

Season Four Episode One "Promises"

Read Luke 1:5-38

Read Matthew 11:2-6

Review the biblical characters of Joanna and Chuza (Luke 8:1-3)

Herod Antipas (aka Herod the tetrarch) in this episode is the son of King Herod (who killed the baby boys in Bethlehem). He is ruler of Galilee (where Jesus lives) and Perea (in modern-day Jordan, where John the Baptist is being held in prison). Herod is married to Herodias (the divorced former wife of his brother, Philip) and John the Baptist has been criticizing him for this. Salome is Herodias' daughter.

WATCH EPISODE

Scripture:

Luke 1:39-80

Matthew 14:1-12

Discussion:

Simon the Zealot and Judas wash clothes. What is the point of their dialogue as they talk about old ways of life and getting dirt out of clothing - how is what they are doing and talking about supposed to teach us about life in God's kingdom?

In the fictional sale of oil, Tamar is very realistically told to wait outside. Do you recall any times in Jesus' ministry when women were treated like that? What do we learn about Jesus from this comparison?

What did you think of the way that Zechariah and Elizabeth (John's parents) were portrayed?

How did Zechariah and Elizabeth's ideal path for their little baby turn out? How does their experience inform our understanding of God's plan for our lives and the lives of our children / grandchildren / etc?

Are you on track to accomplish God's purpose for your life?

Joanna is between a rock and a hard place, as they say. How has she done thus far, living in the tension between the world and following Jesus? How does her path, as it is portrayed in The Chosen, help you navigate similar circumstances in your life?

John the Baptist is on the way to his first wedding banquet. What were your thoughts as you heard “his final words” (not in Scripture, by the way)?

Why did The Chosen show John looking at a lamb as he was being beheaded?

How does Jesus react to the death of his cousin?

What will you take away from this episode?

Biblical Notes / Corrections:

The snow-capped mountains of Utah continue to show up - this time as young Mary travels along the path from Galilee to Judea. A demonstration of the limits of the budget that The Chosen is working with, and a reminder to pray for the creators and to rejoice at the quality they are able to produce given their limited resources.

It's unclear in The Chosen whether someone tells Jesus about John's death, or whether He knows it because He is divine. Jesus' being both fully God and fully human is something that is perhaps impossible for us to comprehend, yet the Bible consistently portrays Jesus as setting aside the powers of His divinity (such as knowing about John's death without being told) ... so we'll give The Chosen the benefit of the doubt and presume that The Chosen has Jesus being told about John's death by someone.

As we continue to read in Matthew 14, we see clearly that the Feeding of the 5000 happens AFTER the death of John the Baptist. We'll get to this more fully in the notes for Episode 2, so stay tuned for that.

Episode Two "Confessions"

This episode is LONG (1 hour 20 minutes). The discussion and notes are also LONG. Might want to divide this episode into two parts in some way that will work for your group.

As the episode begins, Jesus is "sitting shiva" for John - the Jewish practice of the immediate family of the deceased of sitting in the deceased's home while other mourners come and visit with the family.

Read Matthew 16:13-28

Caesarea Philippi is a pagan city, known for its abominations. Jesus' disciples would have been horrified to go there; as we'll see, Jesus had reasons for going there.

WATCH EPISODE

Scripture:

Exodus 20:12
Acts 5:29
Matthew 10:37
Luke 14:26

Discussion:

When have you wrestled with a situation that bears some similarities to the wrestle that Thomas / Ramah had regarding honoring father / mother (or honoring others in authority over you)?

Let's learn from The Chosen in this regard: We need to be clear about the "obey God rather than humans" and "loving father or mother more than ME" Scriptures. The Thomas and Ramah example in The Chosen is NOT what Scripture is talking about, and puts false and unbiblical teaching in the mouth of Jesus. Dangerous!

In the Thomas / Ramah situation, the real Jesus would have either sent Ramah or Thomas back to talk to her father (Kafni) or gone Himself to talk to her father. Kafni said harsh things to Ramah, but did not forbid her from following Jesus. In telling Ramah that she could not marry Thomas, he was not telling Ramah to do something in conflict with God's commands, and therefore he should have been honored and obeyed - that is what the real biblical Jesus would have said. In fact, this exact situation happened to me and my fiance - our parents told us we should not get married. If we had been following the teaching of The Chosen, we would have gotten married anyway. As it was, we considered the commandment to honor father and mother, and made the decision not to get married, and that decision has been clearly blessed by God. That is biblical.

