

FROM THE
EDITORS OF



NEW
COLLECTOR'S
EDITION

The CHOSEN

THE LAST SUPPER — JESUS BREAKS BREAD
DURING HIS FINAL MEAL

SEASON 5
KEY
MOMENTS



Jonathan Roumie



The CHOSEN

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REJOICE!

AS WE CELEBRATE EASTER'S BLESSINGS, WE LOOK AT THE HOLIDAY'S ORIGINS AND HOW *THE CHOSEN* PLANS TO MAKE THAT BIG ONSCREEN LEAP

BY JIM HALTERMAN

Easter Sunday, the day that celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as described in the New Testament, is one of the most important dates on the Christian calendar. It's the day when, according to the Bible, Jesus rose from His tomb and made an enduring statement of hope. "I am the Resurrection and the Life," He's quoted as saying in the Book of John. "The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in Me will never die."

This is a central message that the popular historical drama *The Chosen* has been building toward in its first four seasons as it depicted Jesus of Nazareth (played by Jonathan Roumie) bringing His ministry to His legions of faithful followers. In the Christian tradition, Easter is the culmination of Holy Week, which begins with Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and includes other events recalling the Last Supper, Judas' betrayal and the Crucifixion on what's now known as Good Friday. Three days after that, Easter marks when Jesus rose from the dead to make that powerful statement about faith.

The upcoming fifth season of *The Chosen*, premiering in theaters on March 27, will depict the events of Jesus' life during Holy Week up to the Garden of Gethsemane. The rest of the season's eight episodes will roll out in two parts and, not coincidentally, lead into Holy Week 2025, which begins April 13. *The Chosen* faithful can expect to see the Crucifixion dramatized in Season 6, followed by the Resurrection and its aftermath in Season 7.

This Easter, viewers will still have to wait to see Jesus' Resurrection come alive onscreen, but some may wonder how that day got its name. The word *Easter* likely derived from an Old English name for pagan festivals celebrating the arrival of spring, called Eostre or Ostara. Spring was traditionally a time of rebirth, when new crops were planted and fertility celebrated—abundant crops were hoped and prayed for. Other Easter symbols, such as the egg, are also tied to celebrations of springtime renewal, growth and fertility. (Rabbits, too, are heralded for their ability to have lots of offspring.)

In Germanic history, a goddess named Eostra was worshipped for (you guessed it) representing spring, dawn, fertility and birth. And as far back as the

8th century, the Old English "Month of Eostre," was celebrated in April.

So, it's not surprising that the word *Easter* became connected to Christ's Resurrection—a new beginning. And in *The Chosen*, many of the events and themes that occur during Holy Week have been foreshadowed in previous seasons, including resurrection, forgiveness and the promise of eternal life.

In the premiere episode of Season 1, Mary Magdalene (Elizabeth Tabish) is the first to encounter Jesus—He forgives her sins and banishes the demons in her—and she is also the first to see the risen Christ on Easter, according to the Bible. By the end of the first season, Jesus is discussing His Father's kingdom in heaven with Pharisee Nicodemus (Erick Avari). And in Season 2, viewers

see the faraway look on Jesus' face when He beholds Zealots being crucified for rebelling against Rome.

Later, Jesus begins resurrecting others from the dead. When Jairus' (Alessandro Colla) daughter Nili (Ella McCain) tragically dies from illness in Season 3, Jesus goes to her, speaks the words "Arise, My daughter," and the child returns to life. As amazing as the moment is, Jesus urges everyone present to keep quiet, feeling it is too soon for people to know. But by the time Jesus raises His childhood friend Lazarus (Demetrios Troy) near the end of Season 4, He is further along in building His ministry. It is time for others to know He is the Son of God.

His raising of Lazarus, and the spreading of that news throughout Jerusalem, is what finally sets off the Romans and other religious

figures who see Him as a threat that needs to be eliminated. It leads directly to the events of both Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

In the Season 4 finale, Jesus is moving steadfastly toward His fate. He shares with His apostles that He will not be with them much longer, causing fear and confusion when He hints at His death, which they see as a final end. Jesus then humbly rides a donkey into Jerusalem.

Season 5 of *The Chosen* will pick up from that ride: Jesus will be greeted by crowds waving palm fronds, kicking off what will be His last week on Earth. And, this Easter season, the series will depict on the big screen even more ways that Jesus guides His followers to live lives of faith. If they follow His teachings, they will gain a true understanding and acknowledgment of His life and sacrifices.

**"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"
John 3:16**

Meet the Characters

UPDATED

Jonathan Roumie

JESUS

This Messiah you speak of, I am He,” Jesus calmly tells the shamed Samaritan Photina (Vanessa DeSilvio), whom He meets at Jacob’s well. Still disbelieving, she says, “I am rejected by others.” He replies, “I know. But not by the Messiah.” After Jesus describes intimate details of her pained life, she believes, and He gains another devoted follower.

Many of Jesus’ disciples are drawn in by His everlasting charm and charisma—and if not that, then His healing powers and a miracle or two will do the trick for most. And yes, the Nazarene is all-knowing, which means He is always prepared to say the right thing. In fact, His thoughtful preachings—particularly the moving Sermon on the Mount—quickly entice thousands of new followers.

But what makes *The Chosen*’s Jesus particularly likable to viewers is that He’s never stoic or overly pious. (His disciples do not have to fast! And He heals regularly on the Sabbath.) Instead, we’re treated to a man who laughs, cries, argues, gets frustrated—and can dance with the best of them at a wedding celebration. He loves His mother (Vanessa Benavente). He pokes fun at His disciples. In the first hour of Season 2, while the disciples are staying at Photina’s in Samaria, she tells the men that one of the rooms is haunted. “Oooh, I’ll take that one,” a gleeful Jesus exclaims.

Jonathan Roumie is careful with his “human” approach to the Son of God. “How would He have interacted with people? How does He deal with conflict? And how does He deal with humor?” are questions Roumie has pondered. “Surely a man who had such an intense ministry for those final three years in His earthly life had to have been bestowed with a human sense of humor to be able to deal with all the quirks of the disciples, the people He met and the people constantly asking Him for healing.” Indeed, it seems more plausible than the holier-than-thou alternative.

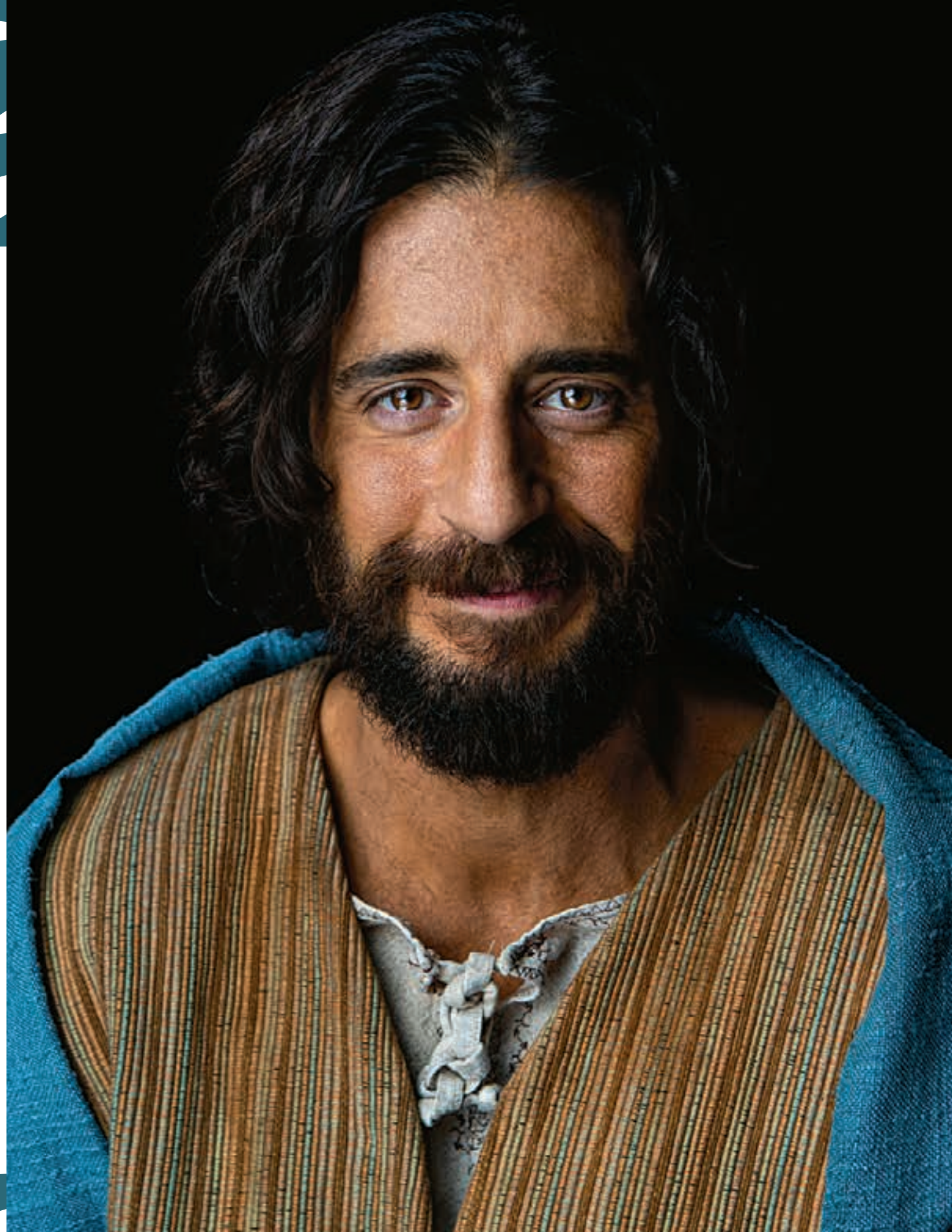
This Jesus is relatable, whether He’s in a hushed one-on-one moment or giving His all to thousands. One of the better examples of the former is His first scene, where He meets Mary Magdalene (Elizabeth Tabish) and exorcizes her demons outside a bar. He calls her by her true name (she’d been going by “Lilith”), then gently places His hands on the sides of her head. She is transformed with nary a witness. He performs similar quiet miracles on the daughter of synagogue official Jairus (Alessandro Colla), raising her from the dead, and finally heals Capernaum’s crippled Barnaby and blind Shula (Aalok Mehta and Anne Beyer) of their maladies in Season 3.

But we also see Jesus on a grander scale, whether through His epic Sermon on the Mount or the miraculous feeding of the 5,000, nourishing the minds and bodies of many. What’s not to love?

Unfortunately, for His naysayers, there’s a lot. For all of the people Jesus touches with His message of a kingdom of heaven, there are others who see Him as spreading a false prophecy. At the top of the list in Season 4 are the Sanhedrin, led by High Priest Caiaphas (Richard Fancy), and fussy procurator of Judea Pontius Pilate (Andrew James Allen), who has been fanning the flames in front of King Herod (Paul Ben-Victor) for Jesus’ execution since the Messiah raised Lazarus (Demetrios Troy) from the dead.

Jesus’ tragic—but glorious—story only gets tougher for everyone involved as the drama progresses into its fifth season, which will cover the events of Holy Week, eventually leading up to the Crucifixion. Jesus reminds us in Season 4 that there is more to life than our time on Earth, and His faithful followers will be rewarded: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” A good reason to keep the faith. —*Jim Halterman*

“HOW WOULD HE HAVE INTERACTED WITH PEOPLE? HOW DOES HE DEAL WITH CONFLICT? HOW DOES HE DEAL WITH HUMOR? SURELY, A MAN THAT HAD SUCH AN INTENSE MINISTRY HAD TO HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR”



The Apostles

Shahar Isaac

SIMON PETER

When we first meet Simon, who later is named Peter by Jesus, he is a skilled fisherman determined to pay off his debt to the Romans. But a lean fishing season prevents him from providing for his steadfast wife, Eden (Lara Silva).

Desperate after an all-nighter of net-casting, he meets Jesus on the Galilee shores, and his life changes. While preaching, Jesus asks to stand on Simon's boat. He tells him to throw his nets into the water one more time. Simon doubts but obeys, and Jesus fills his nets with enough fish to pay off both his and his brother Andrew's (Noah James) debts. "I am a sinful man. You don't know who I am and the things I've done," Simon says, kneeling before Jesus. "What do You want from me? Anything You ask, I will do." Jesus asks him to follow Him, and Simon agrees.

Simon takes up a leadership role as a disciple, though he can be moody and tempestuous with the others—especially his former tax collector Matthew, whom he finally makes amends with. And he sometimes doubts Jesus—like when he and Eden tragically lose their unborn baby in Season 3. But in "Confessions," a fourth-season episode, Jesus renames Simon as Peter, elevating his position among the Apostles and telling him, "All your life, you've been called Simon, one who hears, but today, I call you Peter, Rock."

"Today, I call you
Peter, Rock"
—Jesus to Simon Peter



Noah James

ANDREW

Everyone should have a younger brother like Andrew, the passionate Bethesda-born fisherman and terrible dancer who spends much of his time trying to stop his brother Simon Peter from making bad decisions. He's also all-in on Jesus. "He will give all of himself to help Jesus' mission in any way he possibly can," says James, recalling Andrew's reaction to Jesus being arrested in Season 2. "Andrew storms off after him—without being asked to—and is shocked that the rest of the disciples aren't storming the prison with him," James adds. "There's no holding him back, even to his detriment."

CATCHING UP WITH JAMES...

What do you remember about your first day on set? We filmed the scene where I run in and tell my brother Simon that I've just seen the Messiah, which felt like being thrown out of the nest right away. What I really remember most is how great it was to work with Shahar [Isaac] and how it was clear to us that finding our brotherly connection was so important that first day, and all the others that followed.

Any on-set traditions or jokes you can share? Luke Dimyan [Judas] brought his Nintendo Switch to set [during Season 5's shooting]. I left mine at home because I have a problem...also known as a Super Smash Bros. addiction. So, in between takes, castmates would take turns getting destroyed by me. That's not hyperbole. It was an utter catastrophe for anyone with a controller opposite me. No mercy, only a reign of terror backstage.

If you could add anything to Andrew's bag while he wanders the wilderness with Jesus, what would it be? An oat milk latte, with extra ice.

What would you want for your last supper? A spicy meat lover's pizza. What's a few thousand calories if it's your last supper?



Paros Patel

MATTHEW

From his first appearance, it was easy to see awkward tax collector Matthew was different. While fantastic with numbers, Matthew struggles to understand others, especially when it comes to sarcasm or jokes. "I applaud [creator] Dallas [Jenkins'] vision to portray Matthew as being on the spectrum, but not letting that solely define him," says Patel.

Fitting in had never been easy, but becoming a tax collector is what made Matthew an outcast in the Jewish community and with his family. After Matthew quits his job to follow Jesus, he eventually revisits his parents. "Matthew gained not one but two families," says Patel. "Reconciling with his immediate family enabled Matthew to grow more, not only in confidence, but in his faith as well."

The Apostles

Joey Vahedi

THOMAS

There's a clear reason caterer Thomas finds himself irritated with the peculiar Matthew when they first meet. As fellow disciple Nathanael observantly notes, "You're kind of the same person. All numbers and logic." He's not wrong.

Logic rules over this "doubting Thomas," whose old way of thinking is quickly thrown out the window when he witnesses Jesus turn jugs of water into wine during a wedding feast in Cana. The miracle saves the reputations of both Thomas and his colleague Ramah (Yasmine Al-Bustami). "Join Me, and I'll show you a new way to count and measure," says Jesus. "A different way of seeing time."

Thomas and Ramah become students of Jesus, and while their faith deepens, so do their romantic feelings toward each other. They promise to marry, but the chance is snatched away from them in Season 4's "Moon to Blood," when Ramah is tragically killed after one of Jesus' public preachings gets out of hand with the Romans. Thomas, utterly despondent, continues to doubt Jesus because He did not save the sweet Ramah—and that only deepens when he sees Jesus raise Lazarus (Demetrios Troy) from the dead. "Thomas is a questioner," says Vahedi. "This is both a useful trait and a challenging one. Sometimes, it causes him and others to worry a lot. Other times, it is the voice of reason. Lately, Thomas teeters back and forth between whether the decision to follow Jesus was the right one or not."

CATCHING UP WITH VAHEDI...

What do you remember about your first day on set? Just how hot and humid Texas was in the summer. The crew was handing out Pedialyte pops to keep people hydrated and cool.

In your opinion, why is *The Chosen* so beloved by fans? Viewers feel like they can relate to these characters. They feel seen, which is what every human being wants—to be seen.

If you could add anything to Thomas' bag while he wanders the wilderness with Jesus, what would it be? Mike and Ike's.

What would you want for your last supper? Sushi or an In-N-Out burger.

George H. Xanthis

JOHN

John, the enthusiastic son of fisherman Zebedee (Nick Sha-kour) and younger brother to Big James (Abe Bueno-Jallad), is one of Jesus' devout disciples and can often be seen trailing after Him, furiously writing down the incredible events he sees.

But John also has lessons to learn, like how to control his prejudices and his temper, which flares up when a rowdy group of Samaritans throw rocks at him, Big James and Jesus. Noting John's and Big James' quick anger, Jesus affectionately nicknames them the "Sons of Thunder."

We've even seen a flash-forward of John in the future, continuing to document Jesus' story after His death. When Mother Mary (Vanessa Benavente) asks why John is taking down their stories now, he says, "If I do not write these things down, they'll be lost to history." Xanthis admits the flash-forward "gave me goose bumps while filming, and even more goose bumps while watching as a fan."

CATCHING UP WITH XANTHIS...

What are John's best and worst traits? I always say that John's journey is one from thunder to love. His heart is in the right place, although he doesn't always know how to express himself. It might be why he takes the time on his own to journal about what he learns and sees from his rabbi. He can seem somewhat abrasive and impetuous, not thinking before he speaks or acts. However, his unrivaled loyalty to Jesus will prove to be his most historically memorable trait.

