

The Chosen – Season 1, Episode 7 – Invitations

Episode 7 begins with a flashback to the Old Testament. Even after God had used Moses (and his apprentice Joshua) to lead His people out of Egypt and miraculously provided for them repeatedly in the wilderness, the people continually grumbled against Moses and even the Lord. They complained and were generally rebellious about pretty much everything. Recorded in Numbers 21, eventually God had had enough. He sent poisonous snakes into the camp, and anyone bitten by the snakes died. As the carnage spread, the people begged God (through Moses) for mercy. In response, God gave what must have been an extremely bizarre command: “Make a snake of bronze and put it up on a pole. Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live” (Numbers 21:8). Over 1,000 years later, Jesus would compare Himself to this serpent, saying, “**Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up [on a cross], so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him.**” For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (John 3:14-18). Just as the bronze snake was God’s miraculous provision for His people to save their lives from poisonous snake bites in the wilderness, so Jesus’ death on the cross is God’s miraculous provision for us to save us from the poison and death of sin.



One additional note about the opening flashback: Moses mentions “what happened at Meribah.” This is a reference to Numbers 20 (just one chapter before the incident with the bronze serpent), when Moses disobeyed the Lord by striking a rock (to miraculously draw forth water from it). As a result of His rebellion, Moses was forbidden by the Lord to enter the land God had promised to His people.

After the credits, we are returned to “the present” (during Jesus’ earthly ministry). The episode picks up immediately after Jesus had forgiven the sins and miraculously healed a lame man lowered through the roof of James’ and Johns’ family home. This caused quite a stir among the Pharisees, who know it is blasphemous for anyone but God Himself to claim to forgive sins. Jesus, being both fully God and fully man, completely shatters their categories ... especially for Nicodemus, who is beginning to suspect something new and amazing is happening in their midst. In this scene, the Roman governor, Quintus, visits Nicodemus, a religious leader of the Jewish people, and demands that he find out who Jesus is and set a trap for Him. Nicodemus does meet with Jesus, but not to trap Him; rather, Nicodemus wants to learn who He is. This conversation containing the most famous words in all of the Scriptures: John 3:16. (See above; also, notice that John sits outside Jesus’ meeting with Nicodemus feverishly writing what will someday become the gospel of John.) In this scene, Nicodemus’ suspicions are confirmed: this miracle-working preacher, Jesus of Nazareth, is in fact Israel’s long-awaited Messiah. At the very end of their encounter, Nicodemus quotes one of the most well-known Messianic psalms, Psalm 2 (specifically verses 11-12), and Jesus responds with another line in the psalm.

Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way (Nicodemus), for His wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in Him. (Jesus)

This interaction beautifully portrays the seismic shift Nicodemus is undergoing in his understanding of the Scriptures. He now understands who God's Son really is – not Israel, but this amazing God-man, Jesus, who defies all the old religious categories, overturns sin and death, and makes reunion with God possible in a new eternal kingdom. Jesus describes this Kingdom as an invisible, spiritual Kingdom that is invading this world. It is a Kingdom you cannot see unless you are “born again.”

We were made for God, to walk with Him and be ruled by Him and to enjoy Him forever. All the desires of our hearts are fulfilled in Him. All the things we long for – justice, peace, love, wholeness, goodness, and so much more – are found in Him. He made us for Himself, and we will never rest until our rest is found IN HIM. Jesus came to make possible the kingdom where all these dreams would be realized. His death destroys sin and its power to enslave us and separate us from God. His resurrection establishes an entirely new humanity, free from sin, able to live with God and for God and in God. His life can become our life, if only – like the Israelites in the desert looking up at Moses' bronze serpent – we look to Jesus to give us a new spiritual rebirth, leading to eternal life. He offers all this freely, if we will just let go of our old lives, centered in self and rooted in the desire to make our lives work on our own ... to act as if we were God.

And finally, Matthew (who will someday write the first of the four gospels in the New Testament) also continues to struggle with who Jesus is and the miracles he's seen Jesus do. And I absolutely love the culmination of that journey at the very end of this episode. Don't miss the moment when Simon and Matthew are both questioning Jesus' decision to invite Matthew to follow Him ... when Jesus answers both their questions at once with a simple, “Yes.”

May we all be as Matthew is in this scene, finding the life they've always wanted in Jesus. And may we all, with Simon, “get used to different.”