If The Chosen wanted to show Matthew 10:37 in action, a better scenario would have been to have Kafni give Ramah an ultimatum: "If you follow Jesus, you are dead to me." To

have her literally choose between a) staying with her family and rejecting Jesus or b) staying with Jesus and losing her family. THAT is what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 10 & Luke 14. Discuss...

Note: As we'll see in a moment, The Chosen's fascination with Simon's name change to "Peter" is misplaced in many ways: in timing; in the fact that we have no other Biblical evidence of any negative reaction to it by the other disciples; in the fact that Jesus still calls him "Simon" (for example, see Mark 14:37). As James and John later say around the campfire, Jesus gave them a new name also. Neither their new name nor Simon's seems to have been a problem for the others.

What do you think of Shmuel's change of heart regarding Jesus? Do you think it will last?

Read Matthew 18:21-35

The conversations that Jesus had with Matthew and Simon Peter around the fire are not biblical, but certainly biblically based and excellent. These conversations are definitely a highlight of Season Four! Review with one another what they discussed about apologizing and giving forgiveness. In what situations in your own life do you need to apply Jesus' teaching to Matthew?

What did you think of Matthew's words to Gaius as he described his new life? How can your life of following Jesus be as Matthew described?

What will you take away from this episode?

Important Biblical Notes / Corrections:

While we are watching The Chosen for enjoyment, it is vitally important that we are clear regarding what parts of Jesus' life are presented accurately and what parts are not. Let's be sure to dive into Scripture to know what really happened!

Backstory speculation can be fine; changing biblical events, scenes and portrayals is not. The real Jesus is presented to us in God's inspired and inerrant word, and we want to be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11, who "examine the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so". Thank you for joining together in examining the Scriptures to see what REALLY happened in the life of Jesus.

In the past few episodes of The Chosen, there are some VERY key events in Jesus' life and ministry that are out of order or that are missed. Biblically they happen in a particular order for a particular reason. So let's be sure to know the real Biblical order:

- To introduce the Biblical sequence:

- Death of John the Baptist
- Jesus/Disciples retreat to remote place where 5000+ are fed
- The crowds want to make Jesus King, resulting in Jesus having to send the crowds away and leave that area
- Jesus sends the disciples across the lake / Simon Peter walks on water toward Jesus
- Jesus/Disciples wind up in Gentile area where 4000+ are fed
- They go to through Bethsaida (birthplace of Simon/Andrew/Philip) where the strange healing of the blind man happens in Mark 8:22ff
- They go to Caesarea Philippi, where Simon makes his great confession of faith, where Jesus clearly teaches His disciples about His upcoming death/resurrection, where Simon rebukes Jesus for such teaching, and where Jesus says to Simon Peter, "Get behind me, Satan".
- Jesus is transfigured and meets Moses and Elijah in the presence of Peter, James and John (likely on Mt. Hermon, the only snow-covered mountain in Israel)

Discussion: What order does The Chosen present that is different from what Scripture presents?

Further explanation with Biblical references:

- John the Baptist is murdered BEFORE the feeding of the 5000. John's death is why Jesus withdrew to a solitary place where the Feeding of the 5000 took place. Matthew 14, Mark 6
- After John's death, Jesus withdraws to a solitary place and then feeding of the 5000 happens among a Jewish crowd - the most likely site is Kursi, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, just to the south of Bethsaida and to the north of Hippos. Biblically, this is a Jewish crowd, with very few if any Gentiles sprinkled in ... but The Chosen presents a crowd that seems to be perhaps $\frac{2}{3}$ Gentile and $\frac{1}{3}$ Jewish. I think that what's going on in The Chosen is a conflation / combining of the Feeding of the 5000 and the Feeding of the 4000 in Matthew 15 / Mark 8 (a Gentile feeding). I understand why this happens for theatrical reasons, but the Jewish setting for the Feeding of the 5000 should have been more prominent, and by losing that, it results in confusion if the sequence of events in the actual life of Jesus is to be portrayed and understood clearly.
- The Jewish crowd in the Feeding of the 5000 wants to make Jesus king. This is very important, but not seen in The Chosen because they portray a Gentile crowd. John 6, esp v. 16. This wanting to make Jesus king is crucial - it colors the whole last year of Jesus' public ministry.
- From then on Jesus and His disciples only enter Jewish areas (Galilee / Jerusalem) for brief periods of time - they instead retreat into a time of intense teaching for a year, because a) the crowds want to make Him king and b) the Jewish leaders want to capture Him. They spend time in Gentile cities (Caesarea Philippi Matthew 15:21, the Decapolis, Tyre and Sidon Mark 7:24, etc) and in Perea (the eastern side of the Jordan River)

where quite a few chapters of Luke's gospel are set - see Luke 14-18 . Jesus goes to Jerusalem for festivals, but leaves very quickly - it's not yet His time to die.