If you could add anything to John's bag while he wanders the wilderness with Jesus, what would it be? Probably supplies. Maybe some extra stakes for tents. We might end up needing flint for fire—bah, forget all that! Eema's cinnamon cakes!

What would you want for your last supper? A legit Greek island-style banquet.



THE
SONS OF
THUNDER

Abe Bueno-Jallad

BIG JAMES

The loyal fisherman and eldest son of Zebedee is a complicated man. He's caring, loves his eema Mary Salome's (Nina Leon) cooking, and though he can often be argumentative with his teasing younger brother John, it's clear they have a strong sibling bond. The two even ask Jesus if they can have seats at His side in His kingdom in heaven, but Jesus reproaches the pair for not understanding what they're really asking for.

In Season 2, James did admit to John that he doesn't follow much of what is happening while they are with Jesus. But in time, some questions are answered. Big James witnesses Jesus raise the dead in Season 3 when the Messiah secretly brings a young girl back to life. And in Season 4, he's struck in the head helping protect Jesus from the religious leaders' stoning, but he recovers.

CATCHING UP WITH BUENO-JALLAD...

What do you remember about your first day on set? My first day was full of so many emotions. It felt like a school field trip to this incredible 1st century museum. I was like, "I get to work here!"

Any on-set traditions or jokes you can share? Whenever we go out to the fields, bugs and mites are constantly trying to gnaw at your feet. So we have to dust our feet with this sock of powdered sulfur. Whenever enough disciples are gathered around the sulfur sock, we start this Gregorian chant-style humming and treat it like our last rites before we head off to battle the bugs. I always walk to set feeling like a knight in dusty armor.

If you could add anything to Big James' bag while he wanders the wilderness with Jesus, what would it be? Cinnamon cakes.

What would you want for your last supper? I love lamb, so I think I would want that for sure.



Jordan Walker Ross

LITTLE JAMES

Picture this: You live your life with a paralysis that gives you a physical limp. You witness the Messiah heal stranger after stranger while you're a loyal disciple. When is it your turn to be healed? That's the plight for the meek, loving singer James, aka Little James, who is unable to bring himself to ask Jesus for healing. (Actor Ross' own multiple sclerosis influenced the character's portrayal.)

In Season 3, after the disciples are named Apostles and given their missionary work, Little James finally asks Jesus why He hasn't healed him yet. Jesus says, "Think of the story that you have.... If I don't heal you, to know how to proclaim that you still praise God, in spite of this. To show people that you can be patient with your suffering here on Earth, because you know you'll spend eternity with no suffering." There's nothing *little* about that!

CATCHING UP WITH ROSS...

What are Little James' best and worst traits? Little James is a man of tremendous faith. He's also incredibly loyal and in touch with his emotions. However, he has deep insecurities and doubts about whether he's worthy or capable of doing what he is asked by Jesus. **Any on-set traditions or jokes you can share?** I'm one of the bigger pranksters on set. I like to hide things in my castmates' trailers—like 200 mini Christmas trees.

What would you want for your last supper? I'm a breakfast guy, so I'd probably go for French toast, scrambled eggs, bacon—extra crispy—and maybe throw in some biscuits and sausage gravy.



Giavani Cairo

THADDEUS

"He said He was building a kingdom, a fortress stronger than stone. I believed Him," says Galilee-born Thaddeus about initially deciding to follow Jesus. A skilled mason who has been working on his craft since he was 9 years old, Thaddeus has talents that are integral for moments like the building of the stage for Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

"He's one of the quiet ones in the group, but there's also strength in that," says Cairo. "He's a peacemaker and really wants others to feel seen."

CATCHING UP WITH CAIRO...

What do you remember about your first day on set? My first day was the Shabbat dinner at Mary's house in Episode 2. I remember how it already felt like a family. We were filming at night, and it was freezing in Texas. Jordan [Ross] and I were talking about movies during breaks and chewing on ice cubes right before filming so you couldn't see our breath on camera.

Any on-set traditions or jokes you can share? On any film day, you can be sure to catch [me and Jordan] playing football in between takes.

How has working on *The Chosen* affected your faith? I grew up Catholic but never really considered myself to have a true relationship with Christ. However, months before booking *The Chosen*, I made a commitment to myself to get closer to my faith. I started reading the Bible every day and praying to God. A couple months before the year ended, *The Chosen* came into my life.

Alaa Safi

SIMON Z

Simon the Zealot, known as just Z or Simon Z now, left a challenging life behind to follow Jesus. Growing up and seeing the abuse brutal Romans inflicted on his fellow Jews, Simon abandons his paralytic brother Jesse and joins the Zealots, a fanatical cult of hard-trained killers. Just before Simon is about to attempt an assassination on a Roman magistrate, he sees his older brother walking—healed of his paralysis.

He leaves the Zealots behind and goes in search of the man who healed Jesse. When he finds Jesus, he commits to becoming His student. And though Simon Z struggles to understand Jesus' ways—and why Jesus won't just decimate the Romans and free the Jews—he allows Jesus to throw his precious dagger in the Jordan River. As Simon Z later notes, "I am not a Zealot anymore, just zealous."

CATCHING UP WITH SAFI...

What do you remember about your first day on set? I had struggled for weeks to get my visa back in Rome, so on that first day it was such a relief to finally step on that set. I had to dive into one of my most important scenes first thing in the morning. I was jet-lagged and I didn't know anyone, but everyone welcomed me in such a warm way.

Any on-set traditions or jokes you can share? We just love singing "Happy Birthday" on set. All you have to do is start it, and the whole group will immediately sing along before they even know whose birthday it is. Sometimes, it's no one's birthday!

If you could add anything to Simon Z's bag while he wanders the wilderness with Jesus, what would it be? A camera.

How has working on *The Chosen* affected your faith? Working on *The Chosen* reinforces my belief in the power and the responsibility that I hold as an artist. There is something about a group of people coming together, deciding to dive in daily, to dedicate themselves to a story made to be shared with the world. It feels like everything falls in line, and there's a great power at play that takes over and orchestrates it all, making the circumstances, difficulties, goals and solutions dance in a way that it gives birth to something special every time.



The Apostles

Luke Dimyan

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Did you hear that collective gasp in the Season 2 finale when the wide-eyed businessman's apprentice who helped Jesus' followers secure the land for His Sermon on the Mount is revealed to be Judas? Even those who don't know their Bible verses are aware that the name is synonymous with a betrayer.

When we meet Judas, it's clear that he could easily have a bright future, given his strong business and financial skills. But once he hears Jesus' sermon, he's awestruck to the point that he immediately decides to leave behind his old life—swindling others with trickster Hadad (Josh Zagoren). And when Judas meets the Messiah post-sermon, he offers his services to Jesus, who says He's only seeking followers trying to be like Him. "I am ready to do hard things," a confident Judas replies.

Judas is given the responsibility of handling the ministry's funds—a job that Matthew no longer wants to do. Judas also goes out on ministry with testy Simon and, later, helps Zebedee negotiate with a difficult landowner when buying his olive grove. But it's not enough for the ambitious disciple. When he visits Hadad in Season 4, his old mentor suggests that Judas should be getting paid for his labor of managing the finances—so Judas starts skimming off the top of their savings, and that's where his disloyalty begins.

In Season 4's "Dedication" he tells Jesus, "All I want is to see Your kingdom come," but the kingdom Judas sees isn't quite what the Messiah has in mind. "I want to make sure that You're never held back by not having enough resources," he adds. Doesn't Judas understand that Jesus sees and knows all?



Austin Reed Alleman

NATHANAEL

Looking for a truth-teller? Then Bethesda native Nathanael is your man, something that Jesus knew way before ever seeing him in person, of course. "One of the great things about you is that you are a true Israelite, with whom there is no deceit," Jesus tells Nathanael the first time they meet. And he's not kidding—Nathanael is known among his fellow Apostles for having almost zero filter.

Like many of Jesus' Apostles, Nathanael was at a low point prior to joining His ministry. A brilliant architect, Nathanael is ready to throw away his career, even burning sketches of the synagogue he had always dreamed of building, when one of his structures collapses in a potentially deadly accident. "Do You see me?" he calls out from under a fig tree, hoping for a response. Later, he meets Jesus and gets the sign he was looking for.

CATCHING UP WITH ALLEMAN...

What do you remember about your first day on set? Mainly being in awe of the incredible set and location out in Utah. Everything was moving so quickly. I had booked the role two days before, flown out the next day, and my very first day of filming was the climactic moment of the episode where my character finally meets Jesus.

Any on-set traditions or jokes you can share? [In Season 5,] we started an annual cast-versus-crew flag football game. The crew won that one, but we'll get them next season.

If you could add anything to Nathanael's bag while he wanders the wilderness with Jesus, what would it be? A book and some earplugs.

What would you want for your last supper? Easiest question so far: sushi.



Reza Diako

PHILIP

Being a faithful follower to a controversial holy man is nothing new to the Bethesda-born Philip. Before Jesus, Philip had been an avid disciple of John the Baptizer. So when an imprisoned John urges Philip to go see Jesus, he travels to meet up with the Messiah and His students. "I will," Philip says, even before Jesus gets out the words "Follow Me."

Philip is not only a model disciple (most of the time), but also a great friend. He has a long-standing bond with Andrew, who also used to worship with John the Baptizer. He introduces a struggling Nathanael to Jesus. He even bonds with Matthew, teaching him how to tell jokes. (In Season 4, Diako took over the role of Philip from Yoshi Barrigas.)

CATCHING UP WITH DIAKO...

What are Philip's best traits? What I admire about him is how he has learned to always choose the spirit of surrender to the unknown. He is also very practical and good with survival skills. I sense he wants to be a quiet deputy for Jesus, to keep the pack together for him at all costs.

Any on-set traditions or jokes you can share? This cast and crew are big fans of pickles and pickle juice. Apparently, it is a natural way to keep the electrolytes up in the heat. I have had more pickles in the time of filming than in my whole life.

If you could add anything to Philip's bag while he wanders the wilderness with Jesus, what would it be? I would leave him a "fat goose" in a lunch box. He seems to be dreaming of eating another one, and the locust diet must get boring.

What would you want for your last supper? One double-double from In-N-Out, fries, one small pizza from the best in town, some authentic Turkish kebabs, and my favorite Iranian dish, tahchin with chicken. I would love to end it with a hot homemade brownie with vanilla ice cream, and a double espresso. If I am still alive after eating all that, I will most definitely be fulfilled and ready to say goodbye to this world.

Women of *The Chosen*

Amber Shana Williams

TAMAR

After witnessing Jesus cure a leper, well-dressed Ethiopian Tamar tracks Him and His disciples to Capernaum to see if Jesus can heal her paralytic friend Ethan (Noé de la Garza). Determined to reach a preaching Jesus, she works her way through the crowd and discovers the best way to get Ethan seen is to lower him through the roof of Zebedee's (Nick Shakoour) house. Jesus tells Tamar, "Your faith is beautiful."

"I describe her as a woman who is ambitious, and that's not a very common thing that you saw in that time period," says Williams. "She was a bit ahead of her time."

Tamar helps Zebedee launch his olive oil business, and though she can't read, she proves time and again how sharp her mind is. She also reveals her past to Mary Magdalene, discussing the war-torn village she came from and showing Mary the familial blood that stains her precious jewelry. Mary bonds with Tamar...and so do we.



Lara Silva

EDEN

The Capernaum-born firecracker with a strong love for her family has just enough ferocity to match her husband, Simon Peter. She even notes in the first episode, after a sweet scene in which they tease each other, "Together, we're perfection." (They really are!)

Eden is also not afraid to call out Simon on his missteps, like when he forsakes their weekly Shabbat dinner to go fishing, or when he waits a month to visit his mother-in-law Dasha (Leticia Magaña).

However, in Season 3, a bit of Eden's light goes out. She suffers a devastating and life-threatening miscarriage while Simon is away on his missionary work. When she finally shares the sad news with him, Simon's faith is shaken. Eden goes on her own quest to cleanse herself so that she and Simon can continue to move forward. In Season 4's finale, she is headed to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover with the group.



Elizabeth Tabish

MARY MAGDALENE

Who doesn't love a good redemption story? *The Chosen* is filled with them, but few are as moving as the very first. When we meet Mary of Magdala, known as Mary Magdalene, she's going by the name Lilit. She's possessed by demons and making many sinful mistakes (like drinking and gambling in Capernaum's bar, the Hammer). It's not until Jesus saves her that she's able to move forward in her life. In Season 3, Mary admits to Matthew that she almost didn't meet Jesus, and was about to end her suffering. "I was going to leap from a great height, when a dove caught my eye," she tells him. "And I couldn't resist following it. And it led me to the place where I met Jesus."

But redemption isn't a one-and-done path. In Season 2, Mary backslides into her old vices, walking away from Jesus and the

other followers to drink in a bar when her doubts surface. It's a relatable story, which actress Tabish attests to, recalling, "It felt like the words coming out of my own mouth: 'I can't live up to this.' And for Jesus to respond, 'You can't expect to be perfect right now. I just want your heart. The Father just wants your heart' felt like it was a direct message to me."

In a Season 4 flash-forward, we see Mary show Matthew some of the stories she's written down. As one of Jesus' most observant followers, Mary acknowledges His suffering after Lazarus' (Demetrios Troy) death and Jesus' stoning in the episode "Dedication." She asks Him where it hurts and He says, "Everywhere. Inside and out." Mary admits she hurts inside too and asks the Messiah why. His reply? "Because you have been listening."

Vanessa Benavente

MOTHER MARY

When we meet Jesus' mother, the Nazarene is already a widow (her husband, Raj Bond's Joseph, died years prior), and as Jesus' sole parent on Earth, she supports her Son as He works to bring His message to the world. Like in Season 1's "The Wedding Gift," when Jesus isn't sure He's ready to perform a miracle—turning water into wine—in a public space. Mary encourages Him as the barrels run dry, asking, "If not now, when?"

In Season 2, Mary tells His followers, "He hasn't needed me for a long time.... As a Jew, I'm excited to see everything He does for our people...but as a mom, it makes me a little sad sometimes."

But Jesus does still need His "eema" ("mother" in Hebrew), especially after exhaustion hits from a day filled with healing. It's Mary who helps Jesus remove His sandals and wipes His sweating brow.





Shaan Sharma

SHMUEL

This is one determined Pharisee. Shmuel traveled far and wide to plead his case against Jesus (Jonathan Roumie), who he believes is spreading false prophecy, to high-ranking religious leaders. In Season 4, the pious rabbi is promoted into the Sanhedrin, the judicial religious body in charge. But what will Shmuel do with his newfound power?

He studied under Nicodemus (Erick Avari), who feels that Shmuel is less focused on serving God than on his own political advancement. However, in

Season 3's finale, Shmuel seems to have a change of heart about Jesus after the feeding of the 5,000.

Shmuel may seem comfortable within the Sanhedrin, even showing his pal Yussif (Ivan Jasso) around when he is also promoted to the Palestine council, but Shmuel's doubts are growing. When he is praised for his role in the execution of John the Baptizer (David Amito), he visibly struggles with guilt. He only wants justice. Could his naysaying about Jesus lead to more blood on his hands?



Ivan Jasso

YUSSIF

A colleague of Shmuel and the Pharisees in Capernaum, Yussif supports Jesus' ministry. In fact, he has been writing down accounts of the amazing things he's witnessed. However, Yussif chooses to keep his work private to protect the Messiah, and in Season 4, the newly promoted rabbi struggles with his place in the Sanhedrin.



Alessandro Colla

JAIRUS

Capernaum's duty-bound synagogue administrator, and close friend of Yussif, is also a believer in Jesus. In Season 3, he begs Jesus to heal his sick daughter. "Come and lay Your hands on her, and she will live," he tells Jesus. But when they arrive at Jairus' home, his daughter Nili (Ella McCain) has died, and the funeral ceremony has begun. Still, Jesus discreetly raises her from the dead, saying, "Little lamb, arise."

Richard Fancy

CAIAPHAS

Viewers first see the High Priest of the Sanhedrin during a meeting of the top religious bosses in Season 4, when the traditional leader acknowledges Jesus as a threat. According to Caiaphas, as religious men they cannot be the ones to get rid of Him. Instead, he suggests that they aid in the entrapment of Jesus—and then let the more blood-thirsty Romans take care of Him once and for all.



Erick Avari

NICODEMUS

Though Pharisee Nicodemus is a primary character in Season 1, he has a minor presence in the Bible. A respected member of the Sanhedrin known as the "teacher of teachers," Nicodemus faces a battle between his head and his heart when he learns of Jesus. He takes his job and faith seriously, which is evident in the series' first episode when he visits Capernaum and is asked to exorcise the possessed "Lilith," aka Mary Magdalene (Elizabeth Tabish). He fails and declares her beyond saving. When he later sees her healed, he's astonished...and very curious.

Once he learns of Jesus' identity, Nicodemus requests a secret meeting,

and the two holy men discuss everything from His healing of Mary Magdalene to the concept of being "born again" into the kingdom of God. Nicodemus has many questions but is genuinely dazzled by Jesus. He tells Him, "I believe You are not acting alone. No one can do these signs You do without having God in Him."

Jesus asks Nicodemus to join Him, but there are several reasons the Pharisee believes he cannot, including his age (his fifth grandchild has just been brought into the world!). Plus, he must consider his wife, Zohara (Janis Dardaris), and his work with the Sanhedrin. In the end, he stays behind.

