

The Jesus Quest begins

The world's most-seen film

Which film do you think has been seen by more people worldwide than any other? *Shrek*? *Titanic*? *The Sound of Music*? Actually, it's a film called *Jesus* – a simple retelling of the life of the man from Nazareth, as told in the Gospel of Luke. Dubbed into over 800 languages, *Jesus* has been seen by over 1.5 billion people.

It also happens to be the most accurate film reconstruction of the New Testament story ever made. It was filmed entirely on location in Israel. Researchers spent over five years in meticulous preparation before a frame was shot. The hundreds of costumes were made using only materials that would have been available in the First Century. The vast majority of the parts are played by Yemenite Jews, whose facial features look most like inhabitants of Palestine would have done in Jesus' day.

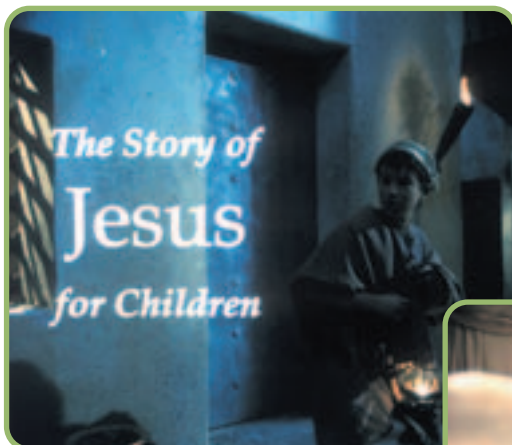
Since its release, *Jesus* has been shown in cinemas in Africa, Asia, Europe (including the UK), North America and South America. It has also been shown on national television in countries as diverse as Russia, India and Nigeria.

The Jesus Quest

This year, *Jesus* has been made more accessible to children after being released as a special, adapted version called *The Jesus Quest*, produced by Campus Crusade for Christ and distributed in the UK by Agapé. *The Jesus Quest* has a PG certificate and is most suitable for the 7–12 age group. In the



Ruth Brown has worked with Agapé for 23 years, being involved with the Jesus Video Project for the last seven years. Having seen her children progress through primary school (now aged 10 and 12) Ruth sometimes describes herself as 'an evangelist at the school gate' and is involved in running Women's Breakfasts and other evangelistic ventures. Most recently she has also been involved in helping *The Jesus Quest* become a resource that can be used in schools. But, most significantly, she is from Yorkshire and likes *The Archers*.



All photographs
© 1979 Inspirational Films
© 2004 Agapé



space of an hour, the key moments in the Gospel are brought to life in a way that draws out the impact Jesus must have had on the people of his time.

Set in Israel/Palestine in AD 30, the story is seen through the eyes of ten year old Benjamin who, together with his friends, sets out to discover more about this 'miracle man' who is causing such a stir. The film uses professional actors and tells the story of Jesus' life and death using selected footage from the original *Jesus* film cleverly interspliced with 22 minutes of newer material which focuses on the experiences of six children who witness, reflect upon and discuss Jesus' words and actions. They sit amongst the crowd listening at Jesus' feet. They are present at the miraculous feeding of the multitude. Later, much to their shock and surprise, they find themselves caught up in the events that lead to Jesus' trial and crucifixion.

Special version for schools

Agapé has produced a special version of *The Jesus Quest* on DVD for schools in conjunction with the Association of Christian Teachers. Significantly, this version of the film – unlike the version for church and community use – omits four minutes of additional, evangelistic footage in which Benjamin encourages the viewer to think through his or her own interest in following Jesus and make a response.

The schools' DVD comes with a CD containing a selection of tried-and-tested ready-to-print lesson

plans (in line with the QCA Non-Statutory National Framework for Religious Education), children's activities and teacher helps.

The Jesus Quest presents an engaging way of teaching primary school children about the life of Jesus. Anne Roche, a former primary school teacher with 17 years of classroom experience, has used *The Jesus Quest* at her church – Riverside – where she is a children's pastor. Anne has also used the video in an inner-city, multi-cultural, school in Birmingham. 'It is a very useful tool,' she enthuses. 'It is a high quality resource which features frequent scene changes and storylines running in parallel, exactly the sort of thing most children are used to. Children relate to the story really well and it allows them to ask the big questions about Jesus for themselves.'

Gospel truths

Anne Roche describes the responses of the 10–11 year old children at the inner-city school: 'I found that many of the children – who were from a variety of faith backgrounds – had a number of misconceptions about Jesus. One child asked, "Did Jesus really bring people back from the dead?" It just blew their minds to think of Jesus raising people from the dead and then being raised from the dead himself!'

The story was, of course, more familiar to the 8–11 year olds at Riverside Church. 'But,' comments Anne, 'They did find the crucifixion difficult, even though the scene is well done and not at all





graphic. Because Jesus is their friend they did not like to see him suffer. However, it did help them to understand what Jesus did for them.'

In a church context she found it particularly helpful that the story presents children with the complete picture of Jesus' life. 'Sometimes in church we chop up the life of Jesus, but this film gives children the chance to take in the whole story and marvel that Jesus is the Son of God.'

PG certificate

Helen Morrison, RE Adviser for Birmingham LEA, was asked to evaluate the video from an education-
alist's point of view. Knowing it had been given a PG certificate, she said, 'Whilst Jesus' suffering is portrayed, it is not dwelt upon and the crucifixion is depicted in a way that shows its brutality without being too upsetting or frightening.'

Rupert Kaye, Chief Executive of the Association of Christian Teachers and a former primary school teacher, said, 'Teachers who use DVD and video with their class will be used to pausing the film

from time to time in order to make learning interventions. They might ask children to predict what will happen next, or encourage them to pay special attention to the dialogue or watch the reactions of characters in a specific scene. If I were showing *The Jesus Quest* to children I would pause the film before the scenes where Jesus is taunted, hurt and killed and say, "Remember, this is a film. Everyone you see is an actor – they are just pretending – and no one was actually hurt making this film. But... the things the actors show are things that the Bible says *really* happened to Jesus." This strategy helps children put a little emotional distance between themselves and the characters in the narrative. By simply pausing the film and speaking to the class, the teacher is able to draw children who may have become completely absorbed by the plot back into the reality and safety of the classroom.'

Clues2Use

Agapé is also partnering with Scripture Union in the production of some after-school club material to use with *The Jesus Quest*. This will be available in the summer and is called *Clues2Use*.

Agapé report that they have already received over a thousand orders for *The Jesus Quest* from individuals and churches and they are expecting demand to be even more intense in the run-up to Christmas as churches decide on suitable gifts for visitors at seasonal events like Christingle, Nativity and Carol services.

■ Ruth Brown

More information



The church and community version of *The Jesus Quest* is available on VHS cassette for £2.99 (plus p&p) and DVD for £10 (plus p&p).

The schools' edition of *The Jesus Quest* is available on DVD, costs £25 (plus p&p) and comes with a CD containing lesson plans, children's activities and teacher helps.

Please note: there is a special Agapé telephone orderline: 0121 683 5090

For more information contact the Agapé office:

Agapé, Fairgate House, Kings Road, Tyseley, Birmingham, B11 2AA

T: 0121 765 4404 F: 0121 765 4065

E: info@agape.org.uk W: www.agape.org.uk