- SIDE NOTE: There is no indication at all in Scripture that the Romans care anything about Jesus or are in any way in conflict with Him. There is no indication at all that any of Jesus' followers were assaulted or killed by Romans during Jesus' lifetime. Even at Jesus' trial, Pilate says, "I find no fault with Him." (John 19:4) So all of this Roman/Jesus conflict is imaginary, and the more it takes center stage, the more it is taking time away from actual biblical events and potentially providing misleading information.
- At some point after this Feeding of the 5000, another feeding happens, this time of 4000 primarily Gentiles. Mark 8
- After this Jesus goes through Bethsaida and there gives sight to a blind man in two phases - the only miracle that happens in this way - this is key to what happens in Caesarea Philippi, and is missed by The Chosen. Mark 8:22-26
- Jesus takes His disciples to Caesarea Philippi. The road there and the actual place is absolutely perfectly seen in The Chosen - as I was watching these scenes I was so excited, shouting "YES! PERFECT!" Mark 8 / Matthew 16
- I also love how Matthew is writing all this down!
- Simon makes the great confession of faith and is given the name "Peter" (a masculine noun) - However in John 1:42 it is clear that this is not the first time Jesus calls Simon "Peter" - He also does so early in His ministry, just after His baptism. So all of this jealous reaction of the rest of the disciples to Peter's new name in The Chosen is, once again, not biblical.
- Jesus then says that it is on "this rock" (a feminine noun in the original Greek) that His church will be built - clearly, then, Jesus is not referring to Peter (masculine) as the "rock" (feminine) on which His church is built - we need to find another feminine rock, and what better "rock" than the "faith" (a feminine noun in the Greek) that Peter has just confessed. It is Peter's confession of faith, rather than Peter himself, on which the church will be built. The Chosen gives some small indication of this by having Jesus back away from Peter as He makes the declaration that He will build His church upon "this rock". Matthew 16:18
- In the Bible Jesus then immediately begins to teach His disciples about His upcoming suffering and death, to which Peter responds, "Never Lord!" and to which Jesus then responds, "Get behind me, Satan!" HUGE MISS in The Chosen! Of course Peter is not Satan; yet just as God the Father revealed to Peter who Jesus really is, so too it is Satan that is behind Peter's desire to have Jesus avoid the cross. This is completely missed by The Chosen, allowing Jesus' disciples then to react to what happens in Caesarea Philippi by talking / complaining about Peter as the rock on which Jesus' kingdom is being built. It has always been true that Peter was a leading figure among the disciples ... but by not including this "Get behind me, Satan" portion of what happens at Caesarea Philippi, we get a skewed view of what exactly is the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ. The foundation is a feminine "rock" ... it is Peter's faith, not Peter, the person. Matthew 16:21-23
- Six days later Jesus takes Peter, John and James up to a high mountain (most likely Mt. Hermon) and the Transfiguration takes place. This is a KEY MISS! We miss this

beautiful and important event in the life of Jesus, where Elijah and Moses (two key figures who climbed Mt. Sinai in the Old Testament) meet up with Jesus. Matthew 17 / Mark 9 / Luke 9 Very likely it is Peter's rebuke of Jesus in Caesarea Philippi that results in God the Father saying of Jesus, "Listen to Him!" on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Discussion: How does knowing the true sequence of events shed greater light for you on why each of these events happened and what part each played in the life of Jesus?

Episode Three "Moon to Blood"

This episode contains some material not suitable for children.

Read II Samuel 12:1-24

WATCH EPISODE

Scripture:

John 9:1-41

Matthew 12:38-42

Matthew 23:1-28

Discussion:

As John and James discuss Simon's new name with their mom and dad, they have a discussion about Matthew 7:7-8. Asking, seeking, knocking and getting whatever you ask for. Confusing words of Jesus. What do you think of Zebedee's clarification or giving this context for Jesus' words: "whenever you are seeking the kingdom of God"?

How do we know when we are seeking the kingdom of God, and when we are seeking our own kingdom?

Why do you think The Chosen moves John 9 from the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem to Capernaum?

"Never before has a person given sight to the blind." Old Testament prophets raised the dead and performed many miracles. But only the Messiah could give sight to the blind. What is Jesus then proclaiming by doing this miracle?

