) ("*Clark*") at 63

²³ *Passional* at 167

Chapter 15. The Passional



Jesus before Caiaphas. Mark 14:46, 53, 55.

Jesus before Caiaphas.

Mark 14:46

And they laid hands on him, and took him.

Mark 14:53

And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and there come together with him all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

Mark 14:55

Now the chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found it not.

Chapter 15. The Passional



Scourging of Jesus. Luke 23:13, 16; John 19:1.

Scourging of Jesus.

Luke 23:13, 16

13 And Pilate called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him.

John 19:1

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

Chapter 15. The Passional



Soldiers crown Jesus.
Matt. 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-19.

Soldiers crown Jesus.

Matt. 27:27-30

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium, and gathered unto him the whole band.

28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

29 And they platted a crown of thorns and put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they kneeled down before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

30 And they spat upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head.

Mark 15:16-19

16 And the soldiers led him away within the court, which is the Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

17 And they clothe him with purple, and plating a crown of thorns, they put it on him;

18 and they began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

19 And they smote his head with a reed, and spat upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.

Chapter 15. The Passional



[The Mocking]

The Mocking.

Matt. 27:31

31 And when they had mocked him, they took off from him the robe, and put on him his garments, and led him away to crucify him.

Mark 15:20

20 And when they had mocked him, they took off from him the purple, and put on him his garments. And they lead him out to crucify him.

Histoire

The disproportionate emphasis on the abuse of Jesus' dignity and physical person is expressed differently in Fontaine's *Histoire*.

Choice of diction and tone is key in understanding the *Historie*.

The word "outrage", one of the most loaded in the text, is used twice when describing the proceedings, but only to instances of abuse against Jesus; the first being the slapping of Jesus while he was before the Sanhedrin,²⁴ and the second being the mocking and spitting while he was blindfolded.²⁵

JC replied that he had said nothing in secret, and that he could find out from everyone what he had taught. This reply was displeasing to an officer who was close to the savior, he gave him a slap in the face, asking him if this was the way to answer the High Priest.

JC suffered this **outrage** with divine patience and only said to this man that if he had said anything wrong, he would tell [Jesus] why it was wrong; that if he had said nothing but good, he should not hit him.

...

It was then that the soldiers began to abuse him. They spat in his face; they blindfolded him in mockery; and by striking him they told him to prophesy and guess who had struck him. The night passed amid these **outrages**, when day had come they took him to Pilate to condemn him to death.

In contrast, emotive language is not used in evaluating whether or not the trial was fair; there was no discussion on any issues pertaining to whether or not the proceedings were lawful to begin with.

²⁴ Histoire at 475

²⁵ Histoire at 476

Four Character Classic

Here, there is virtually no mention of a trial at all, other than that Jesus was taken to “the Council (‘四司’) – literally referring to the justice system of the Qing dynasty.”²⁶

In contrast, there are clear attempts to intensify the accounts of Jesus’ abuse and humiliation with the many couplets describing the scourging in detail– significant when considering the relative minimalism with which the rest of the text is written:

夙願樂為, 主聽仇執。

At daybreak, willingly—the Lord allowed His enemies to seize Him.

連解四司, 受辱萬般。

He was then taken to the Council—where He endured every kind of humiliation.

初縛石柱, 鞭撻五千。

First, He was bound to a stone pillar—and scourged with five thousand lashes.

身無全膚, 羔羊一般。

His body was entirely skinless—just like a lamb.

苦痛血流, 不出一語。

As blood flowed from His suffering—He did not utter a single word.

次做茨冠, 箍在頭上。

Next, they fashioned a crown of thorny caltrop—and looped it atop His head.

槌擊其上, 復繳其后。

They pounded Him from above—and tied Him from behind.

聖血通流, 甘忍其苦。

His holy blood flowed—but He willingly endured His suffering.

²⁶ Clark at 77

SECTION 2: POSTWAR LITERATURE

Texts examined

Relatively popular and well-published texts were chosen for two reasons: First, they would have been consumed more broadly and thus arguably represent a more typical view of attitudes transmitted to children of the time; secondly, their popularity suggests some degree of success and effectiveness in engaging children, thus suggesting that the stylistic and structural choices in these texts succeeded in their intended effects (either to emphasise or downplay certain aspects of the proceedings).

1. Arthur Maxwell's *The Bible Story* ("*The Bible Story*") (1957)²⁷
2. Enid Blyton's *The First Christmas and Other Bible Stories* ("*The First Christmas*") (1945)²⁸
3. Norman Vincent Peale's *Bible Stories* (1973)²⁹

Findings

Maxwell's account of the trial is the only one (out of all twelve analysed in this paper) which deals squarely with Jesus' procedural rights, and it was published during this period.

He was not representative of a broader effort to introduce the ideas of procedural and substantive justice during this period. He placed equal, if not more emphasis on the issues of dignity and physical abuse.

Moreover, the other two writers of the period chose to write the story from Peter's point of view thus putting the trial entirely out of view.

