

Explaining The Chosen: Season 1, Episode 4: The Rock on Which it is Built

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The Chosen, a series on the life of Jesus, is so well done! If you haven't seen it yet, you can click on the link to the right to watch it. The stories about Jesus from the Bible are well-portrayed in this entertaining series. It's a great show but looking a bit deeper at some concepts relevant to the Hebraic faith makes it even more rich and even educational!

If you haven't read my posts on the previous episodes, you can find them here:

[Explaining The Chosen: Season 1, Episode 1](#)

[Explaining The Chosen: Season 1, Episode 2](#)

[Explaining The Chosen: Season 1, Episode 3](#)

Caution: Spoilers ahead!

The Rock

This episode is entitled "The Rock On Which It Is Built". This is because it features Simon, also called Peter. Jesus says to him after he agrees to follow Jesus, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

Whether Jesus meant that he was "the rock" or that Simon Peter was the rock is debated among Christian denominations but what is clear is that Jesus's church will not be overpowered by the "gates of Hades"! And we can see in Revelation that this is true and that our Messiah will be victorious in the end!

The Sea of Galilee

Most of this episode takes place at the Sea of Galilee. Although these scenes are filmed in Utah, the Gailiee is a beautiful area in Israel where Jesus spent much of his ministry. This region is mentioned many times in the Bible – 68 to 72 times, depending on translation.

Galilee was part of the Roman Empire in Jesus's time. Nazareth, one of the main cities in Galilee, was the place of Jesus's birth. Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding (see this in Episode 5), is in Galilee. Galilee was also where his disciples resided as well as where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

Zebedee

Zebedee appears a few times in this episode. He's the father of James and John and is a fisherman by trade. His wife (James and John's mother) was named Salome and details in the Bible point to their family being quite wealthy (Mark 1:20, Luke 5:4, John 18:15).

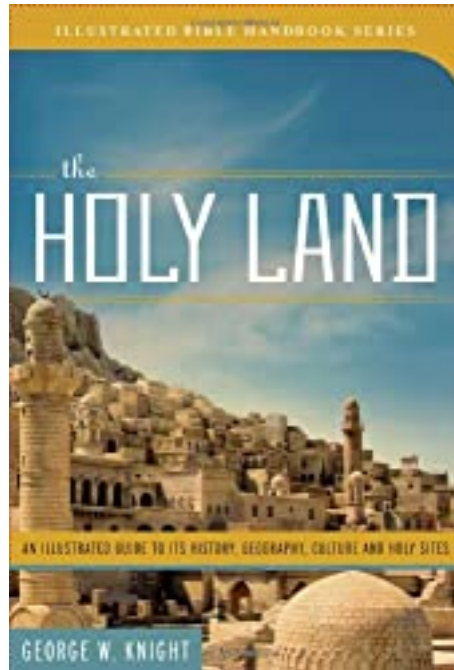
In the opening scene, where Simon is in the boat with the Roman soldiers, the fishing bobber they find bears the Hebrew letter zayin (ז). Simon looks knowingly at the bobber, suggesting to the audience that he knows who it belongs to. We can only conclude the zayin stands for Zebedee as we later see the same bobber put on the table by Simon in the pub while Simon and Zebedee are talking.

Gergesa Shore

In this same pub scene, right before Simon puts the telltale bobber on the table, Simon says to Zebedee "You fished the Gergesa Shore last night".

Gergesa was an area on the Eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. This area wasn't inhabited by Jews and Jewish people of this time didn't spend much time there. It's thought to be the place Jesus healed the demon-possessed men by sending the demons into a herd of pigs, as it's probably the region called "the Gerasenes" in Mark 5:1.

I'm assuming this wasn't Zebedee's usual fishing place, since he appeared quite surprised when Simon mentioned it. The Eastern side of the Sea, where Gergesa was, has high cliffs and is more steep than on the Western side, near Capernaum. It would be easier to put a boat in on the Western side, making it a more likely spot for fishermen. Perhaps, as far as this story goes, Zebedee fished on the opposite side of the lake than he normally does to be undetected by Roman soldiers.