Why do you think The Chosen moves Matthew 23 from Tuesday of Holy Week in Jerusalem to much earlier, in Capernaum?

NOTE: There is no evidence that the Romans ever murdered any of Jesus' followers before the crucifixion. But if they had, it would have made little difference to them. To a Roman like Quintus, stabbing a Jew would have meant nothing.

Even though there were general conflicts over a variety of things between Jews and the occupying Romans, we've stated earlier that there is no biblical record of a conflict between Jesus and the Roman authorities - see Matthew 22:17-21 where Jesus could have easily taken the opportunity to castigate Rome for using Jewish tax dollars to oppress Jews. Even Pilate declares, "I find no fault with Him". What might be some challenges for us today as we relate to our government, if we forget to distinguish between how Jesus relates to the governing

authorities in The Chosen vs. how Jesus actually related to the governing authorities in Scripture?

How was St. Paul able to write the words of Romans 13:1-7 knowing that, as he wrote these words, Nero was Emperor of the Roman world, and was Paul's highest "governing authority"?

When this episode was released, The Chosen's publicity team took incredible pride in the surprise ending - almost all publicity for this episode focused on that non-biblical event. Recall how the Feeding of the 5000's significance was overlooked in an effort to highlight Simon's anger at Eden's miscarriage at the end of Season Three. Let's hope that, in the coming episodes, Thomas' very understandable anger (if Ramah's murder had actually happened, which it didn't) does not overshadow other key events in the lives of Jesus and His disciples.

"Theodicy" Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? This has been one of the most challenging questions that Christians have ever confronted. Many fall away from Jesus because of "bad things happening to good people" (or at least people whom we view as "good"). The Chosen has dealt with this with respect to Little James and his walking disability; it has dealt with it through the story-line of Eden's miscarriage; it is now going to deal with it again as Thomas' fiance, Ramah, is murdered and dies without intervention from Jesus.. None of these stories are in Scripture, but they do provide us with opportunities to consider this ancient, often frustrating reality. How does Jesus try to explain this to Thomas - do you answer Jesus gives to Thomas in The Chosen, just after Ramah's death? How have you dealt with this reality in your life and when has it provided the biggest test of faith for you?

What will you take away from this episode?

Episode Four "Calm Before"

Read Isaiah 55:8-9

WATCH EPISODE

Scripture:

Matthew 8:5-13 / Luke 7:1-10

Mark 10:35-45 / Matthew 20:20-28

Discussion:

As Thomas deals with the death of Ramah, what was Jesus' advice to Peter on how to be a blessing to Thomas?

We have some wonderful exchanges as people try to grapple with this death and try to help Thomas. Did anything else catch your attention in those conversations around Thomas and his grief, as the disciples discuss the death of Ramah?

How might the lives of Ramah, Thomas & Kafni been different if, in Episode Two, The Chosen had put into Jesus' mouth the words we said should have been there regarding the relationship between Thomas and Ramah?

The month of Kislev (late November / December) A.D. 30, back in Capernaum. Historically more likely A.D. 29 or A.D. 32. We stay in this same month until Episode Six.

What were your thoughts as you watched the exchange between Gaius and Thomas/Peter? As you saw Gaius talking with Jesus? As you saw Gaius' home and what happened there?

As you read Matthew 8 & Luke 7, what else do you learn about this event? What clarifications to The Chosen's presentation do you notice?

Matthew 20 adds another person (than Mark 10) to the scene between James/John and Jesus (see notes below). How does this whole scene reveal the complete lack of understanding on the part of the disciples concerning Jesus' ministry?

The Garden of Gethsemane is literally the "Garden of the Olive Press". As Jesus and His disciples leave for Jerusalem, how does The Chosen do a great job of showing us what's coming for Jesus?

What will you take away from this episode?

Biblical Notes / Corrections:

Much of the early part of this episode focuses on Thomas' grief and the return of Ramah's remains to "Tel Dor on the Plain of Sharon". Once again, for some inexplicable reason, The Chosen seems to ignore what the writers simply must know about geography. "Tel" Dor doesn't exist in Jesus' day - it is just plain and simple "Dor", a city with a natural harbor about 10 miles north of Caesarea Maritima. The Plain of Sharon is to the south of Dor.

In addition, there is simply no possibility of a peasant's remains being carted across the country to be buried in her hometown. People (with the exception of royalty like King Herod) were buried quickly, wherever they died. In this regard, note Jesus' place of burial: in Jerusalem.

