

# The Chosen

## Season 1 - "What Does It Mean to Be Chosen?"

### Opening Prayer

To open our Bible study on The Chosen, let us read from the Book of Isaiah 43:14-19.

"Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 'For your sake I send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: 'Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert?'"

Today we are overing episodes 7 and 8: You are established and You are carried

### Episode 7 - You Are Established (Mark 2; Matthew 9; Luke 5; John 3)

Biblical Characters. Moses, Joshua, Jesus, Nicodemus, Matthew, Simon, Mary Magdalene

Synopsis. In the opening, it is the 13th century BC, Moses is making a bronze serpent, so that all of the Israelites who have been attacked by poisonous snakes can look at it and be healed. In the 1st century AD, Jesus tells his followers that they will start moving from town to town, now that the miracles he did are attracting lots of attention. Mary Magdalene tells Jesus that Nicodemus wants to meet with him. Matthew, who has been estranged from his family since he took up tax collecting, has an awkward meeting with his mother. Simon warns Jesus that the meeting with Nicodemus could be a trap, so Jesus takes a few precautions but goes ahead with the meeting anyway. Jesus explains his mission to Nicodemus — comparing himself to the bronze serpent in Moses' day, and telling him that people must be born again — and he asks Nicodemus to join his movement. Nicodemus is clearly interested but says he cannot. The next day, Jesus is walking past Matthew's tax booth. He calls Matthew, and Matthew follows him at once.

**Notable quotes:** "[To Nicodemus] We want rules followed. We want order. Soldiers, money, votes...that's my world. Demons, prayers, oddballs...that's yours. I need to know if our worlds are on a collision course?" (Quintus)

- *2000 years later, these two worlds are still colliding. Which world is your world, the one about money and power? Or the world of prayer...and "oddballs"?*

Keep a listen to the statements and questions from the Roman characters in episodes. The writers use the Romans as a literary tool to show how “odd” being Jewish, Christian, or even Muslim appears to those who do not have faith in the God of Abraham.

### **Episode Talking Points**

Many Christians do not know the connection between Moses and the bronze snake and Jesus and the cross.

- *What was your reaction to seeing the the story of Moses in the first scene and Jesus' explanation to Nicodemus?*

We live in an unpredictable world. There are natural disasters, terrorist attacks, car crashes, cancer, and global pandemics. While there's order in creation (math, science, patterns, logic), there's also chaos and complexity. We cannot grasp the complexities and connections of everything. We want our needs to be met. We want to be safe. We want to feel solid ground beneath our feet. But in Episode 7, the ground is shifting. We cannot control the world. But there is one who is in control. God will accomplish His purpose.

Let's look at our 4 characters:

- Mary: Her world was a flood until Jesus grabbed hold of her and placed her on the rock of his church. As she follows Jesus, she has faith that there is stability no matter the circumstances.
  - Nicodemus: He felt the flood, but will he be ready to abandon his plot of sand? He'd been waiting and watching for the Messiah, but is he unwilling to relinquish the safety of his worldly stature to follow the uncertainty of the heavenly path?
  - Matthew: He relinquished his beachfront property for holy ground. He reached the conclusion that Jesus was the Redeemer they'd been waiting for. He turned away from fleeting worldly treasures and took hold of the promised eternal treasures of heaven.
  - Simon: He stood firmly on the stability of a rock, his rock, which began to crumble. He found a new rock, one that never changes, never fails, and outlasts the sands of the earth.
- *How does the Bible teach us that God is in control even when we think wicked people are in power?*
  - *How is having faith in God so much more than just believing in God? In what ways have you built your house on sand?*
  - *Simon asks, "Do you know him?" Have you ever been like Simon, judging someone who says they are following Jesus? Who is the only one who knows a person's heart?*

Let's read from John 3 and see whether this episode influenced your interpretation and understanding of the passage.

### **Reading John 3:1-15**

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

- *Did the episode influence your understanding?*

[Watch Jesus and Nicodemus 29:10 - 32:50]

As Nicodemus struggles with the decision to follow Jesus, he quotes Psalm 2:12: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way." Indeed, to die in the midst of sin, in the midst of not knowing and not following Jesus would be tragic. But Jesus responds to Nicodemus with the rest of the psalm: "Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

- *What do you think it means to "take refuge" in Jesus, and how does it relate to His teaching on building your life on the Rock?*
- *Did you notice that John was taking notes?*
- *Does Jesus promise zero storms by following in him?*
- *Who lives in us after Baptism? Does it give you comfort knowing they are going through the trials and tribulations with you?*

**Episode 7 prayer:** Dear God, thank you for your redemptive work in the Old Testament lives of the Israelites, as they pictured the coming Messiah. Thank you for sending Jesus, the ultimate Redeemer, upon whom my life can now be established. Please send me ever-lasting faith to stay on firm ground in gratitude to the Holy One, the Creator, the King. Please send the Holy Spirit to those whom I know still live on shifting sands. Amen.

## **Episode 8 - You Are Carried (Mark 1-2; Matthew 8-9; Luke 4-5; John 4)**

Biblical Characters. Jacob, Jesus, Nicodemus, Simon, Mary Magdalene, Andrew, Simon's mother-in-law, Samaritan Woman

Synopsis. The opening is in the 20th century BC. Jacob and his sons dig a well on some land that he has just bought near Shechem. In the 1st century AD, a Samaritan woman named Photina goes to that well, alone, for water. Meanwhile, in Capernaum, Matthew hosts a dinner for Jesus and his followers, and the Pharisees complain that Jesus is associating with sinners. Shmuel confronts Nicodemus for failing to condemn Jesus' blasphemy. Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law so that Simon and his wife will have less to worry about while Jesus and the disciples are traveling from town to town. Quintus is upset when he hears that Matthew has left his post to follow Jesus, and he posts signs around town saying Jesus is wanted for questioning. Jesus and his followers leave town and walk as far as Samaria, where Jesus meets Photina by the well and reveals to her that he is the Messiah. Jesus tells the disciples they will stay in Photina's town for the next couple of days.