[The Holy Land: An Illustrated Guide to Its History, Geography, Culture, and Holy Sites](#)

Matthew's Dog

At the end of the conversation between Matthew and Dominus, Matthew says that his dog guards his tax collection booth while he's gone. At this, Quintus laughs mockingly and says in a patronizing tone "Oh, Matthew, you are a priceless treasure. Of course you have a dog."

Now this means nothing to us in the context of our culture. Of course we have dogs! While pets may be a normal thing in our culture, dogs were not kept the same way in Bible times. Dogs were used for hunting and herding (Isaiah 56:11, Job 30:1) and to compare someone to a dog was an insult (Deut. 23:18, Prov. 26:11, 2 Sam. 9:8, and others). It's assumed that dogs were scavengers in those days and ran in packs that caused them to be dangerous.

The fact that Matthew had a dog as a pet was probably very peculiar, however, since Scripture doesn't mention that Matthew had a dog, this is just a creative addition to Matthew's character on the part of the creators of *The Chosen*. It does fit his character well since he would have been quite lonely as his family and his people would have considered him a trader.

Miracles

When Nicodemus and Shimon are talking with the Sanhedrin about John the Baptist, they discuss how he called them snakes and how he doesn't answer to the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus says he'd heard of a wild man in Jerusalem who went to the king's court

with a message of evils done by Herod Antipas and his family. Here, he's referring to Matthew 14:1-12 and Mark 6:17-29, which says that John had confronted Herod (who claimed to be Jewish) about his marriage to his brother's wife.

It's against the command given in the Torah to marry your sister-in-law (Lev. 18:16), unless your brother has died without children. In that case, it would be under the Law of Levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-6) to marry her to carry on your deceased brother's line. But Herod had divorced his previous wife to marry his living brother's wife, therefore disobeying the Law. When John called him out on it, Herod imprisoned and later had John beheaded.

Right before he adjourns the meeting, Nicodemus asks "Do they say he performs miracles?". This is significant because Nicodemus (and those he's talking to) knew the coming Messiah would fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah about him that said he would heal people and perform miracles.

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah.

Isaiah 35:5-6

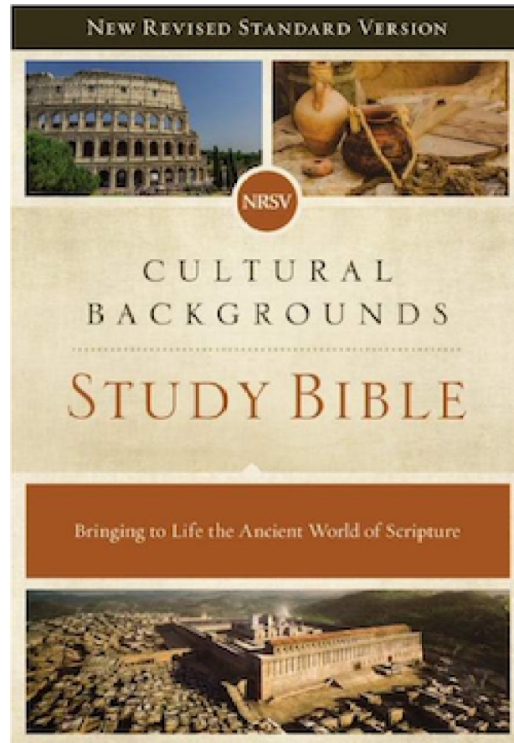
Isaiah 29:8 has a similar prophecy as well. These men knew that if miracles were being performed, they were to pay attention, as this man could be the Messiah.

Of course, we see Jesus perform all of the miracles in this prophecy in the Bible. In the Book of Matthew, John later hears rumors of the miracles Jesus was doing and asks people to find Jesus and ask him if he's the one they were waiting for. Jesus refers to Isaiah 35 in his response, confirming that he is the Messiah indeed (Matt. 11:2-5).

In the very last scene of this episode, Nicodemus visits John the Baptist in prison. He asks again about miracles - this time asking John about Jesus. Nicodemus knows what the Scriptures said about the Messiah and is looking for the signs that he has arrived. He's doing just what we should be - watching and waiting for our Messiah and continually studying the Bible while we wait.