Analysis

Maxwell

"There was no chance for fair play at such a trial. Jesus was as good as condemned before He got there."³⁰

Maxwell's account of the trial effectively imbues a sense of procedural justice. From the outset, Maxwell states plainly that "[i]t was illegal to hold a trial in the middle of the night, but so

²⁷ Arthur Maxwell, *The Bible Story: Volume Nine* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1957) ("Maxwell")

²⁸ Enid Blyton, *The First Christmas and Other Stories From the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2016) ("Blyton")

²⁹ Peale, *supra* note 1

³⁰ Maxwell, *supra* note 27 at 84

great was the hatred of the chief priests that they were ready to break their own laws to get rid of Him”.³¹

There is even an attempt to engage readers and involve them personally with concepts undergirding the maxim that justice must not only be done but also seen to be done:

“Most likely the chief reason for the night trial was that they wanted to have it all over before the people who loved Jesus found out what had been done... If only there had been a few children about, I am sure they would have done what they could do to help. One of them at least would have called out, “Leave Him alone! He’s our friend!” But alas, they were all in bed!”³²

Yet, even so, physical abuse and indignities have equal if not more emphasis in Maxwell’s account with the effect of reducing the relative importance placed on those legal issues:

While Jesus waited, men spat on Him and struck Him. Someone covered His head with a sack while the mob sneered...³³

Suddenly [Herod] went into a rage and let his soldiers mock Jesus and strike Him. As a last cruel joke he had them put a “gorgeous robe” on Him. Then he sent Him back to Pilate...³⁴

Soon His flesh was cut to ribbons and blood was flowing down His legs. Yet even this did not satisfy the beasts who were torturing Him. Some of them made a crown from pieces of a thornbush and shoved it down on Jesus’ head. The sharp thorns opened up more wounds, and soon blood was flowing down His neck and cheeks.³⁵

Tellingly, the only time Maxwell uses the word “unjust” in this account is when he describes the scourging:

Scourging was a terrible punishment. It was done with a whip that was brought down with great force on a prisoner’s naked back. Poor Jesus! How He must have suffered as lash after lash fell upon Him! But it was not only the whip that hurt so much but the thought that men could be so cruel, **unjust**, and hateful.³⁶

³¹ Maxwell, *supra* note 27 at 83

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Maxwell, *supra* note 27 at 87

³⁴ Maxwell, *supra* note 27 at 94

³⁵ Maxwell, *supra* note 27 at 102

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Peale and Blyton

The trial:

Although three decades stand between the publication dates of these two accounts, they are so similar in their structure that they can be analysed at the same time.

As far as the trial goes, both writers choose to recount the proceedings from Peter's point of view and thus exclude the entirety of the proceedings. Only Peale offers a cursory one-liner: "While Jesus was being questioned and falsely accused inside the building..."³⁷

Jesus' dignity:

In contrast, in the aspect of dignity, the accounts are not lengthy and replete with emotionally-loaded appeals to young readers' sympathies.

Jesus was "in prison, mocked at and scorned... they gave Jesus a chair for a throne, and they made Him a crown of thorns that pricked His head, and they put a stick in His hand for a sceptre. They mocked at the poor, tired Jesus and had no pity for Him.

Blyton³⁸

During the long night, Jesus had been mocked, reviled, buffeted, and spat upon. The servants of the high priest had blindfolded him and slapped him crying, "You're supposed to be the great prophet". Prophecy who struck you!" So the pinioned man who was led through the streets in the early sunlight was weary, bruised, and beaten. Even so, he held his head high, and there was a quiet **dignity** about him that even the rough solders who hurried him along found impressive.

Peale³⁹

³⁷ Peale, supra note 1 at 234

³⁸ Blyton, supra note 28 at 64

³⁹ Peale, supra note 1 at 235

Physical violence:

With that said, there are differences in the way the two writers deal with physical abuse.

Blyton on one hand avoids it altogether, deciding it sufficient to state that “[t]he soldiers were cruel and merciless to Him”.⁴⁰

On the other hand, Peale, armed with the new scientific knowledge of the age that the likes of Fontaine and Luther would not have had, makes a polar opposite choice by describing with scientific precision the extent of the scourging:

“Scourging... was almost worse than capital punishment. It slashed a man’s back to ribbons, cutting to the bone. In the cathedral of Turin, Italy, there is today a very ancient linen cloth that for centuries has been venerated as the burial shroud of Jesus... Moisture on the body of a man who evidently died in great agony, with profuse sweating, apparently formed a chemical reaction that left a vivid impression on the linen, in effect a primitive photographic negative... **The Bible does not go into such details. It simply says that Pilate had Jesus scourged.**”⁴¹

It is known that Blyton’s choice to exclude any mention of physical abuse stemmed from a personal desire to avoid story elements which were “hard for adults, let alone children” and to focus only on points from which children would find the most “drama and beauty”.⁴² When compared against decisions by most other writers to deal at least perfunctorily with the issue of scourging, even during the times of Luther and Fontaine, Blyton’s choice to exclude it seems atypical and therefore does not present a substantial point of analysis for this paper.

⁴⁰ Supra note 38

⁴¹ Peale, supra note 1 at 237-238

⁴² Blyton, supra note 28 at 5

SECTION 3: MODERN MEDIA

From the 1990s, new forms of media became available to storytellers. Hand-drawn illustrations, which themselves replaced the woodcuttings and impressions from the early days of the printing press, were supplemented if not replaced by high-quality, digital photographs. Later, audio-visual materials such as videos, music, and animated cartoons emerged as a platform for educating children about the PN.

