

The Chosen – Season 1, Episode 8 – I AM He

The Season 1 finale opens with another flashback (I love these). This one takes some explaining. The Bible explains that, thousands of years ago out of all the peoples of the earth, God chose a man named Abram (then renamed him Abraham) to be the father of a great nation. These were to be God's people, the Jews. Abraham lived around the turn of 2nd millennium B.C., something like 2056-1881 BC (yes, he lived 175 years; see Gen 25:7). A thousand years later, God would promise Abraham's descendent David that his kingdom would be established forever through one of his descendents, who is the Messiah Jesus. So, God's plan to rescue the world from sin and death shoots like an arrow through the lives of Abraham and his family.



Episode 8 opens on Jacob, Abraham's son and heir. Genesis 33:18-20 records, "After Jacob came from Paddan-aram, he arrived safely at Shechem in the land of Canaan and camped in front of the city. He purchased a section of the field where he had pitched his tent from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a 100 qesitahs [pieces of silver]. And he set up an altar there and called it God, the God of Israel." About 2,000 years later, Jesus is leading His disciples through the same area, and He intentionally meets a woman at a well Jacob dug in that area. This well is mentioned only once in Scripture, in John 4:6, but most historians agree that this location (still known today, where a Greek Orthodox church stands) is in the field Jacob purchased in Gen 33.

In the flashback, Jacob introduces us (and a native Canaanite) to two important concepts. First, he teaches us the Hebrew word "Shalom," which describes a multi-faceted, wholistic state of peace and well-being. Then, even more importantly, he sums up the whole of the Scriptures in a single statement. He describes what makes Christianity not so much a religion (like all the religions of the world), but an acknowledgement of reality... Christianity is the only "major world religion" that isn't teaching people how to find God or reach God or be good enough for God to love us. Christians understand that we can never accomplish these things. Instead, God reached down to us ... He came to us in the person of Jesus, to cross the unfathomable gap of sin and rebellious independence that separated us from God. The mind-blowing, earth-shattering reality of the people of God is that "We didn't choose Him, He chose us."

Oh, and one last thing about the flashback: Jacob was a man of great faith in God ... so much so that (recorded in Genesis 32) he wrestled with God and beligerently "would not let go unless you bless me" (v26). This is when God renamed him "Israel," which means "he struggled with God." And Jacob was left with a permanent limp as a result of the encounter. Incredible!

The woman Jesus meets at the well is a Samaritan woman named Photina – remember that Jewish men didn't associate with women who weren't their wives and they generally hated the Samaritans – who is also a serial adulterer – good Jewish men definitely didn't associate with them! She's been married five times, and is now living with yet another man. To say that she's "a sinner" is a bit of an understatement. And the same goes for the people Jesus is having dinner with at Matthew's house. At Jesus' request, Matthew – remember that he is a traitor to the Jewish people and hated by everyone – hosts a lavish dinner party for Jesus, His followers, and some other folks who are considered outcasts by the religious leaders of the day – more tax collectors and the woman Rivka might be a prostitute as Mary was before she met Jesus. So, basically, this is an episode chalk full of Jesus' breaking all the rules of polite Jewish society, and I love the way His interaction with the Pharisees at the door to Matthew's house brings that to the foreground. Jesus makes three profound statements here:

1. **It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick** (Luke 5:31). The Pharisees think they're righteous because they're good at obeying a bunch of rules, but Jesus knows that no one is perfectly righteous as

God requires. Instead, everyone is sick, desperately in need of a Savior, and He has come for those who know that – the ones the Pharisees look down on. Sadly, the Pharisees are in no less need of healing and rescue, but they cannot see it. So in the end, the prostitutes and tax collectors are closer to the Kingdom of God than the “righteous” religious men who stand in judgment over them.

2. **I desire mercy more than sacrifice** (Matthew 9:13b). Jesus knows that nobody can reach God by working harder. It’s God’s grace that reaches us, and He wants His followers to act like He does: gracious and merciful to those who need grace and mercy (we all do!), not standing in judgment over them because we think we’re better than they are.
3. **I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners** (Matthew 9:14c; Luke 5:32). This reinforces that only repentant sinners will see the kingdom of God, not those who (though they are also sinners) wrongly believe they are good enough to reach God on their own merits.

Next, we encounter Nicodemus again. I love this guy. Watch how he wrestles in this episode. He perceives the cost of following Jesus to be astronomically high, and the decision weighs heavily on him. What will he give up? What are the implications of all the things Jesus said the night before when they met on that rooftop? He even compares himself to Hagar, who features prominently in Israel’s (and Islam’s) history. Hagar had a very hard life, but she knew God “saw” (remembered, noticed) her in her loneliness. And in response, she was the first person in the Bible to call God, “El Roi” (אֱלֹהֵי רֹאִי) or “the God who sees.” Nicodemus knows Jesus has “seen” him and called him into something greater than his life as a Pharisee, but will he be able to follow where Jesus is leading? We’ll find out in this episode. And I can’t wait to see where else they take Nicodemus’ character through the rest of the series, since most of his life is unknown to us in Scripture. He only appears in John 3:1-9 (which we saw in Episode 7) and then at the end of Jesus’ earthly life in John 7:50 and 19:39.

Jesus continues this theme into Simon’s and his wife Eden’s lives as well. He knows that Simon’s mother is very sick and that it weighs heavily on the couple. So, in an absolutely beautiful scene, Jesus assures Eden that He sees her and He heals her mother-in-law to lighten the burden of Simon’s ministry on her life. Beautiful!

But the story of this episode really centers around Photina, the woman at the well. For sure, nobody sees her. The scene in the market demonstrates that clearly. She even tells a vendor, “to stop me, you’d have to look at me.” But he doesn’t “serve her kind,” so he does little more than ignore her completely. She feels desperately alone ... until she meets Jesus, who knows every detail of all the sin and all the pain in her life, and loves her anyway ... extends grace to her anyway ... offers her the living water of eternal life (which is to know Him) anyway. Jesus is, in fact, the God who sees her ... the God who sees all of us, if we’ll stop hiding from Him.

And in this scene we see Jesus send Photina on an amazing mission: to be the first Gentile (non-Jew) to believe in the Messiah who has come to save not just Israel, but the whole world, and reconcile people to God. This woman, whom nobody values and nobody sees, will become God’s first ambassador to the world beyond the borders of Israel. Because that’s what happens when we realize that God sees us and chooses us anyway...

We tell everyone!

People must know.