James/John's mother. In Season One we discussed how the Church has historically come to the conclusion that her name is Salome - this is perhaps 95% certain, but not 100%. In addition, it is highly likely that Salome is Mary's (the mother of Jesus) sister. The Chosen misses the fact that James/John were likely Jesus' cousins - we discussed this during Season One. If they are indeed Jesus' cousins, that would explain why they (and their mother) would make such an outlandish request. In any case, the reaction of the disciples to their request is totally understandable.

Check out the future that Jesus has in store for James (Acts 12:1-2) and John (Revelation 1:9). From what we know in history, James was the first of the 12 disciples (aside from Judas, of course) to be martyred and John was the only disciple to die a natural death. Again, the age-old question, why???? To which there is no answer, this side of eternity.

Episode Five "Sitting, Serving, Scheming"

Before watching the episode read the following **Scriptures**:

Luke 8:1-3 (NOTE here "Joanna, the wife of Chuza" ... and note that she was following Jesus along with the 12 and some other women also mentioned here)

Acts 23:6-8 (Note one of the differences between two of the prominent groups of Jesus' day: Sadducees and Pharisees)

Matthew 5:38-42

WATCH THE EPISODE

Discussion:

Check out Jesus' words in Matthew 5:38-42. The Chosen powerfully portrays the meaning of Jesus' words in this episode. What do you think The Chosen was trying to communicate to us by the Roman reaction to Jesus and His followers putting into practice Jesus' radical teaching? Are there similar situations in our modern day which would correspond well to this situation in Jesus' day, and if so, what are they? How would you react?

Yussif shows up again very prominently, now a member of the Sanhedrin. While he's associated with Capernaum in The Chosen, there's no evidence of that in Scripture. Who is this guy? What's he up to? He's interested in being on the "Prophecy Fulfillment Committee" as they study the prophecies of Daniel - why is that? BTW, this committee unknown outside of The Chosen, but whatever, as they say.

Luke 10:38-42 is the biblical reference for the Mary / Martha account that we see in The Chosen. In my opinion it's a wonderful rendering of that scene. As you can tell from where it is in Luke, it is much earlier in Jesus' ministry than we see in The Chosen, but I presume The Chosen moves it later to put it closer to the death of their brother, Lazarus. Jesus was obviously very close to this family, and we'll meet them again in Scripture and, I'm guessing, in The Chosen. In that culture, Mary was definitely out of line ... sitting with the men while Martha was left to work (as she should have been doing, according to that culture). What were your reactions to the scene?

Read Matthew 20:1-16. What parts do you recognize from The Chosen? What parts did they neglect, if any? How did the disciples react to the story? How do you react to it?

NOTE: As we'll see later, there's no biblical evidence for the idea that Mary moved in with Lazarus / Mary / Martha at any time. But then again, it's not impossible. There's a touching scene when Mary washes Jesus' hair. What were your thoughts as they conversed together?

John 12:6 gives us insight into Judas, and provides the background for The Chosen showing him as stealing from the disciples' stash of cash. As the Scripture says, "the love of money is the root of all evil." When have you been tempted by the love of money?

What will you take away from this episode?

Historical Note:

In the scene where the Sanhedrin (ruling council of the Jews) is meeting, the Chosen gives some insights into the conflict between Pilate and the Jews. This is not a biblical scene, but nevertheless is VERY crucial to understanding what is coming in the trials of Jesus before Pilate. Yeah for The Chosen! There are five known conflicts in history - here's a quick summary:

5 Stories from the life of Pilate:

ONE - The Standards 26AD

When Pilate was made prefect, he sent standards to Jerusalem to be put up there - Jewish leaders rejected them and he had them come to Caesarea to meet him - he put them in the Arena and told them that they had a choice to either die or accept the standards. They knelt down and exposed their necks, and so Pilate discovered that these Jews were something else. Pilate relents, and brings standards back to Caesarea. Jews win Round One.

TWO - Pilate Builds an Aqueduct 28 AD

Pilate was worth about \$8M in today's dollars - had to be rich to be a 'patron' - So he build an aqueduct from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to bring water into the city - he used some money from the temple treasury as well - this is talked about in The Chosen and obviously had to have been approved by Jewish leaders - but when the people found out, they rioted and Pilate sent plainclothes soldiers into the rioting crowd and killed a bunch of the crowd. Pilate wins Round Two. Sort of. Tiberius Caesar is not happy when the Jews complain about both the money coming from the treasury and the massacre of Jews; Pilate is on thin ice ...