Items examined

1. One of the latest examples of children's books, *Children's Bible Stories* (2021),⁴³ produced by Gemma Sharpe.
2. Brendan Powell Smith's *The Brick Testament* (2001, website),⁴⁴ which describes itself as "the largest, most comprehensive illustrated Bible in the world" and uses LEGO brand building blocks to produce all illustrations.
3. Jung Soo Yong's *Jesus: A Kingdom Without Frontiers* (2006, movie-length animated cartoon).⁴⁵ The animations are compared with those found in:
4. YouVersion's *The Bible App For Kids Storybook Bible* (2019, interactive mobile game for children).⁴⁶

Findings

It will be shown that the use of new media has allowed writers to give greater effect to their intentions than ever before. A nuanced picture emerges:

In the field of print/visual media (photos or drawings), there is an even greater emphasis on the issues of physical abuse and dignity than before; this comes at the further expense of concerns regarding procedural justice.

On the other hand, where animated media (cartoons and videos) are concerned, writers appear reluctant to depict graphic scenes of physical abuses. At the same time, the availability of dramatic devices such as dialogue greatly increase the ease with which procedural issues are brought to attention.

⁴³ Sally Tagholm, *Children's Bible Stories* (New York: DK Publishing, 2021) ("Sharpe")

⁴⁴ Brendan Powell Smith (2001), *The Brick Testament*. Available at: <https://thebricktestament.com/legacy.html> (Accessed 25 Mar 2022) ("Smith")

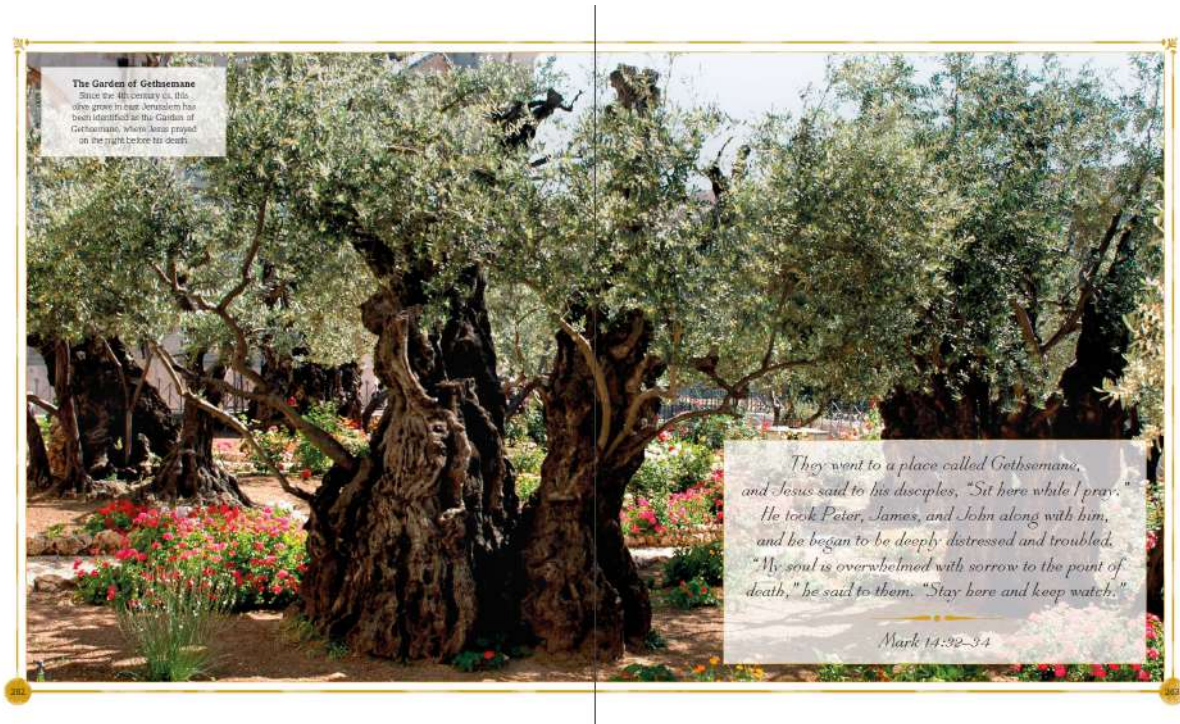
⁴⁵ Jung Soo Yong (2006) *Jesus: a kingdom without frontiers*. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgJ_dSTsXIk (Accessed 25 Mar 2022) ("Jung")

⁴⁶ Youversion and Life.Church (2019), *Bible App for Kids* v2.35 (Accessed at Apple App Store 25 Mar 2022)

Analysis

Children's Bible Stories

Readers come across an imposing, true-to-life photograph of the Garden of Gethsemane⁴⁷ that spans two pages in the book. This leaves no doubt in the mind of readers that the ability to print high-resolution images adds a degree of realism that captures the attention of readers:



⁴⁷ Sharpe, *supra* note 43 at 262

It is therefore telling that in the chapters describing the trial, a realistic image of a crown of thorns was chosen to be added to the illustration, along with the accompanying caption:



*A symbol of royalty, power, and honor during Jesus's time, crowns also feature in the stories of King Solomon's Wisdom and God Chooses David. However, this crown was woven from thorny branches and was only placed on Jesus's head so the Roman soldiers could **ridicule** the idea of him being king.⁴⁸*

⁴⁸ Sharpe, *supra* note 43 at 66

The image immediately draws attention to the issue of torture and dignity as opposed to that of procedural justice. While there is some treatment toward the issue of false witnesses, this is dealt with in the body of text and so takes on a secondary, perhaps more unassuming role in the narrative:

* MATTHEW 26, 27; MARK 14, 15; LUKE 22, 23 *

Jesus and the Sanhedrin

Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council made up of all the chief priests, elders, and teachers of the law.