Romans

Brandon Potter

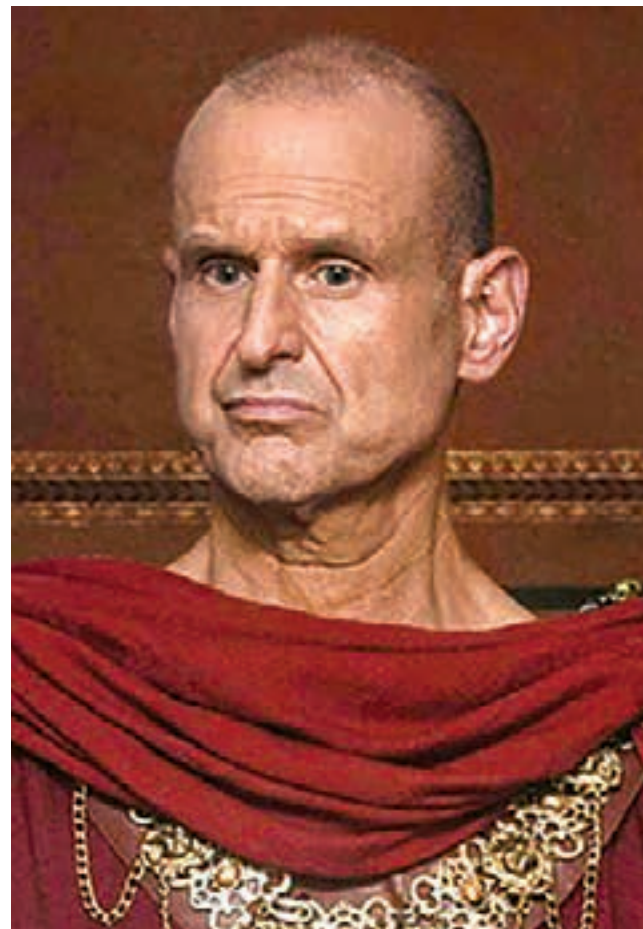
QUINTUS

If there's a redeeming quality to Quintus, Capernaum's former Roman magistrate and onetime Praetor of Galilee, we have yet to see one. The narcissist has a disdain for all, especially Jesus (Jonathan Roumie) and His disciples, and is always looking out for No. 1: himself. As Elijah Alexander's spy Atticus says in Season 2, Quintus is "just about the most detestable guy in all of Galilee." That's putting it lightly.

Quintus can sometimes appreciate others...when they're helping him out. He uttered many an insult at the brilliant Matthew (Paras Patel) but valued Matthew's way of thinking.

"He has this wonderful analytical mind that Quintus was really fascinated by," Potter has said. But he has little affection for Jesus. During their first meeting in Season 2, Quintus tells the Messiah, who was causing crowding in Capernaum, that he likes Him, then threatens, "Don't make me kill You."

In Season 4, Quintus is pushed to his limit. Unsheathing his sword in the crowded square where Jesus was preaching, he slays innocent Ramah (Yasmine Al-Bustami). Quintus almost looked remorseful, but we know he's really sorry when he loses his post and is demoted.



Kirk B.R. Woller

GAIUS

Not all Romans are completely bad, which we find out with this stern yet compassionate centurion, who is promoted to Praetor of Capernaum in Season 4, succeeding Quintus. Originally Matthew's guard outside of the tax collecting window, gruff Gaius shows moments of caring for Matthew's well-being, even counseling his estranged parents after Matthew quits to join Jesus' ministry. "I know some people that were mildly fond of your son," an embarrassed Gaius tells them.

In Season 3, when Capernaum's water supply is contaminated, Gaius and Simon Peter (Shahar Isaac) team up to repair the broken cistern. They bond and realize they share the same knot-tying skills. Later, the Roman shares details of his home life. He's raising a servant's son, whom he fathered. The boy falls ill—and the illness is grave. Gaius calls on Matthew and Simon Peter, admitting that he believes in Jesus. They bring Gaius to Jesus so the Roman can ask for his son to be healed. Gaius falls to his knee. "Lord, I am not worthy to have You come into my home," he tells Jesus. "But You only need to say the word and he will be healed."



Andrew James Allen and Sarah J. Bartholomew

PONTIUS PILATE AND CLAUDIA

Bible readers who are familiar with the Apostles' Creed know it is written that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried."

The young Roman prefect, as he is shown in *The Chosen*, is definitely no mustache-twirling villain—instead, he's a ruthless ruler who is at his most gleeful when causing chaos within the empire. In Season 4's finale, the calculating Pilate casually suggests to King Herod (Paul Ben-Victor) and his court that they murder the recently resurrected Lazarus (Demetrios Troy) and

smiles when he sees the others' thoughtful consideration.

Meanwhile, Pilate's wife, Claudia, is questioning everything around her. When we meet her, we learn that she is having terrible dreams involving a snake and the sleeping Jesus and Apostles. She tries to counsel her husband on his excessive behavior, particularly crucifying Jews, but he won't listen. In Season 4, she confesses to Joanna that she wishes she believed in something as strongly as others believe in Jesus.

Elijah Alexander

ATTICUS

Oozing a fierce strength, the sly cohortes urbanae—a spy sent from Rome to track the Zealots, including Simon Z (Alaa Safi)—is impacted when he witnesses a Jesus miracle. He decides to keep an eye on Jesus and the Apostles, often reporting the Messiah's latest moves directly to Pilate. Did the mysterious Atticus really see Jesus walking on water in Season 3's finale? What we do know, is this: Atticus is personally interested in Jesus and His disciples, and not above helping them out when it serves his own interests.



THE BREAD OF LIFE

JESUS' ULTIMATE SACRIFICE LOOMS AS SEASON 5 RECOUNTS THE EVENTS OF HOLY WEEK, STARTING WITH HIS JUBILANT RIDE INTO JERUSALEM

BY EMILY ASLANIAN



Dinner is (finally) served: Jesus and His Apostles sit down for the Last Supper

There are only 15 days left of filming on Season 5 of *The Chosen*, the Bible-based historical drama that has shaken up how people from around the globe, and from all types of religions, perceive Jesus and His time on Earth. And from the air-conditioned soundstage that houses the all-new Season 5 sets (see page 26 to explore more) in Midlothian, Texas, the cast is humming with excitement at what's still to come. It's Wednesday, and on Friday, they'll be entering the upper room to shoot the Last Supper, the most legendary meal in history.

It's such an important moment that the Holy Week-centered season, which begins a four-week, eight-episode rollout in theaters on March 27, is being called *The Chosen: Last Supper*. Deliberate thought and heart will be put into each precious shot of the dinner. "I think we were all a little nervous about [constructing the upper room]," admits production designer James R. Cunningham during the set tour. "Everybody knows what the Last Supper is, no matter what religion you come from."

But series creator Dallas Jenkins intends to break your preconceived notions on the major

meal. "Typically when [anyone] thinks of the Last Supper, they think of da Vinci's painting, and it's a bunch of white guys eating leavened bread all on one side of a table. None of that is accurate," Jenkins explains to the group of journalists gathered in a scenic garden atrium constructed for Season 5. "This was an intimate moment. There's a lot of tradition, a lot of routine and the Jewishness of that moment is very important."

At that point in time, the disciples still don't understand what is about to happen to Jesus (Jonathan Roumie), and they each have a dif-

ferent idea of what the Messiah is trying to impart to them about His impending Crucifixion. We know from the Bible that they won't fully understand Jesus' foreshadowing until after His Resurrection. "It was 13 people in a room dealing with pain, surrender, sadness, hope and betrayal all at once—and we're going to take our time with [that]," Jenkins continues. "We're taking this down from [da Vinci's] painting, and it's going to be about 13 human beings who are really going through every range of emotion."

Continues ▶



Isaac's Simon Peter delivers a sermon in Season 5 that doesn't go so well for him

But before they reach that upper room, they must first enter the Holy City of Jerusalem on what is now called Palm Sunday. The triumphal entry will be an exuberant celebration, as Jesus humbly rides a donkey through the Golden Gate, with his disciples trailing behind. Over 600 fans traveled to be background extras for the moment, which took up the first three weeks of shooting in Utah. And while the show has incorporated a massive crowd of fans into large-scale scenes before (the Sermon on the Mount and the feeding of the 5,000), this was on another level for the show's crew, due to the length of time the extras stuck around. "Walking in, I wasn't aware of the jubilation that would be surrounding us," says Noah James, who plays dedicated disciple Andrew, of shooting the entrance. It's before 9am, and

we're sitting on the decadent set that serves as Pontius Pilate's (Andrew James Allen) quarters. James' face lights up at the memory of filming it in the spring. "I was just really moved, and it was an incredible way to start the season." Later, Reza Diako, who plays disciple Philip, relates that the moment "felt like when the Backstreet Boys and One Direction were touring during their prime, but a 1st A.D. version, with leaves flying in the air."

"Being surrounded by so many people, you feel the air buzzing" adds Shahar Isaac, who plays disciple leader Simon Peter. "Everywhere you look, you see this wave of attention. It was palpable. You could really feel the tension in the air." And though the moment is a happy one, that tension is very present, confirms Elizabeth Tabish (Mary Magdalene), who

points out to us that "this is the beginning of the end."

Indeed, Jesus' ride into Jerusalem kick-starts Holy Week, the period of time outlined in the Bible to include tentpole moments like Jesus' cleansing of the temple, Judas' betrayal, the Last Supper, Jesus' arrest, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Season 5 will conclude before the Crucifixion, which will be the focus of the sixth season, while the planned-out seventh installment covers the Resurrection and the days after. As usual, *The Chosen* will also deliver non-Bible scenes to fill in gaps in the timeline, like a failed sermon that Simon Peter gives, which has been teased for Season 5.

"One of my favorite songs is from Johnny Cash, 'God's Gonna Cut You Down,'" Jenkins says while discussing this season's theme. "Obviously, Season 6, we know, is going to be devastating. I'm not going to sugarcoat it. But Season 5, before things start to turn, we get to see a Jesus that we haven't explored a whole lot. We get to see Jesus stir some things up. We get to see Jesus topple down some of the structures and the people that are used to their power. And so that phrase, 'God's gonna cut you down,' it's not from Scripture, but I think it makes a nice theme for Season 5."

As Cash croons "what's done in the dark will be brought to the light," we can't help but agree. The powerful image of Jesus standing before the temple with a whip in His right hand was one of the first glimpses fans saw of this year's episodes. Roumie worked with a Hollywood whip trainer to prepare for the cleansing of the temple scenes, which will see Jesus crack the whip and flip tables while reprimanding the Pharisees within. "You're going to see some pretty amazing things that you've never really seen Jesus do before in this season," admits Roumie during our solo interview on another part of the set. "There's a lot that people haven't seen [before onscreen]—the emotional sides of Jesus, the intensity of those emotions that nobody's ever quite captured on film before, and it's all biblically justified."

For His followers, however, Jesus' anger in the temple is terrifying. "It's a shock for all the disciples," says Tabish. "Something is not right. He's almost baiting the Pharisees to punish Him. There's this confusion of, 'Does he want this to happen?'"

That's the question on the perceptive Mary Magdalene's mind, at least. She's the first one Jesus healed in Episode 1, and she'll be the one to discover the stone taken away from Jesus'

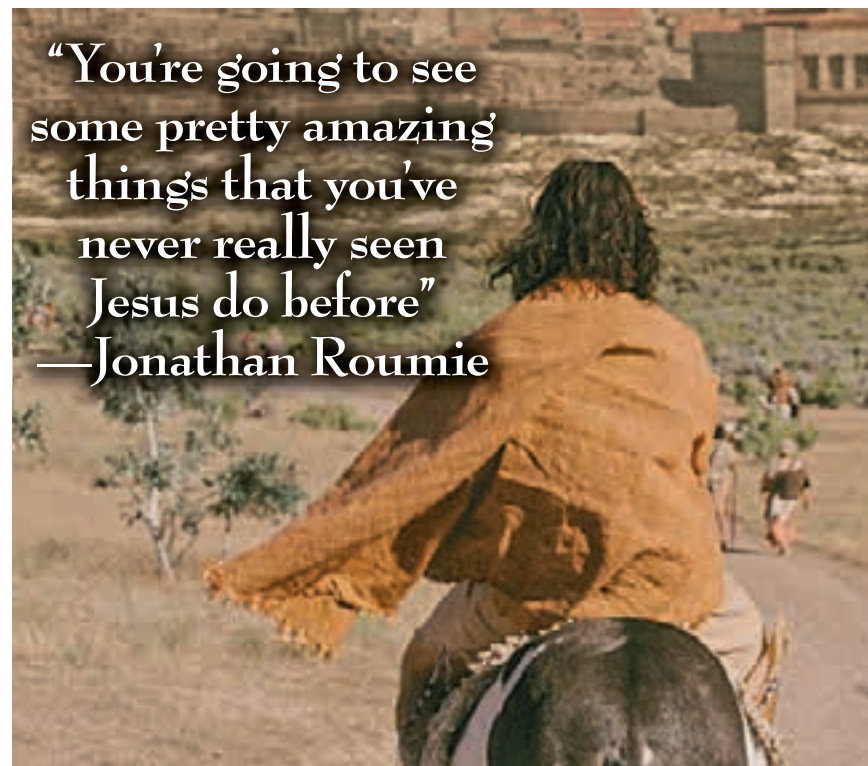
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King Herod (Paul Ben-Victor) with Queen Herodias (Shereen Khan)



Roumie's Jesus in the Season 4 finale before His ride into Jerusalem



"You're going to see some pretty amazing things that you've never really seen Jesus do before"
—Jonathan Roumie

Season 5 Preview



Friend or foe: What is Roman spy Atticus (Elijah Alexander, center) up to?

tomb on Resurrection day. As Jesus notes in Season 4, Mary has been “paying attention,” more than others. “Mary keeps seeing that Jesus is troubled,” Tabish says. “He’s a man of sorrows, and I think she’s catching on to [the idea that] things are not always as they seem. Everybody’s celebrating [during His entrance into Jerusalem], but what’s it going to look like in a week?”

Meanwhile, Apostle Judas (Luke Dimyan) will be incensed by Jesus’ latest move against the wealthy Pharisees. Says Jenkins: “We start to see at the end of Season 4, Judas is thinking, ‘Hey, we might actually have some good things going on, some unifying here.’ [But] Jesus is not here to unify. You can imagine the people who are hoping for unification in order to defeat the Romans, how that is going to affect them.”

Jesus’ actions in the temple trickle into every subsequent move made this season by all the major players who stand to oppose Him—Judas, self-righteous High Priest Caiaphas (Richard Fancy), Roman King Herod Antipas (Paul Ben-Victor), mysterious spy Atticus (Elijah Alexander) and even the troublemaking Pontius Pilate. “Pilate is responsible for the biggest indecision in the history of the world,” Jenkins says. “We want to show [viewers] why he would be undecided about [Jesus]. We spend some time in Pilate’s chambers and with his wife [Claudia, played by Sarah J. Bartholomew].”



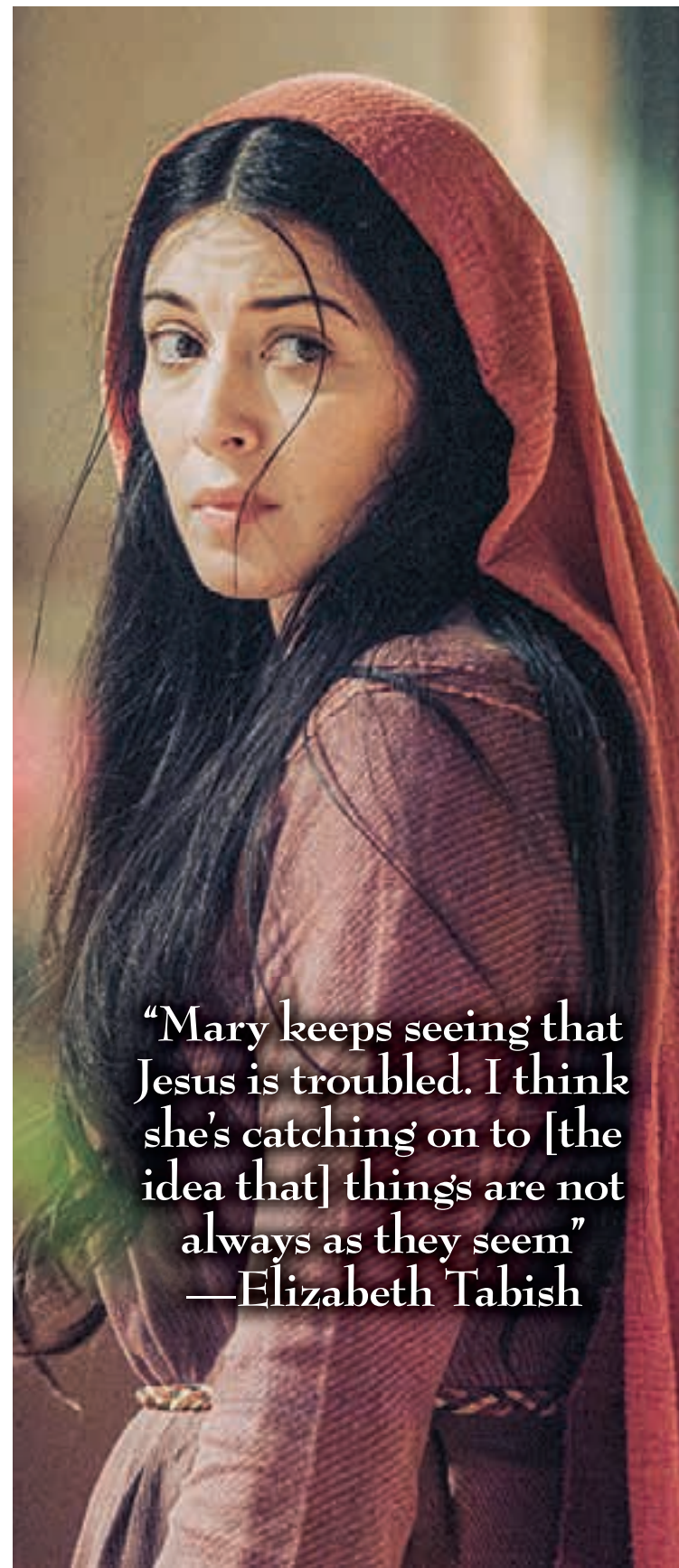
Dimyan’s Judas “officially breaks bad” this season, confirms Jenkins

Pilate and Claudia’s home, as well as Caiaphas’—where Jesus’ trial takes place in the sixth season—were expanded for Season 5, and touring the newly decorated rooms serves as a reminder of how much still stands to change on *The Chosen* before this season’s harrowing conclusion.