Simon's Sick Mother-in-Law

Simon's wife, Eden, tells Simon that Eema (her mother) is sick and has to stay with them. Those of you who are Bible savvy know what's about to happen. You'll find out in Episode 8 but you don't have to wait until then. Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 1:30-31, and Luke 4:38-39 all contain this short but awesome story!



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Breaking a Commandment to Save a Life

During their heated conversation, Simon excuses his fishing on Shabbat by saying “You can break a commandment to save a life”. Jesus also refers to this concept in the Bible, when, in Matthew 12:1-6, he and his disciples were picking grain on the Sabbath. The Pharisees confronted him, accusing them of breaking the Law.

Picking grain by hand on the Sabbath was not a law made by God but one made by man. This was one of the “fences” the rabbis made around the Law to make sure it wasn’t broken and to provide direction to their people on how to live out the Law in everyday life. But Jesus then gave two examples of broken laws that God *had* given.

Jesus brought up when King David and his men were hungry and ate the showbread in the Temple, which was supposed to be only for the priests to eat. He also brought up that the priests break the Sabbath by working in the Temple. And a few verses later, he asks who wouldn’t rescue a sheep that fell in a pit on the Sabbath.

So, was Jesus telling people it was okay to break the Law? No. He was, however, saying that there are occasionally times that the Law must be broken – to save a life or to serve God. This is the reasoning Simon was referring to.

The Lamb of God

Andrew frantically tells his brother Simon he saw John the Baptist point at Jesus and call him “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” (from John 1:29,36). How did Simon know that meant they referred to the Messiah?

During Passover, as well as other situations and times of the year, unblemished lambs were sacrificed for sin and for other types of offerings as well. Simon, Andrew, and others in John’s audience would have been familiar with the comparison of Jesus to these lambs. Calling Jesus the “Lamb of God” indicated that he was the “lamb” or sacrifice provided by God to stand in our place. This is similar to the ram provided by God when Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac. The ram was sent to be in Isaac’s place like Jesus, the “lamb” was sent take ours.

Parables

On the shore of the Galilee, Jesus is telling the people the Parable of the Sower. Jesus taught using parables so those with hearts open to what God had to say to them would understand and those without would not (Matt. 13:13). He also said he taught in this way in order to fulfill the prophecy in Psalms 78:2 – “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old...”.

Parables were typically a Hebraic way of teaching. Although there were many teachers at that time and in that area, only the Jewish teachers taught in parables and not the Greek.

The Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-24) shows us that God’s message stays the same. What determines whether fruit is produced from our faith is the condition of our hearts, not God or His Word. And, like the seeds sown on the rocky soil or among the thorns, we must let God’s Word take root in our life. And from there, our faith must grow and mature. We must not just be placated that we’ve received salvation but work out that salvation (Phil. 2:12), growing from a newborn baby Christian into a mature adult Believer and even continuing to grow from there!

In the parable of the fisherman, Jesus said that the evil and the righteous would be separated. This reminds that, although our works are not what saves us, our actions do matter! If our hearts are in the relationship they should be with God, our actions will match our beliefs.

Simon, Son of Jonah

After Jesus asks Simon to follow him, he calls him Simon, Son of Jonah. In Hebrew (and Aramaic), it’s Shimon Bar Yonah (literally Simon son [of] Jonah) (Matt 16:17).

Why Jesus says this at this point is not clear. Maybe Jesus was just emphasizing his point, similar to when a mother calls her child by both his first and last name when she's very serious. Maybe he's distinguishing between Simons, since the other Simon (called Simon the Zealot) is possibly present. And maybe it's because Simon had just declared who Jesus was - the Son of Man - and Jesus then declared who Simon was - the son of Jonah.

But maybe it's more than that. Maybe Jesus is pointing out that Simon recognizing who Jesus was was a revelation from God - one that Simon couldn't have achieved from his earthly father. The whole verse is "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Jesus could also be referring to a few chapters ago (12), when he was talking about the prophet Jonah and how Nineveh eventually repented at Jonah's warning to them. I'm not sure which of these it is but I'm sure it's significant in some way!

I love how we're really getting to know each of the characters at this point in the series. Although it's a work of fiction, it does put faces to those we read about in the Bible, even our Savior! Read about [episode 5: The Wedding Gift here](#).

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