THREE - The Shields 31 AD

Pilate brings shields with no images on them into Jerusalem, and again the Jews object. Pilate stands fast, and so the Jews go over Pilate's head and appeal to Tiberius. Pilate is then told to stand down, and Pilate brings the shields back to Caesarea. Jews win Round Three.

FOUR - Jesus 33 AD (*Jesus was crucified either in 30 AD or 33 AD - those are the only possible years for it to have happened in the Jewish calendar. If He was crucified in 30 AD, then this event would be #3 and The Shields would be #4*)

John gives us the fullest account. The charges against Jesus progress from being a criminal to being a king to being a god. With each increase in the charge, Pilate gets more concerned. Finally the Jews give the cu de gra - if you do not release this man, you are no friend of Caesar. They threaten to go over Pilate's head and have his "Amicus Ring" taken away, which would

result in exile or death for Pilate. Because of the Jewish success against him, Pilate relents and washes his hands of the matter. Jews win Round Four.

FIVE - Samaritan Rally at Gerizim 35 AD

There is a rally here, and Pilate winds up killing a bunch of Samaritans. Pilate wins Round Five, but is called to Rome to defend himself in 36 AD, and vanishes from the pages of history.

Episode Six "Dedication"

The episode begins in Perea, more than 15 hard, steep & rocky miles east of Jerusalem, and on the eastern side of the Jordan River. It's easily a 6 hour hike, on a good day, with a change in elevation of 1 mile (Jerusalem is 1 mile higher in elevation than Perea).

Read Psalm 118:7-11, 21-29

Read Isaiah 55:8-9

Read Psalm 115:2-3

WATCH EPISODE

Scripture & Discussion:

Matthew and Judas have a conversation about the amount of money left. What do you make of Judas' response to Matthew?

What do you make of this conversation between Yussif and his father? Who are these people - what's your best guess?

How does Peter try to help Thomas? Would his words have been helpful to you as you have gone through difficult times yourself?

Read John 10. The Good Shepherd. The Chosen does a great job of setting this teaching in its context, during Hanukkah, in Jerusalem. Notice John taking notes in The Chosen - beautiful. What key things stand out to you as you read John 10?

Would you have portrayed John 10:39 as The Chosen did, or would you have portrayed it more like The Chosen portrayed the attempted murder of Jesus in Nazareth in Luke 4:30? Give a reason for your answer (preferably from the Biblical text).

Of course, on the heels of John 10 comes John 11, the death of Lazarus. The Chosen gets the sequence perfect! Yeah! Read John 11:1-16. What do you notice - what jumps out at you?

In John 11:16 Thomas makes a startling statement. As you read it in Scripture, is the motivation behind it that Thomas is despairing of life without Ramah and is ready to get life over with? Or is it that Thomas is ready to 'fight to the death' so to speak? Or some other motivation - how do you read it?

What will you take away from this episode?

Notes:

Hanukkah is also called "The Feast of Dedication". It happens at roughly the same time as the Christian Christmas. It would be good for you to look up the story of Hanukkah online - simply search for it on wikipedia or some other site like that. In The Chosen we see the disciples quickly going through the history from Alexander the Great all the way through the Maccabees - basically the "inter-testamental period". This is when the miracle of the 8 day supply of oil for the Menorah occurred (this story is not in Scripture however). This history is almost unknown to most of us today, but figures prominently in the psyche of Jews from Jesus' day until now and is celebrated every Hanukkah.

The date when the things happen in this episode is either December AD29 or December AD32. We'll go with The Chosen's timing of AD29 ... sort of - although they actually put it as AD30, which is impossible historically - not sure why they do this.

Episode Seven "The Last Sign"

Read Isaiah 53:1-8

Read Psalm 13:1-6

WATCH EPISODE

Scripture:

John 11:17-53

Discussion:

As you remember the conversations that the disciples had along the road to Bethany, did anything stick out to you? If so, what?

As you read the biblical account, what commonalities did you see with how The Chosen portrayed the raising of Lazarus - this exciting, wonderful, pivotal event in the life of Jesus - and what differences did The Chosen introduce, if any?

Jesus wept. As you read in John 11, what is your impression of why Jesus was weeping? As The Chosen portrays it, what is your impression? Did your thoughts change as you watched, or were your thoughts reinforced? Why?

NOTE: Lazarus' tomb is a great example of a rolling stone tomb. It looks very similar to the tomb in which Jesus was buried - these sorts of tombs were carved into the rock faces of old quarries.