The high priest, Caiaphas, presided over them all. A string of witnesses had been bribed to appear with trumped-up evidence against Jesus. One by one, they stepped forward and told their stories, and one by one they were dismissed. Finally, two men came forward and said, "This fellow, Jesus, said that he could destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it single-handed in three days."

The high priest looked at Jesus. "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" he asked. Jesus said nothing.

"I charge you, under oath by the living God, to tell us if you are Christ, the Son of God," the high priest ordered.

"If I tell you, you will not believe me," Jesus replied.

"Are you, then, the Son of God?" asked the men who made up the Sanhedrin.

"You are right in saying I am," Jesus answered.

"What blasphemy!" said the high priest,

tearing at his clothes. "Why do we need any more testimony or witnesses? We have heard it from his own lips!" And he turned to the assembled Sanhedrin: "What do you think?"

"He should be put to death!" replied the holy men. They surrounded Jesus, spitting at him and slapping him.

When Judas heard what had happened, he was overwhelmed with remorse. He went to the Temple and tried to give back the thirty silver coins that he had accepted in return for betraying Jesus. "I have sinned," he said bitterly. "I have betrayed innocent blood."

Then Judas flung the coins down on the Temple floor and went away and hanged himself. The holy men picked up the money from the floor and counted it. They decided that they would use it to buy a field that belonged to a potter, which they would use as a burial place for foreigners. It became known as the Field of Blood.



Ceremonial clothes
The high priest's levitical costume included a linen garment called an ephod, worn like a tunic. Gold and colored threads were woven together to symbolize the riches of the Lord. A jeweled breastplate to represent the 12 tribes of Israel was worn over the ephod. The high turtleneck emphasized the High Priest's authority.

* MATTHEW 27; MARK 15; LUKE 23; JOHN 18-19 *

Jesus and Pontius Pilate

Very early the next morning the Sanhedrin had reached a unanimous verdict—Jesus should be put to death.

They bound his hands and took him to appear before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. The chief priests and the elders began to accuse him again, in front of Pilate. Jesus stood in front of them, saying nothing. "They are accusing you of so many terrible things. Why don't you reply?" asked Pilate from his judge's seat. But Jesus said nothing.

"Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Jesus. "It is as you say."

Pilate turned to the priests and elders and said, "I see no reason to charge this man." But the Sanhedrin would not give up. "He has incited people all over Judea with his teaching," they insisted. "Where will it end?" So Pilate agreed to punish Jesus and put him in prison.

Each year, at the Feast of Passover, the people were allowed to choose a prisoner who would be released from jail. Pilate went out and asked the crowd, "Which of the two do you want me to set



Ritual washing
A bowl-washing like these would be used for ritual washing. This practice of purification was a symbolic way of cleansing the soul. Pilate washed his hands to show he wanted no involvement in Jesus's death.



Crown of thorns
A symbol of tyranny, power, and honor during Jesus's time, crowns also feature in the stories of King Solomon's Wisdom and God Chosen David. However, this crown was woven from thorny branches and was only placed on Jesus's head as the Roman soldiers could ridicule the idea of him being king.

free—Barabbas the murderer or Jesus?"

But the chief priests and the elders had already told the crowd what to do and there was a great roar as the crowd shouted "Barabbas!"

"And what do you want me to do with Jesus?" Pilate asked.

"Crucify him!" they shouted.

Pilate called for a bowl of water and washed his hands in front of everyone. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. And, with that, he gave the order for Jesus to be flogged and crucified.

The soldiers took Jesus away, stripped and beat him. They put him in a robe and made a crown of thorns for his head. Then they made him hold a wooden staff and knelt down mockingly in front of him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they jeered.

When they had tired of their fun, they put his own clothes back on before taking him away to be crucified.

"Are you, then, the Son of God?"

Understanding the story

The Sanhedrin have no authority to carry out their verdict; only the Roman governor can impose the death penalty. The Romans did not recognize blasphemy as a crime, so the Sanhedrin present Jesus as a political activist. Pontius Pilate believes Jesus is innocent, but is so keen to please the religious leaders that he agrees to have him crucified.

The relative positions of the illustrations in the text.⁴⁹

As seen above, accounts of the trial that rely heavily on still images tend to demonstrate the tangible abuse and indignations of Jesus more readily than intangible concepts such as procedural improprieties of the trial.

⁴⁹ Sharpe, *supra* note 43 at 267

The Brick Testament

Smith's *The Brick Testament*⁵⁰ further supports this argument. The use of LEGO bricks and physical props such as rubber bands lend themselves more easily to vivid portrayals of scenes like the soldiers slapping/spitting on Jesus, the scourging (note on Samson), and the crown of thorns:



⁵⁰ Smith, *supra* note 44

The Brick Testament

New Testament > The Life of Jesus >

Trial of the Century



Luke 22:63, Mark 14:65

The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him, and some began to spit on him.

The Brick Testament

New Testament > The Life of Jesus >

Trial of the Century



John 19:1

So Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.

The Brick Testament

New Testament > The Life of Jesus >

Trial of the Century



John 19:2

The soldiers clothed him in a purple robe and twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head.