In Season 4’s finale, Jesus tried again to prepare His followers for the next seven days:

“No matter what happens this week, no matter what you see or feel or think or do, I want you to know that in this world, I loved you as My own. And I will love you till the end.”

That message should carry fans through the distressing moments ahead—that His love perseveres. And as if to drive the point firmly home, as we leave the set late in the afternoon, a rainbow appears in the Texas sky.



“Mary keeps seeing that Jesus is troubled. I think she’s catching on to [the idea that] things are not always as they seem”
—Elizabeth Tabish

Bible Study

THE GOOD WORD



READ THESE THREE BIBLE PASSAGES BEFORE HOLY WEEK GRACES YOUR SCREENS

Matthew 21: 12–17

The moment where Jesus cleanses the temple marks a major turning point for the Messiah. In Matthew, it’s recounted as such: “Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ‘It is written,’ he said to them, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’” Then, it’s written that the blind and lame approached Jesus in the temple for healing.

Matthew 23

The Scripture here highlights something we’re sure to see Jesus continue to do in *The Chosen*, which is to warn others of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. This well-known section of the Bible is when Jesus condemns all that the Pharisees are doing wrong, and He calls them a “brood of vipers.” He also highlights seven woes, which begin with: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.”

Matthew 26: 17–29

During the Last Supper, Jesus tells the Apostles that one of them will betray Him. They all ask “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?” And He also, yet again, foreshadows His death with the bread and cup. After, He says: “I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

Enrich your understanding with *The Chosen’s* season-by-season interactive Bible study books (inset), available on thechosen.tv.

THE LAND OF PLENTY

WE VISITED
THE CHOSEN'S
SEASON 5 SET TO
SEE HOW THE
CREW MAKES
MIRACLES

BY EMILY ASLANIAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUSTIN CLEMONS

Located 25 miles southwest of Dallas, Midlothian, which has a population of over 5,000, has been *The Chosen*'s home since 2022



TV GUIDE MAGAZINE
Deputy Editor
Emily Aslanian
toured the set
in July 2024

It's a hot day in the middle of July and a select group of journalists are taking a walking tour of Capernaum. At least, it feels like we could be in the Middle East—it's a scorching 94 degrees!—but we're really on *The Chosen*'s 80,000-square-foot Midlothian, Texas, set, located at the Salvation Army's Camp Hoblitzelle. The massive compound is only part of the Bible-based historical drama's home (the series also shoots in Goshen, Utah, where Season 5 filming began with the triumphal entry in spring 2024).

But in the Lone Star State, our cluster of reporters and camera operators get to see the two large soundstages and the expansive backlot that serves as the home for Capernaum (erected in 2021, it has been transformed from the small fishing village into the bustling city of Jerusalem for Season 5), the Sanhedrin temple where the Pharisees gather and other spots avid viewers will recognize. Across from the city set is the shining lake

that becomes the Sea of Galilee. Walking through the lush scenery feels like stepping back in time.

"We were looking for a place where we could capture the essence of the Middle Eastern locales where Jesus' ministry took place," said *The Chosen* President Brad Pelo in 2022. "When we saw this site and the wide open spaces with rolling hills, we knew it was the place to become our home for years to come." You could say they chose to build their house on a rock.

In addition to familiar areas, the press party was offered glimpses into the fifth season's new sets—from High Priest Caiaphas' (Richard Fancy) ornate office to the colorful home of a mysterious new Greek, Phoebe (whose casting was not announced at press time).

Production designer James R. Cunningham, who has worked on the drama since 2018, is responsible for every intricate setting, from building entire city blocks to stuffing bookshelves with dozens of scrolls. Each time,

Cunningham and the crew raise the stakes. "[Season 5] is a big season for us," he says outside of Soundstage 1, before leading us through a hallway that opens into a decorated garden atrium. "Every set was brand-new, except for Lazarus' [house], but we had to redo that, so it felt brand-new."

Part of Laz's Bethany-based home, says Cunningham, was used to create more rooms for Pontius Pilate (Andrew James Allen). Building and rebuilding is just one way the scrappy series—which is partially financed through crowdfunding and fan donations—keeps costs down. Even in its fifth season, it's not hard to imagine that's helpful when the ambitious hours ahead feature more of the Holy City and its wealthy inhabitants than ever before.

Initial designs for the 55 new sets and locations began in October 2023, construction started in February 2024 and, by July, over 100 crew members were on their final two weeks. Still, they were busily painting, sawing and

hammering away at iconic spots, like the upper room where the Last Supper takes place, a spot that Cunningham says has already been through five different stages of design. "It's a race to the finish on that one," he admits.

But what surprised us the most? While the team tries its best to source authentic materials, Cunningham also shops at HomeGoods, Target and Walmart. "[There are] a lot of things we have to buy, and everything gets touched," the designer explains. "We either have to paint it or age it, so we always want anything that we put on to look handmade or like it would back in the 1st century." That means sewing lots of tassels onto curtains and spray-painting furniture to look weathered, or more ornate, depending on the situation. Sounds pretty miraculous.

Over the next few pages, we've provided a few snapshots of what it's like to explore the epic hit's Texas sets. So, as they like to say on *The Chosen*...come and see.



Phoebe's Home

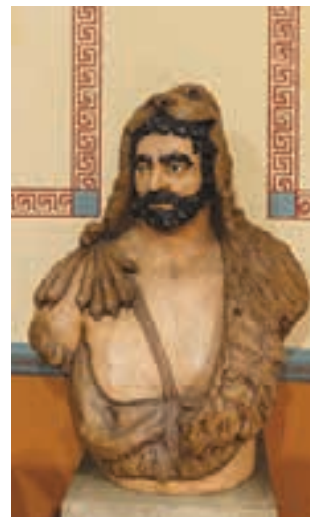
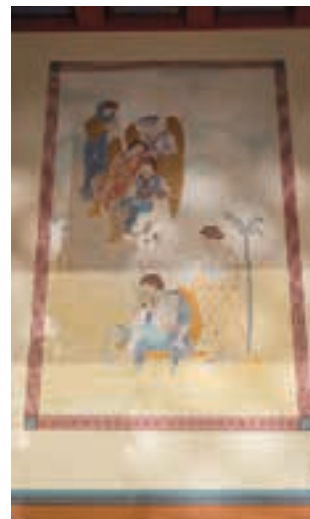


▶ A Greek woman, Phoebe, will help house Jesus and His disciples in Jerusalem, Cunningham explains. "We modeled her whole house off of ancient Greek architecture and colors." Beds from India didn't arrive in time, so the crew improvised. "[These are] little twin beds we found on Amazon; we painted them and added fabric," says Cunningham. "Sometimes shipping is our biggest foe."

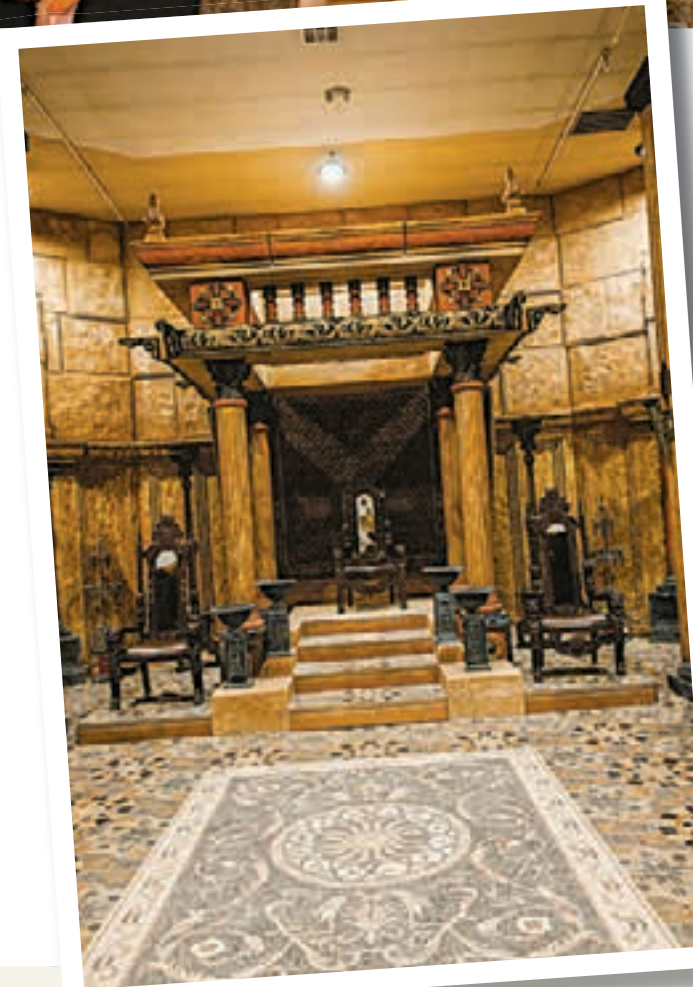
▶ The scenes on the frescoes that adorn the walls were taken from Greek pottery by a graphic designer and free-hand painted by crew.

▶ Some of the smaller props come from on-line retailers like Etsy, but Cunningham also says "a lot of the pottery is from Greece."

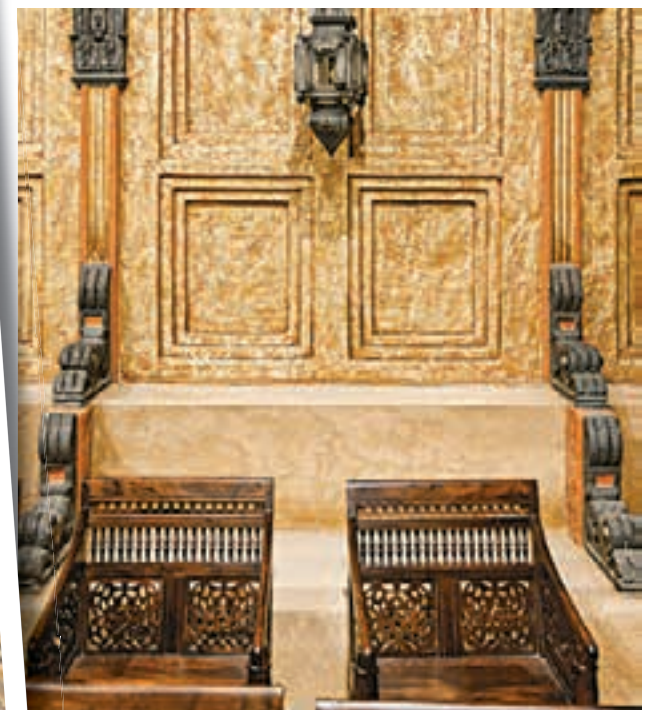
▶ "Within the last 20 years, [historians] found that all the statues in the ancient world were painted," Cunningham notes, while admiring this hand-painted bust of Hercules. Why paint them? To make gods and demi-gods appear more relatable to human worshippers.



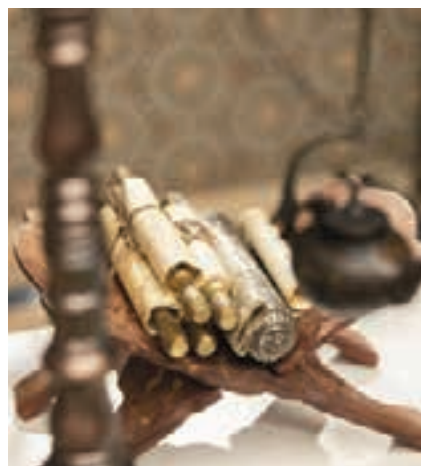
The Sanhedrin



The set for the temple that houses the Jewish judicial court is air-conditioned—a blissful getaway from the constructed city's hot streets—though the noisy A/C gets turned off while filming. Beneath the tiles on the floor (these tiles were picked because of their similarity to what was excavated from the real-life temple's site) is an entire passage written in Hebrew.



Caiaphas' Office



▲ High Priest Caiaphas is not a friend of Jesus'—and we'll see much more from the religious elder as he continues to threaten His safety. Caiaphas' office, explains Cunningham, will serve as a spot "where people would come together to talk about ideas, especially religious [ones]."



▲ Originally featuring a dining room and a larger library, this space was redesigned for Season 5—and beyond. "Jesus' actual trial took place in the home of Caiaphas," Cunningham says. "I had to think ahead to [Season 6] to make sure that we had a big enough space for the trial to take place."

▶ "I actually think this is my favorite set," says Cunningham of the room that features what he called "subdued" colors to match the High Priest's personality, as well as a massive wall of scrolls.

▶ For this space, they looked to other cultures, namely Indian, Moroccan and Turkish architecture, for inspiration.



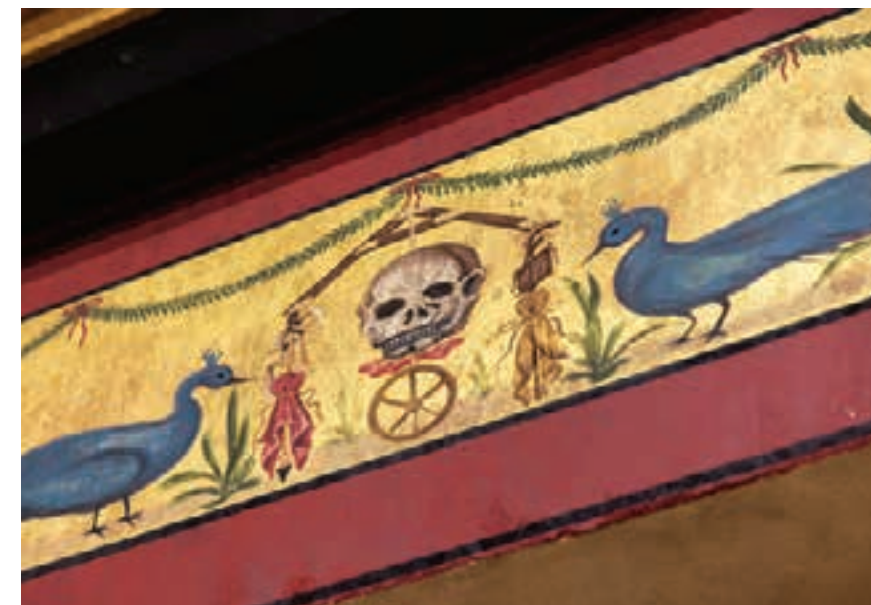
Pilate's Quarters



▲ Pilate's bookshelves are stacked with enough reading material for an entire city. "We do a lot of scrolls—it's probably a little overambitious for what was actual back in the day," Cunningham admits. Across multiple sets, "We have over 2,000 scrolls that my team [pre-rolled]," he notes, adding with a laugh: "We order a lot of paper."

▲ In the foyer, which leads to Pilate's office, a heavy fiberglass statue of the founder of the Roman Empire, Caesar Augustus, stands tall. "[The Romans] considered him a god at this point, and so they oftentimes would have him in their spaces," Cunningham notes. The statue itself is from China and took three months to ship, before it was painted. Snakes above the doors, he adds, symbolized "good luck and prosperity."

▼ This painting above the door to Pilate and Claudia's (Sarah J. Bartholomew) bedroom bears a hidden message. "Because Claudia is a bit of a troubled soul, that is the classic life and death of the Roman culture," says Cunningham of the scene, depicting two dresses tied up and a skull in the middle. "The point was that nobody escapes death," he says. "Whether you're poor or rich, you're always under the guise of destiny."



HEAVEN SENT

THE CHOSEN'S LEADING MAN JONATHAN ROUMIE ON JESUS' SEASON 5 JOURNEY AND CRACKING THE WHIP

BY EMILY ASLANIAN

HAVE YOU MET Jesus? Well, we've met actor Jonathan Roumie, which feels pretty close to the real deal. Though he's quick to point out that he is not, in fact, the Son of God, the gracious star of *The Chosen* has given fans all around the world the gift of one of the most well-rounded portrayals of Jesus in TV and movie history. He jokes with the Apostles, He dances at weddings, He plays ball—and we want to follow Him. We also see the anguish behind His eyes at what's to come. Like the olive in the press, Jesus feels the weight of the world, and in Season 5, that pressure continues to squeeze.

Roumie takes the daunting task of portraying Jesus' Crucifixion onscreen seriously, and though Season 5 will only take the series as far as the Garden of Gethsemane, it's always looming. But as we sat down with Roumie in July 2024 on the Midlothian, Texas, set, his spirits were high. The Catholic convert celebrated his 50th birthday earlier that week and had recently returned to the Season 5 set after spending time with his family.

And how could life be anything but good? Aside from starring on the mega-hit, Roumie was awarded an honorary doctor of fine arts degree for his dedication to his faith in March 2024. He's met the Pope on more than one occasion and been nominated for a papal knighthood. "It can be surreal at times," he told TV GUIDE MAGAZINE in 2023. "[Playing Jesus has] completely deepened my faith and affected my relationship with God. It makes me want to be a better version of myself and the best human being possible. I've been put here to play this character for a reason, I believe. And if that's to allow people to get closer to their faith and to develop a relationship with God, what more could I ask for as an actor?"

Roumie talks about picking up the whip and teases the drama to come.