Why does The Chosen say that Jesus raised Lazarus, but did not raise Ramah? "It was not so much who, but when." What all does Jesus mean when He says that?

If you were there, what would your reaction have been to the raising of Lazarus?

Why do you think The Chosen had Mary Magdalene linger outside the tomb?

What will you take away from this episode?

Biblical Notes / Corrections:

While the Bible doesn't give a specific reason why Jesus chose to raise Lazarus, The Chosen's 'reason' certainly lines up with the resulting determination of the Jewish leaders to have Jesus eliminated (see John 11:53, 57)

Cool 'outside the Bible' fact: Sanhedrin 43a (The Munich Manuscript) speaks of a wanted poster of sorts that went out 40 days before Passover. It reads in part "Jesu the Nazarine will go out to be stoned for sorcery and misleading and enticing Israel. Any who know [anything] in his defense must come and declare concerning him." It seems reasonable to presume that this wanted poster was created in response to the raising of Lazarus and is what John 11:53, 57 are talking about.

There is no biblical indication that Lazarus' family was from Nazareth. Could be, however. The idea of them being rich is likely true (Mary having the expensive perfume for Jesus' feet in Episode 8).

We do not know whether Mother Mary was present - she certainly could have been. It certainly seems from what takes place at the foot of the cross of Jesus (John 19:26-27) that the idea that Mother Mary was at this point unofficially part of Lazarus' family is not biblical (Jesus transfers care of her from Himself to John at the cross - no mention of Lazarus).

There is no biblical evidence for the dark cloud (Thomas' mourning / Jesus' cross) hovering over the disciples at this point in Jesus' ministry. True, they are on the run from Jewish authorities. But other than that, the cross is still probably 2+ months away, as noted above.

It's surely wonderful that Jesus has such compassion towards Thomas. But the constant focus in the second half of Season 4 on Thomas and his grief over Ramah puts a very dark cloud over the climactic "raising of Lazarus" scene. It seems clear that The Chosen is trying to juxtapose Jesus bringing one person back to life while not doing the same miracle for another, which is worthwhile to contemplate for sure. In addition, I wonder whether The Chosen is using these imagined events in the life of Thomas as 'backstory' for why we will find him later, of all the disciples, gone on Easter morning and doubting Jesus' resurrection. If the motive is to try to explain Thomas' future doubting, I like the idea ... but I'd rather have The Chosen make up some backstory within a few episodes of Easter evening so we don't have Thomas' grief and disillusionment hanging over us for 3 more seasons.

Thomas' grief at the scene of Lazarus' restoration to life is simply unbiblical and leads us in a wrong direction concerning the mood surrounding the event. This focus on Thomas' grief at the end of Season Four makes me think of the ending of Season Three, where the focus on the anger of Simon does not allow The Chosen to keep the focus on the significance of the Feeding of the 5000. My frustration with the way this whole Thomas-focus detracted from the raising of Lazarus grows greater with each time I watch the episode.

Episode Eight "Pure Nard"

NOTE THAT THIS IS A DRAFT OF NOTES THAT WILL BECOME A FULL STUDY ONCE ALL EPISODES ARE OUT OF THEATERS AND RELEASED ON PUBLIC APPS, ETC

Read Exodus 12:1-14

I Chronicles 3:1

John 11:49-52

Zechariah 9:9

WATCH EPISODE

Scripture:

John 12:1-8 / Matthew 26:2-13 (see notes below)

Matthew 25:31-46

Discussion:

What were you thinking as Martha and Mary had the conversation about what they could give to Jesus? How might Mary's gift inform you, specifically, in your life's devotion to Jesus?

What is the setting of the parable in Matthew 25 as contrasted with the setting given to that same parable in The Chosen? (NOTE: clearly Jesus told the same parables multiple times and in various settings).

QUESTION: I forget whether The Chosen included Mt 25:46 or not - check it out and discuss, if it was not included, why it might not have been included.

NOTE: Oft-ignored part of this Matthew 25 parable: In this parable Jesus is specifically talking about caring for those who are in the family of faith ("brothers of mine"). This is not to say that we should not care for everyone, but it is especially important to care for those of the family of faith.

The Chosen indicates that Caiaphas specifically and knowingly prophesied the death of Jesus, one man for the nation. Is it your impression that that lines up with what you read in John 11:49-52 or not? Give a reason for your answer.