In contrast, the conduct of the trial by the Sanhedrin appears a somewhat more abstract issue that cannot easily be communicated by LEGO mockups:



A Kingdom Without Frontiers

In *A Kingdom Without Frontiers*,⁵¹ the otherwise abstract problem of the night proceedings is illustrated easily to children through dialogue. The result is that concepts of procedural issues are communicated clearly to viewers in a manner that is not prescriptive (a potential pitfall of conventional books which are unable to demonstrate the concept outside of the textual medium):



“I don’t understand why the **High Priest** is in such a **hurry**.”

“I’ve never seen a **trial at dawn** the **day before** **Passover!**”

(Timestamp: 02:15)



“The outcome of this trial has already been decided – long before it started.”

(Timestamp: 05:45)

⁵¹ Jung, *supra* note 45

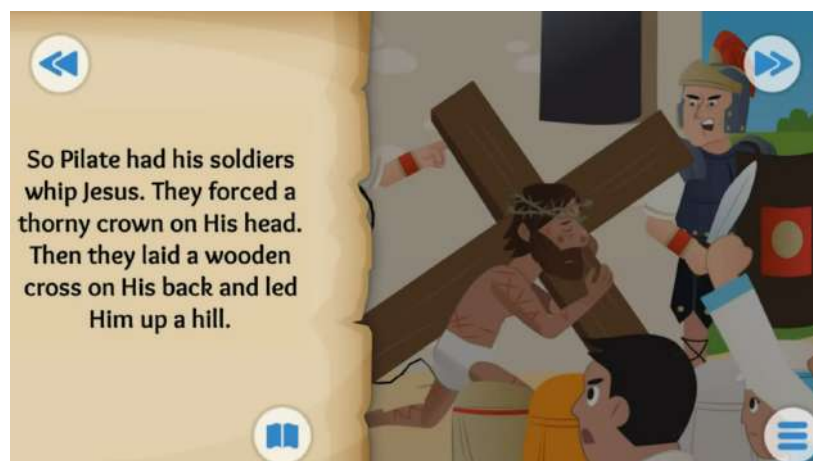
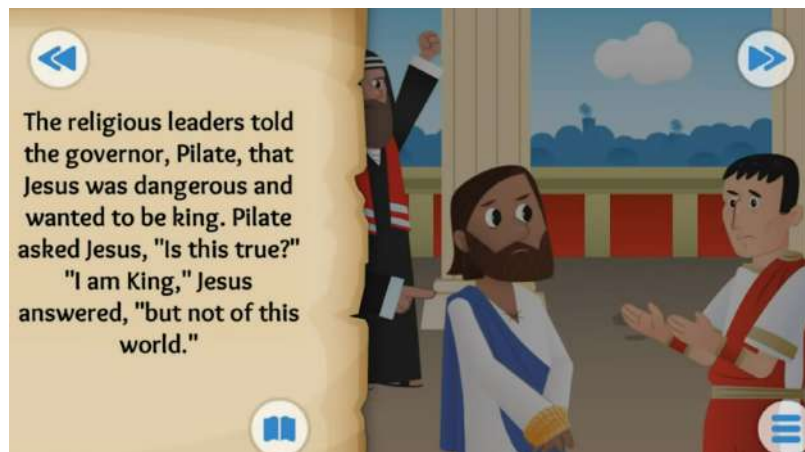


“The evidence is clear up to this point.”
“It’s not enough to sentence a just man. It’s NOT ENOUGH!”
(Timestamp: 05:57)



“We have looked for witnesses against him for days but we haven’t found any! **But the testimonies of these two agree. They certainly agree!**”
(Timestamp: 07:00)

Notably, any scenes indicating the scourging and other forms of abuse are absent; this is also apparent in the [Bible App for Kids](#) where the video content skips over from Jesus' encounter with Pilate to the crucifixion scene:



SECTION 4: ACCOUNTS IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Texts examined

1. Diane Stortz, *Biblia Para Niñas: La Historia más Dulce* (2011)⁵² (“*Biblia*”) – a Bible storybook
2. Ada Lam, 耶穌是主 *Jesus is King* (2000)⁵³ (“*Jesus is King*”) – a collection of lessons and activities designed for Sunday School students, accompanied by a teaching guide

Findings

Children’s literature, when written in foreign languages, follows similar structures to those written by anglophone writers. They too avoid dealing directly with the trial and choose instead to focus on the ill-treatment of Jesus while in Jewish and Roman custody.

There is a marked emphasis on the blamelessness of Jesus, with more effort being made to make Jesus’ innocence clear to readers than seen in English materials. There appears to be a blending of the concepts of legal and moral innocence.