You recently turned 50, but you play Jesus in His thirties so convincingly that most people watching don't even realize that there's a nearly 20-year age gap. What's your secret? I don't think of myself as a particular number. I don't feel my age. I think, biologically, I'm probably much younger. I think it's what allows me to pass as the age of the character. So I think God knew what He was doing. [Laughs] You know, I live a pretty clean lifestyle, so I think that's all helped, and genetics help as well.

I'm grateful that I get to play this role, which has been one of the most impactful and incredible roles an actor can ever play. It's one of the most complex I think anybody could ever play. So I feel very, very fortunate.

There are some heavy scenes coming up in Season 5. Jesus is going to lose His temper, and we'll see the cleansing of the temple from Scripture. Did you have to do any whip training for those scenes? I did. I trained with a legendary whip master named Anthony De Longis, who trained Harrison Ford for one of the Indiana Jones films [2008's *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal*



Series creator Dallas Jenkins (left) with Roumie

Skull] and Michelle Pfeiffer for *Batman Returns*. Once I knew that there was some whip craft needed for Season 5, I wanted to make sure that I knew what I was doing, and I didn't injure myself. I spent a lot of time with [the whip], and it's now a new passion and a hobby. I love it.

What's going on in Jesus' head when He picks up that whip in *The Chosen*? I think He's calling out injustice. He's at the limit of his tolerance for injustice because of how the poorest of the poor are being treated by the so-called religious authorities. And He, being the ultimate religious authority, calls them out, and He calls them out in a way that irrevocably changes His fate on Earth. So that's something that's just been really a joy to get to play.

You're most of the way through shooting the fifth season. What is your mindset in terms of preparing for the Crucifixion in Season 6?

It's getting closer and closer. We're literally on the doorsteps of the Crucifixion scenes and narratively, chronologically, we're within 24 hours of that coming to fulfillment. And so, I have to start thinking about it a little bit now. **Meanwhile, Jesus is still trying to explain what's going to happen to His disciples—and it's not going well.** Our conversations in Season 5 mostly are centered around Jesus trying to impress upon the somewhat hapless disciples the gravity of what is to come in the next several days [seen] throughout the season, and them wrestling with not actually quite getting it. He's really trying to speak very plainly, and it's just not registering. And it doesn't, as we know from Scripture, quite register until the Resurrection.

RIGHT: PAUL ARCHULETA/GETTY IMAGES



10 HEALING OF SHULA AND BARNABY

SEASON 3, EPISODE 6

Jesus (Jonathan Roumie) heals many over the duration of the series, but one of the sweetest is this third-season moment when he cures old pals Shula and Barnaby (Anne Beyer and Aalok Mehta, right). “You have so much to do, Rabbi,” Shula says, explaining why she never asked Him to heal her blindness before. “So many people need you more.” And yet, Jesus heals her—and Barnaby’s leg—in the joyous scene.



TOP 10 MIRACULOUS MOMENTS

RANKING THE DRAMA’S MOST ASTOUNDING SCENES
BY EMILY ASLANIAN



8 HEALING OF GAIUS’ SON

SEASON 4, EPISODE 4

Like the story of the faith of the centurion in Matthew 8: 5–13, Roman Gaius (Kirk B.R. Woller, above right, with Roumie) is brought before Jesus to ask Him for help. But here, the sick servant he asks Jesus to heal is also Gaius’ illegitimate son. “Lord,” says the kneeling Praetor of Capernaum, “I am not worthy to have You come into my home. But You only need to say the word, and he will be healed.” Amazed at his incredible faith, Jesus cures the boy from afar.



7 HEALING OF VERONICA

SEASON 3, EPISODE 5

Veronica (Zhaleh Vossough, above), an outcast from Caesarea Philippi, was shunned after an illness caused her to bleed for 12 years. When we meet her, she is convinced that the smallest touch from Jesus will end her ailment, and brushes her hand across His garment in the crowded street. Jesus senses her healing and calls out, “Who touched me?” She tells her story, and He understands. “Go now in peace,” He says. “Your faith has made you well.”



9 HEALING THE PARALYTIC IN CAPERNAUM

SEASON 1, EPISODE 6

Disciple Tamar (Amber Shana Williams) makes a big entrance here when, after seeing Jesus cure a leper on the road, she is determined to bring her friend Ethan (Noé de la Garza, center), paralyzed since childhood, to Him. But it’s harder than it sounds: Jesus is preaching inside a home, and all the entryways are blocked by people. So, she has Ethan lowered through the roof. Jesus heals the man, and adds: “I say to you, My son, rise, pick up your bed and go home.”

6 TURNING WATER TO WINE

SEASON 1, EPISODE 5

This well-known Gospel of John story occurs when Jesus is attending a wedding in Cana with his mother, Mary (Vanessa Benavente). It’s Mary who asks Jesus to help when the wine runs out. “Everyone, please step outside,” Jesus announces to the room before getting to work. Plunging his hand into the water basin, Jesus lifts his hand, and it is dripping red wine. This miracle leads to two new disciples: Thomas (Joey Vahedi) and Ramah (Yasmine Al-Bustami).





4 MIRACLE OF THE FISH

SEASON 1, EPISODE 4

After a long night of fishing with nothing to show for it, Simon (Shahar Isaac) and his brother Andrew (Noah James) encounter Jesus on the shore. He tells them to “put [the net] down for a catch.” Andrew rushes to obey, but Simon doubts. They throw it in, and the boat nearly capsizes from the swell of fish. After seeing his error, Simon falls at Jesus’ feet. “I’m sorry,” he sobs. “We waited for You for so long, we believed, but my faith...anything you ask, I will do.”



5 HEALING AT BETHESDA

SEASON 2, EPISODE 4

Hopeless paralytic Jesse (Dennis Apergis, above, with Roumie), injured after falling from a tree as a child, meets Jesus after many years of sorrow trying to heal himself at the Pool of Bethesda, a powerful spring. “Do you want to be healed?” Jesus asks. “You don’t need this pool. You only need Me.” Jesus heals the emotional Jesse, while disciple John (George H. Xanthis) scrawls the story in his notebook for his future Gospel.

3 FEEDING OF THE 5,000

SEASON 3, EPISODE 8

The Son of God preaches under the hot sun for hours, and as captivated as His audience may be, they still need nourishment. With just five loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus (Roumie, right, with Alaa Safi’s disciple Simon Z) multiplies the food in front of the disbelieving disciples, feeding the 5,000. Thomas, who was present for Jesus turning water into wine, notes, “This feels familiar.” And Jesus cheekily admits, “Maybe.”



2 RAISING LAZARUS

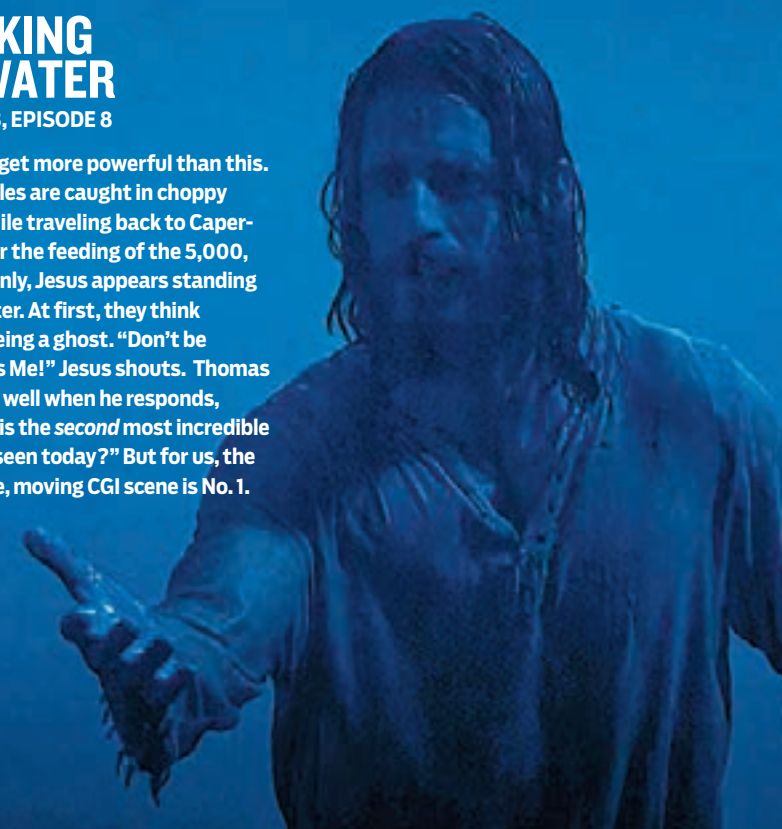
SEASON 4, EPISODE 7

Jesus is devastated at the news of his oldest friend Lazarus’ (Demetrios Troy) death. He returns to Bethany for His last and greatest public miracle. “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” Jesus says to Lazarus’ sister Martha (Sophia Blum, above, third from left), who tells Jesus that her brother has been dead for four days. “Your only priority in this moment is faith,” he adds. The stone blocking the tomb is removed, and Lazarus steps out.

1 WALKING ON WATER

SEASON 3, EPISODE 8

It doesn’t get more powerful than this. The Apostles are caught in choppy waters while traveling back to Capernaum after the feeding of the 5,000, and suddenly, Jesus appears standing on the water. At first, they think they’re seeing a ghost. “Don’t be afraid—it’s Me!” Jesus shouts. Thomas sums it up well when he responds, “How is this the *second* most incredible thing I’ve seen today?” But for us, the impressive, moving CGI scene is No. 1.





THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST (2004)

Is there a more rousing re-creation of the Resurrection than the victorious moment from director Mel Gibson's controversial film? Following the harrowing Stations of the Cross sequence that divided audiences with its brutal authenticity, we see the silhouette of a stone being rolled in front of the tomb's entry and then away from it as light floods the space, casting a beam across the now empty Shroud of Turin. As composer John Debney's orchestral score swells, the camera pans to the beatific face of a risen Jesus (Jim Caviezel, left). As Christians know, even that is not the end of the story, and Gibson has announced plans to explore the aftermath of this miracle with his in-production 2026 sequel, *The Resurrection of the Christ*. —Damian Holbrook

"Don't be afraid. I am with you every day to the end of time"
—Jesus of Nazareth



RISEN (2016)

Seeing is believing for Roman tribune Clavius (Joseph Fiennes, above), who is tasked with recovering the missing body of Yeshua (the Hebrew name for Jesus, played by Cliff Curtis) before rumors of a resurrected Messiah cause an uprising. While the biblical event is not depicted onscreen, the shock and awe Clavius feels when he finds Yeshua sitting among His followers is palpable. It sends Clavius down a path of curiosity over the inexplicable events unfolding before him. —Meaghan Darwish

HE HAS RISEN

THESE EIGHT ONSCREEN RESURRECTIONS ARE MOVING AND WORTH THE WATCH



A.D. THE BIBLE CONTINUES (2015)

A sequel to 2013's *The Bible*, this dramatic series from Mark Burnett and Roma Downey begins with the Resurrection and goes on to depict the first 10 chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. In the premiere, a mighty rumble shakes the earth as an otherworldly being rolls away the stone from the tomb of Jesus (Juan Pablo Di Pace, above). Christ appears to Mary Magdalene and His stunned Apostles, asking, "Can't you believe your own eyes.... Blessed are they who have not seen Me and still believe." —Lisa Chambers



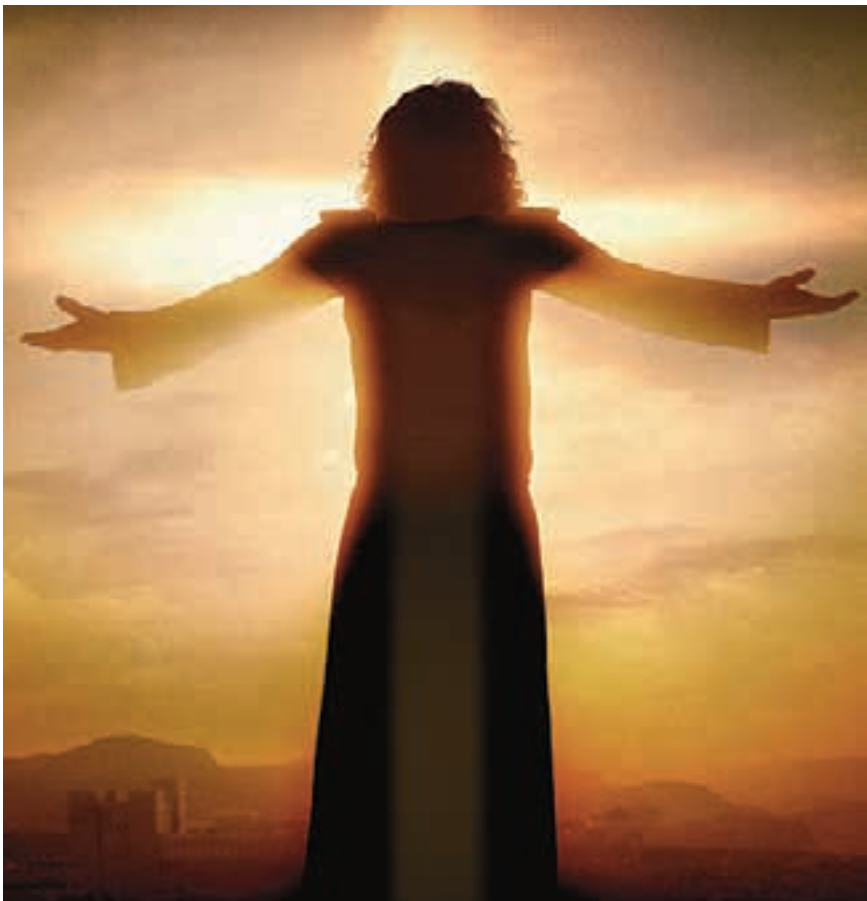
THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD (1965)

Faithful to the Gospels to the end, the reverent 1965 film biography of Jesus (Max von Sydow, above) reveals the Messiah to his disciples in a euphoric climax accompanied by Handel's

"Hallelujah" chorus. Jesus emerges from the clouds, clad in a white robe, with stigmata visible on His hands as He issues His final commands ("Make it your first care to love

one another and to find the kingdom of God") before vanishing in a beam of light, declaring, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." —Matt Roush

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PURSUIT OF TRUTH; LD ENTERTAINMENT/AFFIRM FILMS/COLUMBIA PICTURES; GEORGE STEVENS; NBC/ED GARDNER



RESURRECTION (2021)

Hope doesn't die on the cross! Executive producers Roma Downey and Mark Burnett used footage from their sprawling 10-part miniseries *The Bible* for this big-budget film celebrating the events surrounding the Crucifixion of Jesus (Juan Pablo Di Pace, above). His rise from the sepulchre is shown as a blessed event preceded by a glorious light in the night sky witnessed by the faithful and fallen alike. The story then follows his Apostles' efforts to spread the word of the Lord after His ascension. —DH



MARY MAGDALENE (2018)

Resistant to the path laid out for most women of her time, Mary Magdalene (Rooney Mara, right) rejects the idea of marriage and motherhood to follow Jesus (Joaquin Phoenix) in this gorgeously shot movie. The story highlights her pivotal role as His “apostle of apostles” and the first to see Jesus resurrected. The sequence demonstrates the deep bond between them and prompts Mary later to set out to spread His word. As the movie's tagline promises, “Her Story Will Be Told.” —MD



JESUS OF NAZARETH (1977)

Franco Zeffirelli's historical and Gospel-based NBC miniseries depicts the Christ story from His supernatural birth to the Resurrection. In the emotional final scenes, Mary Magdalene (Anne Bancroft) reveals the good news to the disciples, followed by the risen Jesus—played

by British actor Robert Powell (above)—quietly assuring them: “Don't be afraid. I am with you every day to the end of time.” With a religiously sensitive script, the film earned critical praise and huge ratings. —Ileane Rudolph

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MGM/LIGHTWORKERS; NBC/EVERETT COLLECTION; WARNER BROS.; JONATHAN OLLEY/© IFC FILMS/EVERETT COLLECTION



BEN HUR (1959)

The Oscar-winning epic, subtitled “A Life of the Christ,” stops short of the Resurrection but foreshadows the miracle as Judah Ben-Hur (Charlton Heston, left) and wise man Balthazar (Finlay Currie) mournfully witness the Crucifixion, which Balthazar describes as “the beginning.” In the ensuing fierce storm, Ben-Hur's mother and sister are cured of leprosy, and Ben-Hur reveals, “I felt His voice taking the sword out of my hand.” The final shot depicts the empty crosses atop the hill of Calvary. —MR



▶ Jonathan Roumie with the child actors of Season 1's "Jesus Loves the Little Children." The third episode was actually the first the actor shot. "The kids are the first folks that I worked with," he recalls, "so that was really cool."

BEHIND THE SCENES



▶ Roumie (in Season 1's "The Wedding Gift" here) has been pretending to be Jesus since he was a preteen. After seeing Robert Powell's 1977 TV miniseries *Jesus of Nazareth*, Roumie says with a laugh, "I was inspired to basically build my own life-size crucifix in my backyard."



▶ "This is probably the hardest scene we filmed in [Season 1]," said creator Dallas Jenkins about the healing of the paralytic in "Indescribable Compassion." Shot over five days in July 2019, the scene—in which Ethan (Noé de la Garza, center) is lowered through a roof—was a "massive puzzle piece."

▶ Jenkins directs and co-writes each episode, but he refuses to let the show's success go to his head. "When we were on the set of Season 1, there was nobody watching," he says. "We have to make sure nothing changes now that there's millions of people watching."



▶ Season 2 opened with a flash-forward depicting the Apostles (like Shahar Isaac's Simon Peter, above) as they told the stories of how they each met Jesus. Born in Israel, Isaac grew up near Capernaum, where his character is also from.