We know Joanna from Luke 8:3 & 24:10 and we know Claudia (Matthew 27:19), the wife of Pilate, from various extra-biblical historical records. What was your reaction to the fictional conversation between Joanna and Claudia?

What emotions, if any, were stirred in you as you sensed Palm Sunday coming closer and closer?

What will you take away from this episode?

Biblical Notes / Corrections:

The Chosen is using a different timeline than Scripture. It is putting the events of Episode 6 (Hanukkah - December) one week away from Episode 8 (the week of Passover - early April AD 30). In reality the timeline is as follows:

John 10 - Hanukkah - December

John 11 - Lazarus - mid January?

John 11:53 (see note above about Sanhedrin 43a) - early February?

John 11:54 mid January - mid- March? Jesus again withdraws, this time not as far as Perea, to the east of the Jordan River, but most commentators put this place somewhere in the wilderness near Jericho, on the western shore of the Jordan River and about 10+ miles from Jerusalem. Luke 18:31 - 19:27 happen during this time - we miss these in The Chosen (giving of sight to Blind Bartimaeus, a key miracle, as ONLY the Messiah gives sight to the blind; Zacchaeus climbing up in the tree to see Jesus)

John 11:55 "when it was almost time for Passover" - late-March

The 'anointings' of Jesus in the Gospels present us with some confusion:

John 12:1-8 Mary, sister of Lazarus, anoints Jesus' *feet* with a pint of pure nard. There is no mention of the presence of any of Jesus' adversaries. Judas alone questions this 'waste'. Question: does Jesus come to Bethany six days before Passover (John 12:1) AND the dinner of John 12:2 where the anointing happens is also six days before Passover? In other words, does the "six days" designation denote the 'coming to Bethany' AND 'the dinner', or just the 'coming to Bethany'? In the order of John's gospel, the anointing is recorded the Friday evening (a Sabbath dinner) before Palm Sunday (presuming we are following Jesus' calendar, which put Passover on Thursday at sundown - see notes below).

Matthew 26:2-13 In verse 2 we are two days before Passover. Again as in John's gospel, does this 'two days' talk about verse 2-5 only, or does it also give us a time frame for the anointing of Jesus' *head* (by an unnamed woman, in the home of Simon the Leper) resulting in the same reaction, this time by many disciples, namely, saying that this could have been sold and given to the poor. Mark 14:1-9 tells the same story as Matthew 26 - again, no mention of any of Jesus' adversaries. Unlike the John anointing, Jesus says that the actions of this unnamed woman will be told wherever the gospel is proclaimed. The anointings in John & Matthew/Mark are so similar and happen in such close proximity ... are they the same anointing as John's (placed here by Matthew/Mark to connect them to the betrayal of Judas) or were there two anointings that week? We are unsure.

Luke 7:36-38 tells of a 'sinful woman' in Galilee? who came into a Pharisee's home and anointed Jesus' feet with perfume, again, from an alabaster jar. To make things more confusing, the Pharisee's name is Simon. There is no adverse reaction of the disciples recorded at this anointing; there is only the adverse reaction of Simon the Pharisee.

Is Jesus anointed at least three times (and perhaps other times not mentioned in Scripture) or is Jesus anointed once or twice or what's going on here? My opinion: I do not see how all of these Scriptures can be said to talk of the same one anointing. So "one anointing" is OUT. Either we have two anointings (one anointing in Luke and another in Matthew/Mark/John) or we have three anointings (in historical order: Luke; John; Matthew/Mark).

While much can be found online about marking a Passover lamb's feet, etc ... thus far I've found nothing that I consider reliable to indicate that that was actually a practice of Jews in Jesus' day.

FYI: The bridge that The Chosen seems to say was handed down from King David all the way to Joseph and then to Jesus makes for some drama, but there's nothing historical about it.

Exodus tells us that Passover lambs were chosen 4 days before they were slaughtered. If we put Passover when Jesus celebrated it (sundown on Thursday ... remember that Jews begin their days at sundown), then the lamb for His Passover dinner would have been slaughtered on Thursday. Which puts the choosing of the His Passover lamb on Sunday - Palm Sunday. NOTE - for more confusion, the Jews of Jerusalem celebrated Passover at sundown on Friday, thus slaughtering their lambs at 3 PM on Friday afternoon, the very moment when Jesus died!). But they weren't choosing their lambs until Holy Monday.

The relationship between Pontius Pilate and Herod Antipas was apparently not as much of a friendly rivalry as The Chosen portrays - Luke 23:12 tells us that prior to Good Friday, Herod and Pilate "had been enemies".