Analysis

Both texts emphasise Jesus’ innocence

The brief account of the proceedings offered by Stortz in *Biblia* opens with a decisive assertion of Jesus’ innocence, though not necessarily in a legal sense:

¡Jesús nunca hizo nada mal, ¡ni siquiera una sola cosita!
 (“Jesus never did anything bad/wrong, not even one little/single thing!”)⁵⁴

The Mandarin lesson plans in *Jesus is King* place a similar emphasis on the innocence of Jesus, once more not necessarily in terms of legal culpability. In the opening activity, children are steered toward a notion of justice that blends legal and moral culpability into the same concept:⁵⁵

⁵² Diane Stortz, *Biblia Para Niñas: La Historia más Dulce* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011) (“Stortz”)

⁵³ Ada Lam, *Adventures with New Believers – Student Guide B3* “耶穌是主” (Hong Kong: Christian Communications, 2000) (“Lam”)

⁵⁴ Stortz, *supra* note 52 at “*El día más triste*”

⁵⁵ Lam, *supra* note 52 at 12-13

6

耶稣死而复活

新闻报导

请为萤光幕上的图画编上次序，并把图画与适合的句子相连。



• 耶稣为了代我们承受做错事的刑罚，甘心让人杀害祂。

• 因为耶稣犯错，所以祂被人杀死。



• 耶稣去见祂的朋友，和他们说话，好让他们知道祂已复活。

• 耶稣的朋友们互相传说耶稣已经复活，但他们从来没有见过耶稣。



• 耶稣为祂的朋友们举行庆祝会。

• 耶稣和祂的朋友们吃一顿特别的晚餐。



• 士兵来捉拿耶稣时，祂正在园子里祈祷。

• 士兵来捉拿耶稣时，祂正在园子里躲避。



• 天使在墓旁对一些妇女说耶稣已经复活。

• 天使对一些妇女说耶稣仍然躺在墓里。

12

English Translation:

Please match each image to its corresponding caption.

Jesus let mankind kill him in order to bear the consequences of the **wrong things that we did.** (Correct answer)

Jesus made mistakes, so he was killed. (Wrong answer)

...

金句背诵



对或错

为何耶稣要死？把答案圈出来。



- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| 1. 只有坏人才犯罪……(犯罪的意思是做错了事。) | 对 | 错 |
| 2. 耶稣死是要代替我们受罚。 | 对 | 错 |
| 3. 这是神为了爱人而进行的一个伟大的计划。 | 对 | 错 |
| 4. 耶稣的死只是为了祂的朋友。 | 对 | 错 |
| 5. 耶稣为所有人而死，后来祂还从死里复活。 | 对 | 错 |
| 6. 耶稣现在活着。 | 对 | 错 |

13

English Translation:

Why did Jesus have to die? Circle the correct answer.

Only bad people break the law…… (The meaning of “break the law” means to do something wrong.) (True/False)

Jesus died in order to suffer **our punishments in our place. (True/False)**

...

Both texts ignore the event of the trial

A closer examination of the accompanying teacher's guide⁵⁶ evinces a disregard of the importance of the trial. The foregoing materials appear to have sufficed in fulfilling the stated "Learning Objectives", one of which is for children to "arrange the order of the importance of the events concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus", even where any mention of the trial is noticeably absent.

The intention to exclude the trial is made even more clear in the "Bible Explanation" component, where teachers are encouraged to read out pre-prepared passages adapted from the Bible. The passages in this component fail to mention the trial, even as they go into greater detail on the events immediately preceding and following it:

English Translation:

Help the children to turn to the Matthew 26. Matthew 26 tells us what happened the night before Jesus died on the cross. Now, turn to Matthew 27. Matthew 27 tells us what happened on the day Jesus died on the cross. Please turn to chapter twenty-eight. Matthew 28 tells us what happened after God resurrected Jesus. Listen carefully to what happened when Jesus died and was later resurrected.

Jesus in the Garden

Jesus came quietly to the garden to pray. He knew something terrible was about to happen, so He was there for His friends and Himself. The garden was very quiet. Before long, Jesus saw a large crowd and soldiers with knives and torches coming. He knew they wanted to kill him. **The soldiers bound Jesus' hands and took him away.**

Death of Jesus

The next day, the soldiers nailed Jesus' hands and feet to a cross, and Jesus died. Then the soldiers took His body from the cross and placed it in the tomb.

⁵⁶ In the accompaniment to the main activity book (Lam, supra note 52) (See Appendix)

The much shorter overview of the events as presented in *Biblia* exhibit a similar unwillingness to mention the existence of a trial, choosing instead to skip ahead to the crown of thorns and crucifixion.⁵⁷

Spanish Text	English Translation
¡Jesús nunca hizo nada mal, ¡ni siquiera una sola cosita!	Jesus never did anything wrong, not even one little thing!
Pero algunos líderes del pueblo de Dios no querían que Jesús fuera su rey.	But some leaders of God's people did not want Jesus to be their king.
Los líderes enviaron hombres a arrestar a Jesús en el jardín de Getsemaní. Él podría haberlos detenido, pero no lo hizo. Sabía que esto era parte del plan de Dios. Todos los discípulos de Jesús huyeron.	The leaders sent men to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus could have stopped them, but he didn't. He knew this was part of God's plan. Jesus' disciples all ran away.
Los líderes golpearon y escupieron a Jesús. Ellos lo llevaron ante el gobernador. Querían que Jesús muriera. Algunas otras personas también querían eso. «¡Crucifiquenlo!», gritaban todos.	The leaders hit Jesus and spit on him. They took him to the governor. They wanted Jesus to die. Some other people did too. "Crucify him!" everyone shouted.
El gobernador permitió que los líderes y la gente que gritaba se salieran con la suya. Jesús fue entregado a los soldados para morir en una cruz.	The governor let the leaders and shouting people have their way. He handed Jesus over to his soldiers to die on a cross.
Los soldados se burlaron de Jesús y le pusieron una corona de espinas en su cabeza. Hicieron que Jesús llevara una cruz pesada hasta las afueras de la ciudad. Allí clavaron sus pies y sus manos a la cruz.	The soldiers made fun of Jesus and put a crown of sharp thorns on his head. They made Jesus carry a heavy cross out of the city. They nailed Jesus' hands and feet to the cross.