▶ In the sophomore season's "Reckoning," Jesus meets magistrate Quintus (Brandon Potter, in gold). The Roman was written as a drunken party boy, but the character evolved when Potter took the role. Now, "Quintus will never stop clawing his way to the top," Potter says.



▶ Aala Safi, aka former assassin and Zealot Simon Z, is a professional stuntman with a martial arts background, so that's really him viewers see in action. He's worked with Jackie Chan, and on such films as Marvel's *Doctor Strange* and 2023's *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*.



▲ The Season 3 finale ended with a standout miracle: Jesus walking on water. Above, Isaac (second from right, standing) prepares to balance not just his emotions, but his body, for the pivotal scene, in which his Simon tries to join Jesus on the water. “We ended up getting blue floaties from, like, Walmart,” Jenkins (front center, in wetsuit) said of the scene, which shot in Louisiana inside a blue-screen tank with real water. The only problem? The water was so loud that the actors had to rerecord their dialogue after shooting.

BEHIND THE SCENES



▶ Catherine Lidstone auditioned twice—first in Season 2 and again in Season 3—before booking her role as Mary of Bethany for the fourth round. “I thought they’d made a mistake,” she told the crowd with a laugh during ChosenCon 2024. “[I thought,] there’s no Marys left! What are they talking about?”



▶ Jenkins has the utmost respect for his star, Roumie (seen here in Season 4). “There’s a presence about [Jonathan],” he says, “something in his eyes that makes you think, ‘This guy is someone I want to be around.’”



▶ Day one of Season 5 filming, and the Apostles are already goofing around. The first scene they shot on their return to the Midlothian, Texas, set was the entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. “That whole day was literally just the procession,” explains Noah James (far right, with George H. Xanthis and Abe Bueno-Jallad).

▶ Jesus and some of His disciples take a breather outside of Lazarus’ tomb during Season 4 filming. From left: Austin Reed Alleman (Nathanael), Joey Vahedi (Thomas), Paras Patel (Matthew), Amber Shana Williams (Tamar), Jordan Walker Ross (Little James), Elizabeth Tabish (Mary Magdalene) and Roumie.

“These carved statues of Baal and Pan? They’re dead and decaying, but we worship a living God, and You are His Son.” —Simon Peter



**“I just want your heart.
The Father just wants your heart.
Give Us that.” —Jesus**

The Greatest Story Ever Told

CAST AND CREW RECOUNT HOW *THE CHOSEN* WENT FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO INTERNATIONAL HIT

BY JIM HALTERMAN, WITH ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY EMILY ASLANIAN



Shepherd Simon (Aaron Himelstein) offers an unclean lamb in the short film *The Shepherd*, which served as *The Chosen*'s unofficial pilot

CREATING THE FIRST multiseason series (we can't wait for Season 5!) that tells the story of Jesus of Nazareth's life, introduces His disciples and His enemies and explores the tentpole moments of the Bible, like Jesus walking on water and raising the dead—well, how tough could that be? To say *The Chosen* just fell into place would be, in a word, blasphemous. But like all good stories, how the fan-favorite drama miraculously came together—and went on to find great success as an international hit with more than 250 million viewers from 175 countries—is one with twists, turns and, fittingly, even some divine intervention.

IN THE BEGINNING...

Creator Dallas Jenkins never set out to make this series. After some setbacks in his professional life, the director and writer shot a short film for his church's Christmas Eve service called *The Shepherd*, from the point of view of the shepherds present at Jesus' birth. The film was a small production, and Jenkins returned to it after making a flop film that could have ended his career. Thankfully, it didn't.

Dallas Jenkins: *The Chosen* was born out of failure. I [directed] a feature film, *The Resurrection of Gavin Stone*, that got released

nationally [in January 2017], and it completely bombed at the box office. I was left with a very uncertain future as a filmmaker. Absolutely, if that movie would've succeeded, there'd be no *Chosen*. I dusted off a short film that I had written about a year and a half earlier, about the birth of Christ from the perspective of the shepherds. We filmed [*The Shepherd*] on my friend's farm in Illinois, 20 minutes from my house.

After *The Shepherd* was finished, Jenkins didn't shop it around to network executives as he had with previous projects. Instead, the film made the

"The Chosen was born out of failure"
—Creator and director Dallas Jenkins



"And so it's time?" an eager Simon (Shahar Isaac) asks Jesus (Roumie) in the final moments of Season 1 after Jesus declares He is the Messiah. "Let's go," He replies, before the group (above) walks off toward Samaria

rounds online. The right people began to take notice, including a studio executive who would wind up working on the show...eventually.

Katherine Warnock, vice president of original content at The Chosen: People ask Dallas all the time, "Did you know this was going to be a global phenomenon?" Of course, Dallas says, "No, I had no idea." But I get to say, "Yes, I did!" because the pilot episode came across my desk at MGM [where Warnock was then senior director of content]. I immediately emailed Mark Burnett and Roma Downey [producers known for creating dramas like 2013's *The Bible*], and I said, "You have to acquire this. This is going to take over the world." I literally said that. We didn't land it, but then God made a way.

Jenkins: The short film got in the hands of a

"This is going to take over the world"
—Katherine Warnock, VP of original content

small streaming platform [VidAngel]. They heard my idea for the show and decided they'd love to do it. They said, "We want to raise the money through crowdfunding." At that point, I thought, "I really have nothing to lose, and I'm coming off of this failure, so we'll

see what happens." [*The Shepherd*] ended up going viral, and at the end of [the video], I gave people the opportunity to invest, not donate. More than 16,000 people around the world invested over \$10 million for Season 1. **Jonathan Roumie (Jesus):** My history with Dallas Jenkins goes back [roughly] 10 years. I did a [different] short film with him called *The Two Thieves*. I originally auditioned for the penitent thief, and two days later, I got asked to read for the role of Jesus. I thought, "Aw, man, Jesus only has like five lines."

Jenkins: Ten seconds into his audition for Jesus [in *The Two Thieves*], I thought, "That is one of the best portrayals of Jesus I've ever seen." He combines masculinity with gentleness. We filmed [the project] in a rock quarry in Chicago. It was freezing while [Roumie] was up on the cross. He was literally



In Season 1's "Jesus Loves the Little Children," the first episode of *The Chosen* that Roumie shot, Jesus builds a group of young followers

shaking and could barely think, could barely talk. It actually helped the scene, because he was portraying His death. So then we started doing short films and vignettes over the next few years, every time Good Friday or Easter would come around. And then there came a chance to do *The Chosen*.

After raising enough money to shoot the first few episodes of the series, it was time to figure out the show's title, cast and sets and, eventually, get the cameras rolling.

Jenkins: A guy on our marketing team and I realized that *The Chosen* refers to three different things that are all relevant for the show. It refers to Jesus as the Chosen One, to the Jews as God's chosen people and to those Jesus chose to follow Him. We just thought, "Man, this title seems to cover a lot of ground in two words," so it felt perfect.

"I was just blown away by the writing"
—Elizabeth Tabish (Mary Magdalene)

Roumie: Dallas called to say, "Hey, we're doing a TV series, four episodes, it's crowdfunded, probably not going to go anywhere...you want to put the sandals back on?" I said, "I need a job, so, heck yeah."

Jenkins: [Roumie] was the first person cast. We weren't bound by trying to find celebrities but by who was best for the role, and we wanted to make sure we were faithful ethnically, and not just trying to satisfy some studio's requirements for a star. The story is the star.

Elizabeth Tabish (Mary Magdalene): It was a crowdfunded web series [shooting] in the middle of nowhere, Texas. The pressure was not quite on, but when I first read the script for the audition, I was just blown away by the writing. Faith-based media doesn't have the best rap, and there was just nothing cheesy about any of it. It seemed like a historical drama that wasn't preachy.

Paras Patel (Matthew): I found out I got the part a week before I started the show. I was not



"I was going through some things and relating deeply to where Mary was at in the first episode, which is in a pretty dark place," admits Tabish, shown here as Mary Magdalene in that episode



Isaac's Simon, James' Andrew and Lara Silva as Simon's headstrong wife, Edna, celebrate Shabbat in Season 1

the first choice to portray Matthew. Dallas' wife, Amanda, had a dream and felt that I would be a better fit based on a callback audition I had where my camera glitched and it froze with me looking sideways [for the entire audition]. I liked that there was actually no "right" way to play Matthew [from] the beginning. It was a collaborative effort to just tell the story of the character through creative license. We built him from the ground up.

Jenkins: We film the majority of our seasons on a Salvation Army property in Midlothian, Texas. It's about 40 minutes outside of Dallas. We have access to several hundred acres. We've built a 1st century set, and then we film about a third of our season on a huge Jerusalem set in Goshen, Utah.

Amber Shana Williams (Tamar): We're always in awe at the artistic genius that [production designer] James R. Cunningham brings to the show and how everything feels so real. I mean, all those candles burning—we're choking on that smoke. That is authentic.

Noah James (Andrew): It is such a gift working on the sets that we do. People think actors are weird, and, yeah, we obviously are, but feeling the fabrics and wood and bricks, seeing the Roman signposts—sometimes all it takes is looking around, and you can get exactly what you need for a scene.

Williams: I love being on those sets. I'm always taking pictures of all of the gorgeous details. The most minute things that you wouldn't even consider have some of the greatest details. It's just marvelous.

Tabish: The first four episodes were filmed, and then we waited

"We knew that last scene had to deliver, or people wouldn't keep tuning in"
—Jenkins

to see a response. There was some struggle to find where we were going to be [shooting], but having that set in Midlothian has been pretty pivotal, knowing that we have a place to continue this story.

JESUS WALKS INTO A BAR...

The first episode introduced future disciples like awkward Matthew, nervous Andrew and brash Simon (Shahar Isaac), but the primary focus was the suffering, demon-possessed Mary Magdalene (Tabish). After approaching her in Capernaum's local bar, Jesus casts out her demons and heals her. But we don't see Him until the pivotal final five minutes. Wait, what?

Tabish: To start a show about Jesus with the story of Mary Magdalene just seemed very new and very cool, honestly.

Jenkins: We knew [waiting until the end of the episode to reveal Him] was risky, but we treated it like a real show as opposed to a Bible project. We knew that last scene had to deliver, or people wouldn't keep tuning in. It's similar to *This Is Us*, where you watch the first episode and when it all connects at the end, it creates a massive moment and you're like, "OK, I'm in."

Tabish: That last scene in Episode 1, there was a bit of pressure. "If this doesn't work, then it ruins the rest of the show." It was a freezing night, and I was so worried that I wasn't performing well.

Isaac and Joey Vahedi's disciples Simon and Thomas around the campfire



Lord of the Sabbath: Jesus (Roumie, center) leaves Wadi Kelt with His disciples in this pivotal Season 2 moment that mirrors Matthew 12: 1–8

I look back and still don't think I did, honestly. But I think that's a testament to the strength of the show overall, of the directing, of the editing, of the music, of the cinematography, of the other actors, where it still was a really powerful moment in the show. It's written so well that you have to work hard to mess it up as an actor.

Roumie: It continues to be one of my favorite scenes, because it's such an ironic, dramatic introduction to the character. Jesus in a bar sounds like the beginning of a joke. [Laughs] We had that sense when we were filming that this is going to be really special.

Jenkins: When we first started seeing the footage, performances, cinematography, and then [hearing] the music, it's like what they say, the sum was so much better than the parts.

Season 1 included many of Jesus' miracles, like filling Simon's boat with fish and, in the fifth episode, "The Wedding Gift," turning water to wine. Jenkins knew he had the chance to do something unique.

Jenkins: You've never seen why Jesus changed the water to wine [onscreen]. You see that in the Scripture, but it's one or two [Bible] verses, and so we unpack that. In that same episode, you see Jesus dancing with His friends, laughing at their jokes. All of those things you've never seen portrayed in this way.

Warnock: The goal was to bring Jesus down from the gorgeous stained-glass windows and present him as a friend.

"The goal was to bring Jesus down from the gorgeous stained-glass windows"
—Warnock

WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

Season 1 was released in 2019, and the fanbase grew, but viewership didn't really explode until the show was free to stream in 2020.

Tabish: It was so wonderful to have this immediate feedback of feeling like we're on the right track of telling something that feels true to people and honest.

James: Lots of fans have shared with me that they connect with Andrew's anxiety. I feel really honored to portray that struggle.

Williams: There is an appreciation for the representation that Tamar brings to the show. I know people who look like me don't see themselves reflected in the stories of this time period.

Warnock: You never get tired of hearing "This show saved my life."

Jenkins: When COVID hit, people were having a hard time finding it and didn't want to pay for it, so [we released Season 1] totally free, with payment optional.

James: People were really starting to find the show, and while we were all going through that collective shutdown and paradigm shift, I kept receiving messages that our show was helping people through it.

Patel: I began to realize something was happening through my social media. I remember texting Dallas, "Is this happening

to you right now?" His response was casual: "Yeah, the show is going viral."

Jenkins: We also had an eight-night livestream on YouTube. Instantly, our income quadrupled, and the next night it quintupled, and the word-of-mouth went crazy. We had enough [funding] to do Season 2.

Patel: I remember being surprised, because the show had been released in 2019 and it didn't get off to a big start—or any start—so to have it happen a few months later had me a little shocked. But in hindsight, seeing the journey of our show from the beginning to where we are now, I often just say, "Well, it's *The Chosen*—get used to different."

"THE FROZEN CHOSEN"

With more eyeballs than ever on The Chosen, production on Season 2 began in Texas. As Jesus collected more disciples, the show found more followers. For the buildup to the epic Sermon on the Mount (which spanned the Season 2 finale and the Season 3 opener), 2,000 extras—all fans—huddled in freezing temps for a multiday shoot.

Warnock: My favorite scene of all time was [early]



Roumie's Jesus with His cousin John the Baptizer (David Amito, left)

in Season 2 [Episode 3, “Matthew 4:24”] when Jesus has been healing all day and at the very end [of the episode], He rolls in exhausted. That hit me incredibly hard. The human side of Jesus, what toll that would’ve taken on Him—that wrecked me.

Patel: I loved the moment in Season 2 when Matthew is trying to get Thomas’ and Nathanael’s [Joey Vahedi and Austin Reed Alleman] attention when he is hiding from a Pharisee in a marketplace. I love getting the chance to do physical comedy when I can, and that moment still makes me laugh out loud.

Jenkins: The majority of the show is content that’s not directly from the Bible—it’s meant to set up those moments in the Bible. That’s where you go, “You know what? God didn’t give us everything about this story.”

Tabish: I was at the Sermon on the Mount [filming], and it was freezing. To look out on the sea of people who are all so excited to be there and nobody’s complaining or freaking out [was great].

Roumie: We had [2,000] people, now referred to as “the Frozen Chosen,” who sat there patiently, joyfully, for hours while we shot the scene. I’d never at that point worked in front of that many people as an actor. It was like something out of a Cecil B. DeMille film, harkening back to Old Hollywood.

Patel: In filming the Beatitudes with Jonathan [in the finale], I choked up every time. I remember telling Jonathan about it, and he responded saying, “I thought you were just really cold,” because it was freezing.

Roumie: And we’ve got [Christian worship artist] Phil Wickham playing a concert in the background [when cameras weren’t rolling] and freezing along with everybody else.

Williams: Just the very fact that these fans put their heart and soul—and pocketbook—into coming all the way out to Texas from all over the planet to be a part of the show, that’s when I really saw the effect it was having on the audience.

Roumie: It was one of those moments where we knew there was going to be such a payoff [onscreen].

WALKING ON WATER

After Season 2 premiered in April 2021, The Chosen began airing on several streaming outlets, including Netflix and Prime Video, between 2021 and 2022. In December 2021, the second Christmas special, Christmas With The Chosen: The Messengers, was released in theaters and grossed more than \$13.7 million. Things looked bright for the show’s third season, which included both intimate moments (Andrew visits John the Baptizer in jail) and bigger spectacles (the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus walking on water). Shooting with the now-close-knit cast was just as fun as ever.

Jenkins: Every year [cowriters Ryan Swanson and Tyler Thompson] and I go to Oregon. There’s a generous family that puts us in a cottage and provides for our food, and we just get away for three or

“I honestly wish I could be more like her,” says Williams (left, with Tabish) of her confident disciple Tamar

The Apostles (and Kace Winfield’s believer Telemachus, third from right) in a behind-the-scenes moment during the feeding of the 5,000



four days and plot out the season. We have to make sure we are really doing honor to the original story.

James: I think people would be really surprised how long it takes to film a complete sequence. Sometimes all day or multiple days. When we filmed [the scene from Season 3, Episode 1] in Herod’s dungeon with John the Baptizer [David Amito], Joanna [Amy Bailey] and I, that was the whole day. Those are the most rewarding days, because it feels like you truly transport yourself for hours. Even when you have a break, there’s a small fire inside of you burning for the scene.

Roumie: The feeding of the 5,000 was the extreme opposite temperature [from the Sermon on the Mount], so it was 110 degrees. People were passing out, but everybody was fine. We just have the best fans in the world.

James: There are times [while shooting] when we’ve completely lost our minds and are singing about drinking our pickle-brine shots because it’s one million degrees and we need electrolytes and we don’t even know what day it is.

Patel: The night shoots bring out some special qualities in us because we are so delirious.

Tabish: There is a lot of joking around on set, but if someone’s really trying to stay in the scene, I feel like the cast is intuitive enough to recognize that and protect that space to make sure everyone’s able to perform the best that they can. But sometimes it’s really hard, because this cast is really funny. Jordan Walker Ross [Little James] is hilarious. George [H. Xanthis, who plays John] is super funny. Jonathan is very, very funny. Amber and I get the giggles sometimes, and Paras and I get the giggles all the time.