**Notable quotes:** "Listen, if we are going to have a question and answer session every time we do something you are not used to, this is going to be a very annoying time together for all of us." (Jesus)

### **Episode Talking Points**

This episode is about how God chooses, then carries you. Bishop Robert Barron from Word on Fire often comments on how very strange our religion is to those who are not from the Judeo-Christian faith. Let's see how the writers state that fact in the beginning of this episode

[Watch Jacob at the well 37:00 - 39:36]

"[To Jacob] From all the gods you could possibly choose from, you pick an invisible god, whose promises take generations to come true, who make you sojourn in strange places, and broke your hip? That is a strange choice." (Asib)

- *Jacob says, "We didn't choose Him...He chose us." Did you first choose God, or did God first choose you?*
- *Did the opening help explain the historical and religious significance of the well in which Jesus met the Samaritan woman?*

Compare Jacob's "He chose us" to God choosing the Samaritan people...again. Jesus knows he is going to meet the Samaritan woman at the well and plans for it. God is calling all his people to follow Him again, as prophesied in Isaiah 43 that we've been reading. Jesus knows meeting a Samaritan and a woman, alone during the day, is culturally taboo in the same way eating and conversing with sinners is culturally taboo. But like God's messages through the prophets in the Old Testament, God is not interested in cultural taboos. God is interested in saving souls. God knows us, the choices we make, and the sadness that results from our sins. And He searches to call us back anyway.

On the subject of choosing, let's watch Nicodemus' choice.

[Watch Nicodemus choice 1:08:45 - 1:10:48]

- *"You came so close." Have there been times in your life when Jesus would have said the same about you? What calls from the Lord did you ignore or tried to ignore?*
- *Do you think there was any symbolism in the gifting of money instead of going on mission with Jesus?*

The unknown is scary, strange, uncomfortable, and unpredictable. The disciples experienced radical change by following Jesus. They went from living in houses to pitching tents. From earning their way to depending on Jesus to show them the way. From making plans for their lives to having no plan other than serving God.

- *What new thing are you afraid Jesus might lead you to? Could it be missionary work, ending a toxic relationship, repairing a broken relationship, sharing your faith, leaving your job?*

In Isaiah 43:16-19, God reminds us of all his marvelous deeds He has done in saving and blessing the Israelites. Then, God promptly tells the people to forget it. God didn't want them to think God was a thing of the past. God wanted them to follow the One who does new things, forges new paths, and carries His chosen people along. From Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David, God called people to do things that should've been impossible, but God made the impossible possible.

We've been following 4 characters this season. What faith did they show?

- Mary: A single woman with a traumatic personal history followed Jesus from town to town, trading the familiarity of home for the unknown, relying on Jesus to carry her. And over time, she became less like her old self and more like Jesus, carrying others as we'll see in future episodes.
- Nicodemus: He didn't get to experience the walking with Jesus part. He did not have faith to let Jesus carry him. But that does not mean he didn't eventually learn to trust in letting his Lord carry him.
- Matthew: Nothing made sense anymore to Matthew. But he had faith that only God makes the impossible possible. So, Matthew let Jesus carry him. And becoming like Jesus, Matthew helps carry us to God in his gospel.
- Simon: Self-sufficiency would have made being carried a foreign and unattractive concept to Simon. Throughout the New Testament, we see attempts from Simon to follow Jesus using his own strength...only to stumble and fall. But Jesus persisted with Simon because learning to depend on Jesus is wholly necessary to be the rock on which Jesus built his church. We'll see Simon's full acceptance in a future episode.

- *How has God been faithful to you in the past? When did God carry you?*
- *What impact does your faith plus God's willingness and ability to carry you have on your faith journey?*

A quick note about the scene with Jesus and Eden. The writers wanted to portray that wives made great sacrifices keeping the home running while their husbands went on journeys for work. There is an unnamed woman who sacrificed to let Simon Peter go on mission. They wanted to both put a name to this person and to thank her for making the sacrifice.

### **Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

"For consider your calling, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'"

Next season, we'll meet Philip, Nathaniel, Simon the Zealot, and Judas. We'll follow Jesus on his early missions. We'll experience his disciples wrestle with both Jesus' message and with each other. The stories include the Good Samaritan, the Good Shepherd, the healing of the paralytic at the pool, the Lord's prayer, and the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount...the beatitudes.

**Episode 8 prayer:** Dear God, Just as you made a way through the wilderness and rivers throughout the desert in the Old Testament days, and just as Jesus made the lame to walk and the blind to see in the New Testament days, you continue to make the way today. Indeed, the God of miracles is not a thing of the past. Lord, you are doing new things in and through us, building your kingdom and accomplishing your good and perfect will, from the beginning of time to the end. Thank you for your promise to keep and carry your chosen people. I humbly ask Jesus to continue changing me from the inside out, making me more like Him every day. Send opportunities to do hard things in Jesus' name. I praise you for allowing me to be a part of building your kingdom, just like those who've gone before me. Amen.