⁵⁷ Supra note 54

DISCUSSION

In general, writers of children's Bible stories placed great emphasis on the degrading treatment and physical abuse against Jesus during and after the trial. This attention came at the expense to any potential treatment of the procedural fairness of the trial. It is evident that procedural fairness was generally of secondary importance to writers, if it was a concern at all.

It has been shown in Section 1 that this slant was present even the very first examples of printed children's Bible stories. Sections 2 and 3 demonstrated that this preference endured across time, into the postwar and present-day period, with few notable exceptions in the field of audio-visual media. Section 4 has demonstrated that the bias remained apparent even across different as languages.

The effect of this overwhelming emphasis on the treatment of Jesus during the trial results in the following conclusion: The way the trial is portrayed to young children in Bible stories imbues a sense of justice that closely resembles the principles of protecting persons under detention and imprisonment.

The implications of this finding on Western conceptions of justice are not immediately clear. From a purely theoretical model of epistemology, an argument can be made that children's "trial literature" forms a critical foundation for children's formative ideas of justice and fairness. In practice, however, it must be admitted that the debate regarding the influence of Christian doctrine on Western legal thought is a highly controversial one⁵⁸ with equally forceful arguments being made that it was, on the contrary, the separation of the state from religious doctrines that gave rise to the present-day conceptions of individual human rights and protections.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Mark Tushnet, "Distinctively Christian Perspectives on Legal Thought?" (2003) 101(6) Mich LR 1858

⁵⁹ Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Christianity and Human Rights" (2004) 4(3) Journal of Lutheran Ethics

CONCLUSION

One remarkable development gives room for some contemplation. It is found in the developing international consensus on human rights.

“All persons under any form of detention or imprisonment shall be treated in a **humane** manner and with respect for the inherent **dignity** of the human person.”

Principle 1 of The Body of Principles for the Protection of
All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment
Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1988

“All human beings are born free and equal in **dignity** and rights.”

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Declared by the UNGA in 1948

The devil himself knows not the mind of men;⁶⁰ the influence of children’s Bible literature on western legal thought will always remain a somewhat speculative exercise. That dignity is in the forefront of modern thinking on human rights and protections, however, may not be a pure coincidence.

LIMITATIONS

1. More materials in different languages could have been assessed to confirm the argument set out under “Findings” in Section 4.
2. The analysis could have been more sensitive toward potential differences between: Christian texts, Catholic (non-catechetical) texts, and Catholic (catechetical) texts.
3. Further reading could have been done to fill the gap between the early literature of the 15/1600s and the postwar literature of the late 1900s.

⁶⁰ Per Brian CJ of the Medieval English Courts

APPENDIX

Teaching Guide to Mandarin Activity Book (Lam)

6 耶稣死而复活

经文

太二十六 20、26 至 40、47、57，二十七 1、2、22、27 至 37、45 至 50，二十八 1 至 10；约二十 1 至 18

金句

「但基督已经从死里复活。」（林前十五 20）

课文中心

耶稣死在十字架上，后来复活，并且现在仍然活着。

学习目标

借助这一课，让儿童能够：

- 1.排列有关耶稣死和复活的重要事件的次序。
- 2.讨论为何耶稣从死里复活对我们如此重要。
- 3.感谢神差派耶稣到世间来，为我们所犯的错而受死，又使耶稣从死里复活。在圣灵感动下，祈祷求神赦罪，好成为神家的一分子。

教学程序

课前活动

教师可按实际情况，带领儿童进行以下两个兴趣活动，或选择其中一个。

建议一 好消息

材料：学生本资料页 L，颜色笔。

教师按资料页指示，引导儿童找出隐藏的好消息。然后借以下的话，帮助他们明白好消息的内容：基督是耶稣的另一个名字。「从死里复活」是什么意思呢？（再活过来。）你认为图中的妇人知道耶稣仍然活着时，她们会有什么感受？有什么反应？耶稣被杀之后，被埋葬在坟墓里。在圣经时代，坟墓是一个石洞，人们死后都会被埋葬在这些石洞里。

建议二 蛋中宝

材料：巧克力蛋十二只，写有句子的纸条，礼物包装纸。

预备：

- 1.预先在每张纸条上分别写上以下的句子：

耶稣为我们的罪受刑罚。

神使耶稣再活过来。

神爱我们，差派祂的独生子到世间来。

天使宣布说，耶稣已经复活！

妇人们把耶稣复活的消息告诉祂的朋友。

耶稣的朋友们十分高兴，因为耶稣已经复活。

耶稣复活之后，和祂的朋友们见面。

- 2.把纸条折成一小片。
 - 3.用礼物包装纸把纸条与巧克力蛋里起来。
 - 4.照此方法，把七张纸条，分别藏在七只巧克力蛋内。
- 预先把七张藏有纸条和五只没有纸条的巧克力蛋，分别藏在上课的地点内，如：椅子、书架等。