Shooting
Jesus’
walking on
the water
“became a
necessary
part to this
journey”
—Jenkins

Jenkins: I was not planning on shooting the walking on the water, because I didn’t think we could pull it off. But it became a necessary part to this journey, and some of the things that Jesus was saying were going to culminate in this experience on the water. Our visual effects team felt like we finally had the resources to do it. Obviously, there’s CGI. Spoiler alert: Jonathan Roumie can’t actually walk on water!

Roumie: To me, [walking on water] was a lot of fun. It was challenging, but we were in a water tank in Louisiana, and we shot it at a time of the year when it was pretty agreeable and the water wasn’t that cold. It was tricky [though], and we had a long day because we only had one day to get that entire scene.

Jenkins: That might be one of the most emotionally impactful scenes we’ve ever done. And so, when I finally saw—we have video on our Behind the Scenes [video] channel—the music

is done, the visual effects are done, the color is done, it was overwhelming. I was weeping.

“FOLLOW ME”

Episodes 1 and 2 of Season 3 launched in theaters in November 2022, ultimately grossing more than \$14.6 million. The season finale hit theaters the following February. In April 2023, Jenkins and The Chosen LLC terminated their contract with distributor Angel Studios, accusing the distributor of breach of contract. Then, in July, The CW was the first broadcast network to air the series, and The Chosen graced the cover of

TV GUIDE MAGAZINE. By the time Season 3 landed on Prime Video that same month, the response had become truly heavenly. Season 3 finished 2023 as the No. 4 most watched show on Prime Video.

Jenkins: One of my favorite moments in the history of the show is when *The Chosen* was in the Top 10 on Amazon for two months. At one point, *The Chosen* was in the Top 10 right next to [2023 horror comedy film] *Cocaine Bear*. A Jesus show, right next to *Cocaine Bear*! And [it's been seen] on The CW, Peacock and Netflix. It's getting in front of people who might not normally consider something like this.

The continued shooting of Season 4 was under threat due to the start of the SAG-AFTRA strike in July 2023. However, the drama was the first to be granted an interim agreement waiver to wrap up its last two weeks of filming. Between Seasons 3 and 4, viewership doubled. Over 250 million people have seen at least one episode. Even bigger news came that October during the first The Chosen Insider's Conference, "ChosenCon," about the unique theatrical launch for Season 4 in February 2024.

Jenkins: When people saw a couple of [Season 3] episodes on the big screen, we just said, "We want to do that again," so we decided to release Episodes 1 through 3 together, Episodes 4 through 6 together and then Episodes 7 and 8 together.

James: You can always watch the episodes at home, but there's something special that happens in a theater surrounded by other people who are just as filled with anticipation as you are. *The Chosen* is perfect for that communal experience.

Williams: Where on this planet have you ever heard of a television series being released in theaters before [airing on] whatever network it's going to? You don't! It's unprecedented, and crazy in all the good ways. It also gives a lot of opportunity for people to be fully immersed in the experience of the show.

Warnock: For us to do theatrical, it's "Hey, we're not here for the money." We're here for the gathering moments and really bolstering those key moments, like ChosenCon, feeding of the 5,000, Sermon on the Mount. That is what we see Hollywood taking notice of the most—like, "Hey, they're doing this differently than anyone's ever done before."

THE ROAD AHEAD

In May 2024, Jenkins announced that The Chosen's relationship with Angel Studios was "effectively over" after months of arbitration. Season 4 premiered globally in June 2024 with 3.5 million streams, representing an estimated 4.2 million U.S. household viewers over the first three days. Season 5 wrapped filming in July after 68 days. The episodes are slated



A crowd of *Chosen* fans connected with one another during the first ChosenCon in October 2023 in Dallas



Roumie, with Isaac and Luke Dimyan (Judas), in Season 4

for theatrical release starting on March 27, 2025. During the second ChosenCon, in Orlando, Florida, in September 2024, Jenkins announced the launch of 5&2 Studios and the expansion of The Chosen Universe, including five new series. The fanbase continues to grow, and with seven seasons of The Chosen planned, there's plenty of ground left to cover.

Jenkins: The show takes on a life of its own because the people who are watching it are telling other people so passionately that we are trying to keep up with it. On day one of writing, six years ago, when I was in my basement, we put up a word on the wall on a big white piece of paper, and it just said "Authentic." Everything that we [do], we want to be as authentic as possible.

Roumie: We're taking our time [to tell Jesus' story], but it's not going to feel like we're taking our time, because people are so invested in what they've seen and the Jesus they've come to know and love.

Williams: I can't believe we got this far. I had no idea or plan or gumption that this was going to be coming for us, and here we are doing it and we're past halfway through.

Jenkins: The response to Season 4 has been really great and just reminds us to keep going. And we are now in the home stretch. We've stuck with our original plan, so Season 7 is still on track to be the end.

Roumie: Season 5 will center around Holy Week. Season 6 on the Crucifixion, and Season 7 will focus on the Resurrection.

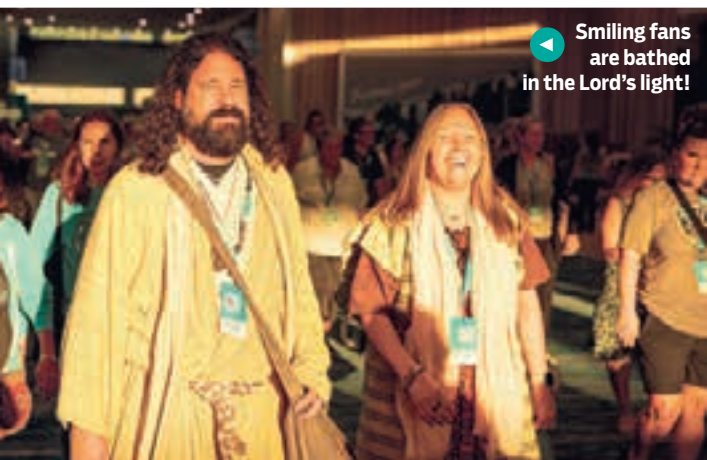
Warnock: This is not a normal show we're making. Almost the entirety of our cast aren't Christians, so just to see Hindus, Buddhists, Baptists, Catholics across the spectrum of faiths, Muslims in our cast, coming together and portraying this amazing story.

James: I come from outside of the Christian community, so I didn't know what to expect as a Jewish actor from L.A., but I have been welcomed by everyone with open arms. The cast and crew are so warm and generous—truly like a family—with members from all walks of life. I am so grateful to be a part of this show. Not only has it changed my life, but it's introduced me to some of my favorite people.

Patel: Every single message I get [from the fans] is unique and it truly is a remarkable feeling to be a part of something of this magnitude that has impacted so many people globally.

Roumie: We have the best fans in the world.

Jenkins [during 2024's ChosenCon]: I know that when we do a ChosenCon after Season 7 [of *The Chosen*], it's going to be a huge celebration. It's not going to be "Oh, I'm so sad it's over." No, it's going to be a celebration, because again, there's more to come. It's going to be a celebration of gratitude.



▶ Smiling fans are bathed in the Lord's light!



CHOSENCON 2024



▶ Fans prayed during worship, and swayed to the beat during sing-alongs led by Christian artist Phil Wickham.



▶ At the Bible Roundtable, Jenkins shared the Good Word with series adviser Father David Guffey (left, with Jenkins).



▶ Executive producer Derral Eves took the stage to announce the new kids' animated series *The Chosen Adventures*.

FOR THE DRAMA'S LATEST FAN EVENT, DEVOTED DISCIPLES TRAVELED FROM NEAR AND FAR TO GATHER AND CELEBRATE THEIR FAVORITE SHOW

BY DYLAN FORD

IN SEPTEMBER, FLORIDA bore witness to the second coming...of The Chosen Insiders Conference! After the success of last year's inaugural ChosenCon event in Dallas, the divine convention relocated to sunny Orlando, where 5,000 of *The Chosen's* followers (many wearing period garb) came together for two days to share their faith and love for the series. Attendees—many in person and others virtual—were treated to panel discussions with the show's creators, meet-and-greets with its stars, musical performances and a cast versus crew trivia game. There was even a Scroll Room, where fans could write prayers or testimonies on small paper scrolls that will be used as props during Season 6!

As *The Chosen's* tireless creator Dallas Jenkins said on stage during the event, "There is no limit to where the show can go." He means that literally—the first three seasons of the global hit have been translated into 60 languages. After all, they're just getting started.



▶ Attendees are encouraged to donate to the Come and See Foundation (comeandsee.net), which funds the series.



▶ Here's hoping this fan—dressed as Roman Gaius—crossed paths, and not swords, with actor Kirk B.R. Woller.



▶ "What a crazy weekend," wrote actor Noah James (Apostle Andrew) on Instagram. "I'll need to sleep for a week."

▶ In addition to playing Mary Magdalene, actress Elizabeth Tabish has also directed several short films.



◀ Don't turn your back on Judas! But it is safe to snap a photo with actor Luke Dimyan.



▶ Left: Patel hugs Alaa Safi (Simon Z) during the Apostles panel while reminiscing about Season 4.

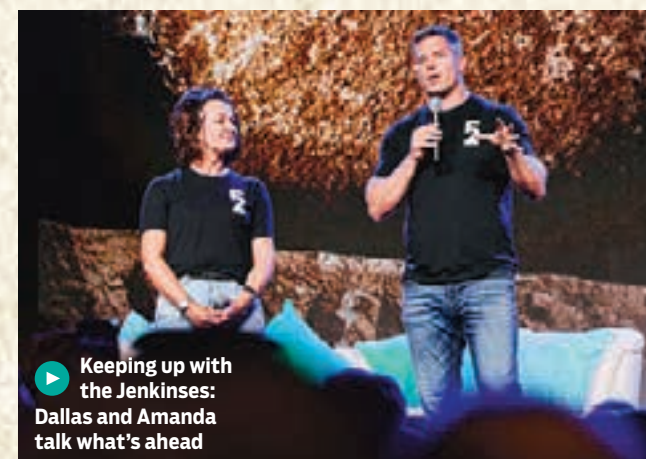


▶ Jenkins (right), who called himself a "rugged indoorsman" on social media, will be featured on a *Wild* episode with Grylls.



▶ Survivalist Bear Grylls (far right) poses with Dimyan, James, Tabish, Paras Patel and creator Jenkins after announcing the show *The Chosen in the Wild*.

▶ Fans were invited to "brush up" on the series by contributing to a massive paint-by-numbers wall depicting scenes from the fourth season.



▶ Keeping up with the Jenkinses: Dallas and Amanda talk what's ahead



▶ Wickham rocked the main stage twice! Did you also know he was an extra in Season 2's Sermon on the Mount scene?

▶ Vanessa Benavente (who plays Mother Mary) was thrilled to be on hand at ChosenCon to "give back a little bit of all the love that [the cast] has been receiving."



▶ Attendance was up for 2024's event, which welcomed roughly 1,500 more fans than in 2023.



▶ Paras Patel on why his Apostle Matthew is a fan favorite: "You see Matthew find his light, and it inspires you [to find yours]."



SEASON 1

BY JIM HALTERMAN

“Fear not,
for I have
redeemed you.
I have called
you by name.
You are mine”
—Jesus to
Mary of
Magdala

EPISODE 1

“I Have Called You by Name”

It's A.D. 26 in the village of Capernaum, and the troubled “Lilith” (Elizabeth Tabish, right) fights for her life as she is possessed by demons. Even passionate Jewish leader and Pharisee Nicodemus (Erick Avari) cannot expel it from her body. Also struggling are desperate fishermen brothers Simon (Shahar Isaac) and his anxious younger sibling Andrew (Noah James), who are unable to bring in enough fish to pay their increasingly large debts to unpopular tax collector Matthew (Paras Patel).

IT'S A MIRACLE At a low point, Lilith meets Jesus (Jonathan Roumie, finally appearing onscreen in the last five minutes of the episode). She's shocked when He



calls her by her true name, Mary of Magdala. With the touch of His hands on the sides of her head, she is exorcised of her demons. **HOLY SCRIPTURE** After Jesus heals Mary Magdalene (as she is more commonly called), He speaks the words of Isaiah 43:1: “Thus says the Lord who created you and He who formed you. Fear not, for I have redeemed you.” That same Scripture is referenced in the hour's opening flashback scene—by Mary as a young child (played by Camila Carreon). **EPISODE MVP** Mary Magdalene. Not only is she the first person we see Jesus save, but Tabish's powerful scenes—including one harrowing moment where Mary nearly throws herself off a cliff—set the bar high for the emotional performances ahead.

EPISODE 2

“Shabbat”

The now-cheery Mary Magdalene is filled with energy as she selects food in the marketplace to prepare for Shabbat dinner. Her changed demeanor is a shock when she crosses paths with Nicodemus. Simon's mission to pay his debt has him playing a dangerous game spying for the Romans. And Matthew's lofty gig as a tax collector isn't making life easy.

NOTABLE THEME The traditional Shabbat meal and its importance in Jewish culture is explored in this hour and seen as an event that all classes of people enjoy. Mary Magdalene's Shabbat is simple (she's rusty!) and Nicodemus' is luxurious, with powerful politicians joining him and his wife, Zohara (Janis Dardaris). Meanwhile, the determined Simon, who abandons his family dinner to catch illegal fishermen with the Romans, finds himself in trouble with wife Eden (Lara Silva) and his brother Andrew.

INTRODUCING... Thaddeus (Giavani Cairo) and Little James (Jordan Walker Ross), who appear at Mary's Shabbat even though she doesn't know them. “We were told this would be a good place to come,” says James. They're already students of Jesus, who shows up shortly after their arrival.

EPISODE MVP Matthew, ostracized by his fellow Jews for his tax-collecting duties, is also rejected by the Romans for his attitude and mannerisms (creator Dallas Jenkins has said he's akin to someone on the autism spectrum). Matthew is even estranged from his mother and father. While others celebrate Shabbat together, Matthew dines alone.



Above: Roumie's Jesus at Mary Magdalene's Shabbat dinner; Patel's Matthew (right)



SEASON 1

“He will be most pleased
with those of you who are
the peacemakers”
—Jesus to the children

EPISODE 3

“Jesus Loves the Little Children”

Before Jesus connected with His multitudes of followers, He was already winning over a more innocent, open-minded group of people: children. The first that we see is Abigail (Reina Ozbay, right, second from left), who stumbles upon Jesus’ humble campsite outside of Capernaum. Jesus is aware of the little girl’s eyes upon Him, and when Abigail returns with her unsure friend Joshua (Noah Cottrell), He invites them into His camp. From there, the group grows substantially until Jesus has an entire class of devoted youngsters following Him around.

EPISODE MVP Abigail, who quickly befriends Jesus and is happy to bring more children with her as the days go on, letting them know it is safe.

HOLY SCRIPTURE Old Testament passages like “an eye for an eye” and vengeance are discussed. Jesus also has the children learn the Lord’s Prayer and they sing “Behold, how good...” from Psalm 133:1.

NOTABLE THEME One of Jesus’ strengths is how He can teach either through sermons or simple conversation, offering advice and guidance along the way. The children in this sweet installment prove to be much better listeners than some opposers Jesus will face in the future. The episode also shows Jesus in moments of solitude—taking time to pray, speak with His Father and work on wood carvings.



Isaac’s Simon:
A believer again

EPISODE 4

“The Rock on Which It Is Built”

A desperate Simon hopes that one last night of fishing—before cruel Roman magistrate Quintus (Brandon Potter) jails him for failing to turn in his fellow fishermen and therefore betraying the Romans—will yield enough fish to clear his debts. When that doesn’t happen, his first encounter with Jesus changes his life. Following Mary Magdalene’s exorcism, a curious Nicodemus interviews wandering preacher John the Baptizer (David Amito), who is being held in a cell by the Romans for spreading his own word.

IT’S A MIRACLE Got fish? Simon, Andrew and the other men sure don’t, even after a tiring all-night fishing quest. While docking in the morning, they see Jesus preaching to a small group of people on the Galilee shore. Jesus asks to stand on Simon’s boat to preach and then

tells a discouraged Simon to throw out his nets one more time—and the entire vessel is filled with fish. It’s enough fish to pay off both Simon’s and Andrew’s outstanding debts to the Romans. **HOLY SCRIPTURE** The story of Jesus providing fish is told in Luke 5:1–11. Also, Andrew, already a follower of John the Baptizer, tells Simon about Jesus before they meet Him on the beach by saying that Jesus is “the Lamb of God, He who takes away the sins of the world.”

EPISODE MVP Like Tabish’s performance when Jesus saves Mary Magdalene in the opening episode, this one is a standout for Shahar Isaac as Simon. Early on, we feel the intense pressure that Simon is under to provide for his family, but seeing him shift from deep despair into elation once Jesus saves him is a joy to watch. When Simon drops to his knees to devote himself to Jesus, we’re ready to do the same.

SEASON 1



EPISODE 5

“The Wedding Gift”

Nicodemus continues questioning the imprisoned preacher John the Baptizer and comes closer to understanding that something greater is coming. The now-debt-free Simon is surprised by wife Eden's reaction when he reveals he's planning to quit fishing and follow Jesus. A wedding in Cana is the setting for another jaw-dropping moment.

IT'S A MIRACLE At a wedding celebration in Cana (above), there is a shortage of wine that threatens the festivities. Jesus' mother, Mary (Vanessa Benavente), who is friends with the mother of the bride, asks Him to help, and He turns barrels of water into wine.

EPISODE MVP Behind every great man is his mother. Here, the kind-hearted Mary shows wonderful understanding toward her important Son and also supports Him with a mother's love. We see this in both the show's present-day scenes and in a flashback to when Jesus was 12 years old and ran away to the temple. **INTRODUCING...** The overly logical caterer Thomas (Joey Vahedi), who decides to leave his life behind—along with sweet colleague Ramah (Yasmine Al-Bustami), the daughter of the vintner who produced the wine for the wedding—after witnessing Jesus' water-to-wine miracle. They plan to join the group in Samaria in 12 days.



