

Among the most popular stories about Jesus that you will find in the King James Version is one that, alas, was not originally in the Bible, but was added by scribes. This is the famous account of Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery. The story is so well known that even most modern translations will include it - but place it in brackets with a footnote indicating there are doubts about its originality or, in some translations, making an even stronger note that it probably does not belong in the New Testament.

In fact, even though it is technically true that the passage “probably” does not belong in the New Testament, the reality is that it is not a debated point among textual scholars and translators. The passage was not part of the Gospel of John originally. Or any other Gospel. People know it so well principally because it appeared in the KJV

Here is what I say about the passage in my book [Misquoting Jesus](#).

The Woman Taken in Adultery

The story of Jesus and the woman taken in adultery is arguably the best known story about Jesus in the Bible; it certainly has always been a favorite in Hollywood versions of his life. It even makes it into Mel Gibson’s The Passion of the Christ, even though the movie focuses only on Jesus’ last hours (the story is treated as one of the rare flashbacks). Despite its popularity, the account is found in only one passage of the New Testament, in John 7:59-8:12, and it appears not to have been original, even there.

The story line is familiar. Jesus is teaching in the temple, and a group of scribes and Pharisees, his sworn enemies, approach him, bringing in tow a woman “who had been caught in the very act of adultery.” They bring her before Jesus because they want to put him to the test. The Law of Moses, as they tell him, demands that such a one be stoned to death; but they want to know what he has to say about the matter. Should they stone her, or show her mercy? It is a trap, of course. If Jesus...

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