教师借以下的话，介绍此活动：复活节是一个特别的日子，对一些人而言，这可能只是一个送复活蛋、玩具、兔子的日子，但事实上，复活节是纪念神使耶稣从死里复活的大日子，这也是我们庆祝复活节的真正原因。今天，我们要从房间里找出一些复活蛋来。复活蛋里藏着我们庆祝复活节的原因，你能把这些复活蛋找出来吗？你能把庆祝的原因找出来吗？

让儿童找出复活蛋，然后请他们轮流读出纸条上的句子。并向他们提问：当你知道耶稣从死里再活过来，你感到怎样？为什么你认为那些爱耶稣的人，会在复活节里快乐地庆祝？他们为什么庆祝？

课文讲解

材料：圣经图片（教师本材料页 G）。
预备：预先把圣经图片复印放大，涂上颜色。

引言

帮助儿童翻到圣经马太福音第二十六章。马太福音第二十六章告诉我们，在耶稣死在十字架上的前一夜发生了什么事情。现在，先翻到马太福音第二十七章。马太福音第二十七章告诉我们，耶稣死在十字架上那一天发生了什么事情。请再翻到第二十八章。马太福音第二十八章告诉我们，在神使耶稣活过来的那一天发生了什么事情。请留心听耶稣受死和后来复活时，所发生的事情。

人们计划杀害耶稣

耶稣骑驴进入耶路撒冷后，差不多过了一星期。那城仍然是挤满了来圣殿敬拜神的人。很多高声赞美耶稣的人，每天都在圣殿里听耶稣的教训。

但：有些人不喜欢群众高叫：「耶稣是我们的王！耶稣是神差来的！」这些人也不喜欢群众听耶稣的教训。

「我们怎样对付耶稣这个人呢？」这些人互相问道。「人们以为祂是王。其实祂只是制造麻烦。我们必须除掉祂！」他们开始计划怎样阻止耶稣教导人。他们不敢在喜爱耶稣的群众面前伤害耶稣，必须在耶稣独自一个人时，才谋害祂。

耶稣与祂的朋友吃最后的晚餐

在远离群众的一座阁楼里，耶稣和祂的十二位朋友一同吃晚餐。耶稣看着曾经帮助祂的每一个人。祂爱他们每一个。

「这是我与你们一同吃的最后晚餐。」耶稣告诉祂的朋友，「我要死的时候到了。」

众人都非常难过。「为什么耶稣这样说呢？为什么祂必须死？」

「不要难过，」耶稣说，「这是神的计划。我将要做的事情，都是因为我爱你们。」

耶稣对祂的朋友说完后，他们一起祈祷和唱歌。然后走出城外，进到一个花园里。

耶稣在园里祷告

「留在这里，」耶稣告诉祂的助手，「我要独自祷告一会儿。」耶稣静静地来到花园的另一边祈祷。祂知道将会发生一些可怕的事情，所以祂为祂的朋友和自己祷告。

园里静得很。不久，耶稣看见一大群人和带着刀与火把的士兵到来。祂知道他们想杀祂。士兵捆住耶稣的手，把祂带走。

耶稣死了

第二天，士兵把耶稣的手和脚钉在一个十字架上，耶稣死了。然后，士兵把祂的尸体从十字架上取下来，放在坟墓里。

耶稣的朋友十分伤心。他们不明白耶稣为什么死去。他们很爱耶稣，但祂现在死了，他们不能再见到祂了。（耶稣让这些人杀害祂，是因为祂要为我们曾经做的所有错事受罚。这是神为了爱所有人而定下的计划。）

坟墓空了

星期天的清早，发生了一些事情，使耶稣的朋友由悲伤转为喜乐。有几个很爱耶稣的妇女，来到放置耶稣尸体的坟墓里。她们看见坟墓打开了，非常的惊讶。其中一个妇人是抹大拉的马利亚，她赶快跑去把这消息告诉耶稣的两个朋友彼得和约翰。其他妇女进入坟墓里，发现耶稣的尸体不见了，只看见一位天使。那些妇女很惊慌，但天使说：「不要怕。耶稣不再在这里，祂复活了！」现在，妇女们真的十分兴奋，她们跑去找耶稣的朋友，告诉他们发生了什么事情。

在这个时候，抹大拉的马利亚已经找到彼得和约翰。她喘着气对他们说：「他们从坟墓里取走耶稣的尸体！」彼得和约翰连忙往坟墓去看个究竟。他们发现坟墓正像马利亚所说的那样，是空的。然后，他们回家细想发生的一切事情。没多久，马利亚回到坟墓去。她开始哭起来，因为她不知道耶稣的尸体怎么样了。她站在那里的时候，耶稣站在了她身旁。「你为什么哭呢？」祂问道。马利亚的眼睛可能充满泪水，她看不见是谁与她说话。她以为是园丁。耶稣柔声说道：「马利亚。」这时候，马利亚的悲伤转为喜乐了！她知道耶稣复活了！

（出示圣经图片。）

在那快乐的一天，耶稣几次与祂的朋友见面。耶稣要他们每一个都知道，祂是复活的主。这是何等奇妙、快乐的一天啊！

圣经应用

学生习作一 新闻报导

教师按该页指示，引导儿童按事情发生的次序，为每幅图画编上号码，并选出恰当的句子。然后问儿童：你认为哪一幅图画最重要？为什么？如果你亲眼看见耶稣被钉死在十字架上，你会感到怎样？如果你亲眼看见耶稣再活过来，你会感到怎样？为什么耶稣从死里活过来，对我们是如此重要？

金句背诵