EPISODE 6

“Indescribable Compassion”

Word in Capernaum spreads about Jesus' miracles. Nicodemus proclaims that John the Baptizer is not a threat to the Romans, which adds to the tension between the Pharisee and his student Shmuel (Shaan Sharma). Roman Quintus is more impressed by the money coming in from Simon's paid debt than any talk of fishy marvels.

IT'S A MIRACLE It's a doubleheader for the do-gooder in this installment. First, Jesus heals a desolate leper (Stephen Hailo), clearing the disease from his body. Later, Jesus and His followers arrive for a meal at the home of Mary Salome and Zebedee (Nina Leon and Nick Shakoour), the amiable parents of disciples Big James (Kian Kavousi) and John (George H. Xanthis). As a large crowd gathers to see Jesus' preachings, a paralyzed man (Noé de la Garza) is pushed through the crowd by his friend, an Ethiopian woman named Tamar (Amber Shana Williams). With the help of Mary Magdalene, the man is lowered through Salome and Zeb's roof so that he may be healed by Jesus and walk again. Witnesses to this include Matthew (who still cannot comprehend what is happening) and Nicodemus (in total awe at the event).

NOTABLE THEME As peaceful as Jesus is with delivering His message and performing miracles, the threat of danger is ever-growing. Simon is aware that with more people seeing Jesus, some of the “wrong kind of people” will also appear. Romans and Pharisees alike are in the masses to observe the man walk again.

ENEMY OR ALLY? Pharisee Shmuel is taking his own noteworthy path, away from his teacher Nicodemus. Shmuel reveals here that he is the one responsible for having John the Baptizer imprisoned by the Romans. Later, once Shmuel sees Jesus heal the paralyzed man, he calls for Roman guards, but Simon and the others usher Jesus away to safety.



From left: Pharisees Yussif (Ivan Jasso), Sharma's Shmuel and Avari's Nicodemus look on; above: Roumie's Jesus preaches

SEASON 1



“So if I have told you of earthly things and you do not believe, how can I tell you heavenly things?” —*Jesus having a serious talk with Nicodemus*

EPISODE 7

“Invitations”

Politics and religion clash when Quintus asks Nicodemus if Jesus is a threat he should be concerned about. Matthew, still confused by the miracles he’s seen, visits his estranged mother, Elisheva (Jacqueline Torres), for clarity. Mary Magdalene arranges a meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus that worries Simon.

HOLY SCRIPTURE During Jesus and Nicodemus’ enlightening discussion (above, and covered in John 3:1–21) the subject of being born again arises, which is paramount to Jesus’ philosophies and teachings. When a humble Nicodemus asks, “What have You come here to show us?” Jesus replies, “A kingdom...a sort of kingdom that a person cannot see unless he is born again.” Nicodemus doesn’t quite understand what “born again” means just yet.



EPISODE MVP This thoughtful hour focuses most acutely on awkward Matthew. We feel his torment when Matthew’s mother tells him that he squandered his gift for numbers by turning against his people and becoming a tax collector for the Romans, and that his father won’t even talk to him. But Matthew’s story becomes exuberant when he quickly runs from his work booth to join Jesus at His invitation to follow. **ENEMY OR ALLY?** Though Roman guard Gaius (Kirk B.R. Woller, far left, with Patel’s Matthew) is often gruff with Matthew, we see that there is some regard between them here. Gaius pleads with Matthew, “No Jew lives as good as you,” and warns him that he’ll regret leaving his position for life on the road. But Matthew seems to know better, even if he has yet to fully understand Jesus.



EPISODE 8

“I Am He”

In the first-season finale, ambitious Pharisee Shmuel faces off with an impassioned Nicodemus over the latter’s refusal to report Jesus’ work as blasphemous. An unhappy Quintus blames Jesus for Matthew leaving his post. Another miracle saves someone in Simon’s family. Jesus reveals for the first time that He is, indeed, the Messiah.

IT’S A MIRACLE Jesus heals Simon’s sick mother-in-law, Dasha (Leticia Magaña), just as her fever has spiked. She wakes up with a sudden jerk, not knowing who Jesus is, but then quickly rises to prepare drinks for everyone. It’s a funny and relatable moment.

HOLY SCRIPTURE This episode is filled with Gospel stories, starting with a conversation about sinners at a dinner at Matthew’s house (Mark 2:15–17, Matthew 9:10–13, Luke 5:29–32) and continuing with the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–31, Matthew 8:14–15, Luke 4:38–39). But the big one is Jesus’ dialogue with the fallen Samaritan woman Photina (Vanessa DeSilvio) about being the Messiah (John 4:1–42). She gleefully runs to spread the word across Samaria of the Messiah’s arrival. **EPISODE MVP** Even though the conflicted Nicodemus turns down Jesus’ invitation to join Him on the road, the moment the “teacher of teachers” sees Jesus leave Capernaum—which leaves the older man sobbing deeply against a wall just around the corner—is breathtakingly sad. Despite being afraid to depart with the group, Nicodemus does leave behind a bag of coins to help fund their journey.



Photina (DeSilvio) in joyful mood; top, Roumie; below, an unhappy Nicodemus stays behind



SEASON 2

Jesus (Roumie, center, with Xanthis and Bueno-Jallad) prevents an altercation between the Sons of Thunder and the Samaritans; below: John, in the future, prepares to write his Gospel

EPISODE 1

“Thunder”

In the future, Apostle John (George H. Xanthis) speaks with the men about their first encounters with Jesus (Jonathan Roumie). In the present, Jesus calms fiery brothers John and Big James (Abe Bueno-Jallad, taking over the role). The group dines with Melech (Nikhil Prakash), a Samaritan farmer unable to provide for his family.

IT’S A MIRACLE A contrite Melech confesses to Jesus the haunting event—striking down a

Jew in the road—that caused him to injure his leg. That morning, Melech can walk again. The disciples learn that Jesus doesn’t need to be present for a miracle to occur.

EPISODE MVP John, who shows great emotion as he’s speaking with the others for what will become his Gospel in the future. Jesus and Big James are no longer on this Earth. Mother Mary (Vanessa Benavente) asks why John is interviewing them now. “Because everyone is here. I need to get their

memories,” he says with determination. In the present, Jesus nicknames John and Big James the “Sons of Thunder” for their quick tempers after a dustup with angry Samaritans on the road. **HOLY SCRIPTURE** Melech’s wife, Chedva (Kenneisha Thompson), asks if Jesus is the Messiah during dinner and, if so, when He will bring an end to the world’s suffering. Jesus replies (from Luke 4:43): “I’m here to preach the good news of the kingdom of heaven.... In this world, bones will still break. Hearts will still break. But in the end, the light will overcome darkness.”



“He didn’t die. Somebody came along and helped him,” Jesus tells Melech (Prakash, left, with Roumie) of the Jew the Samaritan attacked

“When you were in your lowest moment...I did not turn My face from you”
—*Jesus to Nathanael*

EPISODE 2

“I Saw You”

Matthew (Paras Patel) bonds with new arrival Philip (Yoshi Barrigas). Architect Nathanael (Austin Reed Alleman) hits rock bottom before meeting Jesus. Mary Magdalene (Elizabeth Tabish) and Ramah (Yasmine Al-Bustami) begin to study the Torah.

IT’S A MIRACLE A distraught Nathanael—whose dream of building synagogues is literally crushed when his latest project results in a bad accident—meets Jesus but is wary. Jesus tells him that He did not turn His face from Nathanael when he called out to Him under the fig tree. When that private moment is revealed, Nathanael becomes a believer.

INTRODUCING... In addition to Nathanael, we also meet Philip, a friend of Andrew’s (Noah James) who brings an upbeat energy to the hardworking group. Philip, whom Jesus calls their “most

experienced” follower, previously traveled with John the Baptizer (David Amito). He’s also kind and observant, connecting with the left-out Matthew, whom he tries to teach the art of joke-telling.

HOLY SCRIPTURE Philip recites Ezekiel 39:9 and the other men join in: “And then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them. Shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, clubs and spears and they will make fires of them for seven years...” He then teaches Matthew about making wet wood usable for fire.



With his dreams having literally gone up in smoke, Nathanael (Alleman) desperately cries out to God

SEASON 2

A worn-out Jesus (Roumie) being cared for by His sweet “eema” (Benavente)

EPISODE 3

“Matthew 4:24”

With more and more people coming to Jesus for healing, the group tries to navigate the crowds, knowing that with fame come enemies. However, amid all the healing, a confused Little James (Jordan Walker Ross) wonders why Jesus has not healed him from his own physical malady. Mother Mary mourns the fact that Jesus no longer needs her...but by the end of the episode, we know that’s not true.

IT’S A MIRACLE Or, over 100 of ‘em! Word of Jesus’ healing has spread, and early in the episode, it’s noted that He has already healed 60, with 50 more in line, not including lepers. The Son of God is *exhausted*.

EPISODE MVP Singer Little James, who has been a mostly quiet follower, despite his powerful voice. He notes his confusion to Thomas (Joey Vahedi) when he sees so many others getting healed, while he still walks with a cane due to a form of paralysis. Thomas asks why Jesus hasn’t healed him. Little James says he has not asked, and he worries that if he brings it up, Jesus’ mind might change about him.

HOLY SCRIPTURE This episode is based on Matthew 4:24, which proclaims, “News about Him spread all over Syria, and people brought to Him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and He healed them.”



“It’s never come up, not even once,” laments Little James to Thomas (Vahedi, right, with Ross) about his leg



EPISODE 4

“The Perfect Opportunity”

Simon the Zealot (Alaa Safi) is the latest to join Jesus. Old enemy Shmuel (Shaan Sharma) and a new threat, Roman spy Atticus (Elijah Alexander), are watchful over the impending arrival of Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles, where He is ready to stir things up.

IT’S A MIRACLE In a moving opening montage, we see a young boy, paralyzed after falling from a tree, struggling through his life’s challenges alongside his younger brother Simon. Once older, Simon departs to join the Zealots, a militaristic cult, and the destitute Jesse (Dennis Apergis) waits at the Pool of Bethesda—a spring with supposedly magical healing powers. That’s where Jesus comes in. He heals the defeated man on Shabbat, a move that does not go unnoticed by the Pharisees, particularly for its timing. Jesse rises and carries his mat out of the pool area.

HOLY SCRIPTURE Jesse’s healing comes from John 5:1–13, and is characterized with Jesse’s desperate, but failed, attempts to reach the pool to (he hopes) heal his legs.

INTRODUCING... Simon the Zealot (eventually nicknamed “Z”), who is a great example of the show’s regularly repeated sentiment that your past does not define you. Moments before Simon is set to assassinate a magistrate, a mission from the Zealots, he sees Jesse walking after his encounter with Jesus. Simon steps away from his Zealot life to seek out Jesus.



“When you stand on two feet, I will know the Messiah has come,” Simon (Safi) says to his brother Jesse (Apergis, above, with Roumie)

SEASON 2

Jesus throws Simon Z's knife into the river (Roumie, left, with Safi)



EPISODE 5

"Spirit"

Mary Magdalene strays down a dark path. A determined Shmuel continues trying to stop Jesus from preaching. Simon Z joins the disciples. Jesus says goodbye to His cousin, John the Baptizer.

IT'S A MIRACLE A man (Anthony Michael Irizarry) who is possessed by the demon Belial, attacks Simon Z. He is saved when Jesus heals the disturbed man by yelling a commanding "Out! Out of him!" Once the man is exorcised of his demon, he tells Jesus his true name is Caleb. The event rattles Mary Magdalene, who recalls fighting her own brutal demons in the series' opener.

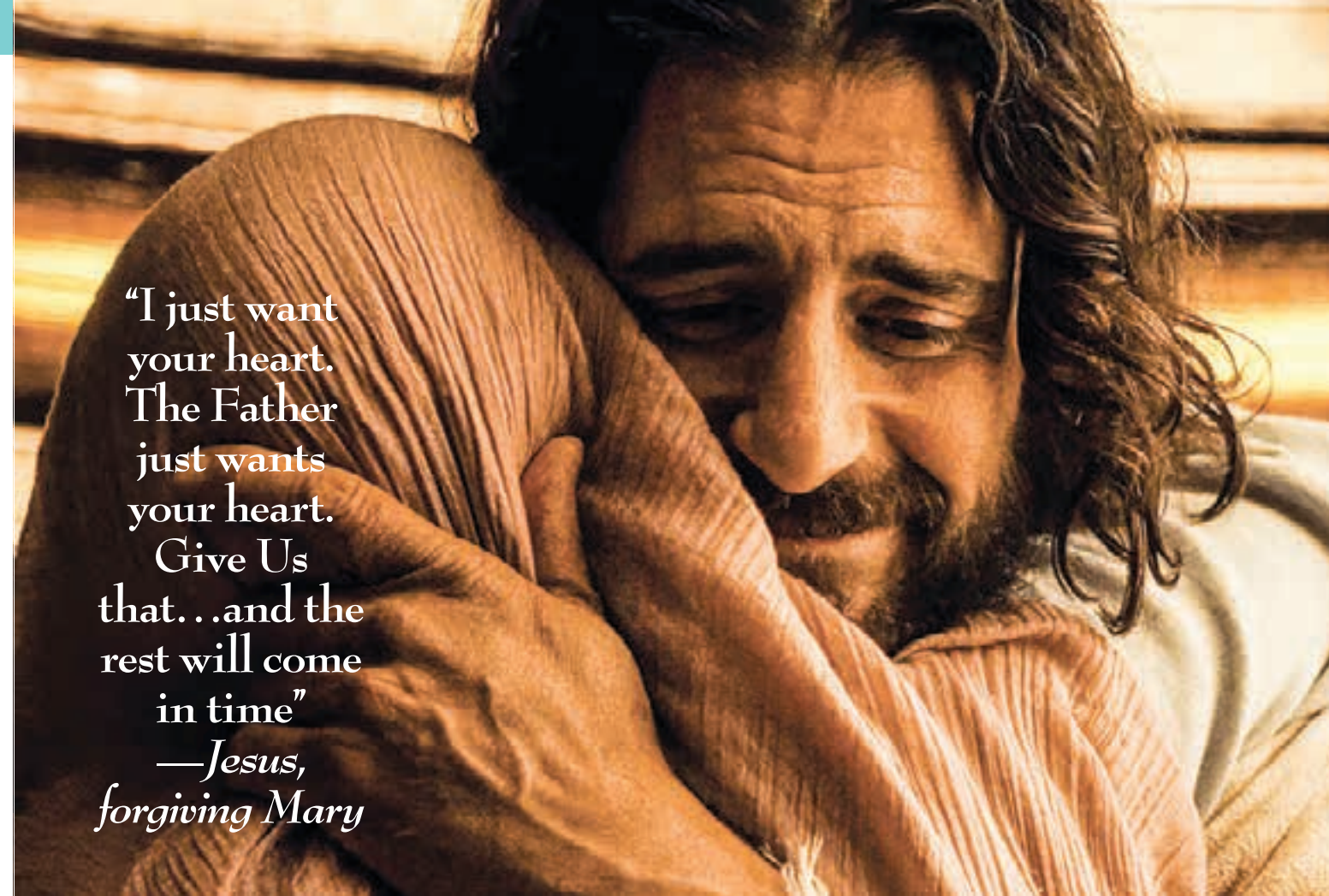
HOLY SCRIPTURE This isn't the first time we've heard Psalm 139, which only stresses its importance when, late in the hour, Jesus asks Matthew to recite the passage, "If I ascend into heaven, you are there. If I make my bed

deep in the depths, you are there," telling him to remember those words.

ENEMY OR ALLY? Atticus, a Roman spy (part of the cohortes urbanae), hears about the healing of the paralyzed Jesse in the previous episode—and he even tells Jesse that he believes Jesus truly performed a miracle on him. (Does he?). But as Atticus continues to track Simon Z, he witnesses Jesus toss his newest disciple's beloved dagger into a river, much to Simon Z's dismay. Atticus later fishes it out, looking unsettled. This won't be the last time we see the warrior's former dagger.



"I must confess, I'm eager for You to get to the point," John the Baptizer (Amito) tells Jesus



"I just want your heart. The Father just wants your heart. Give Us that...and the rest will come in time"
—Jesus, forgiving Mary

EPISODE 6

"Unlawful"

Jesus performs a miracle in a synagogue, upsetting a small town's religious leaders. Unlikely duo Simon and Matthew search Jericho for the missing Mary Magdalene, who is out drinking and gambling after backsliding into old habits. Shmuel hits another roadblock. The group learns that John the Baptizer has been sentenced to life in prison by the Romans.

IT'S A MIRACLE Jesus visits a synagogue in Wadi Kelt during service on the Sabbath, and despite protests that it's unlawful to heal on that day, He goes ahead and heals a man with a withered hand. **EPISODE MVP** Tabish's Mary Magdalene once again steals the show, breaking our hearts when she

weeps from shame and tells Jesus after returning to camp with Simon and Matthew, "You redeemed me and I just threw it all away." Of course, Jesus forgives her. "Look up," He says. "It's over." And they embrace. **NOTABLE THEME** This episode highlights the opposing stances on Jewish law between Jesus and other rabbis. The rabbis who pursue Jesus and his disciples out of Wadi Kelt to confront Him about healing on Shabbat are even more furious when they realize that Jesus allowed His hungry followers to eat wheat from a field, breaking the traditional fast. "Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," Jesus says to the angry religious leaders.



Tabish's Mary Magdalene backslides into old habits but is forgiven by Roumie's Jesus (above)

SEASON 2



"Oh, Jesus of Nazareth, I like You," Quintus (Potter) says. "Just don't make me kill You." Below: Roumie's Jesus is detained by Roman Gaius (Woller, right, with Roumie)

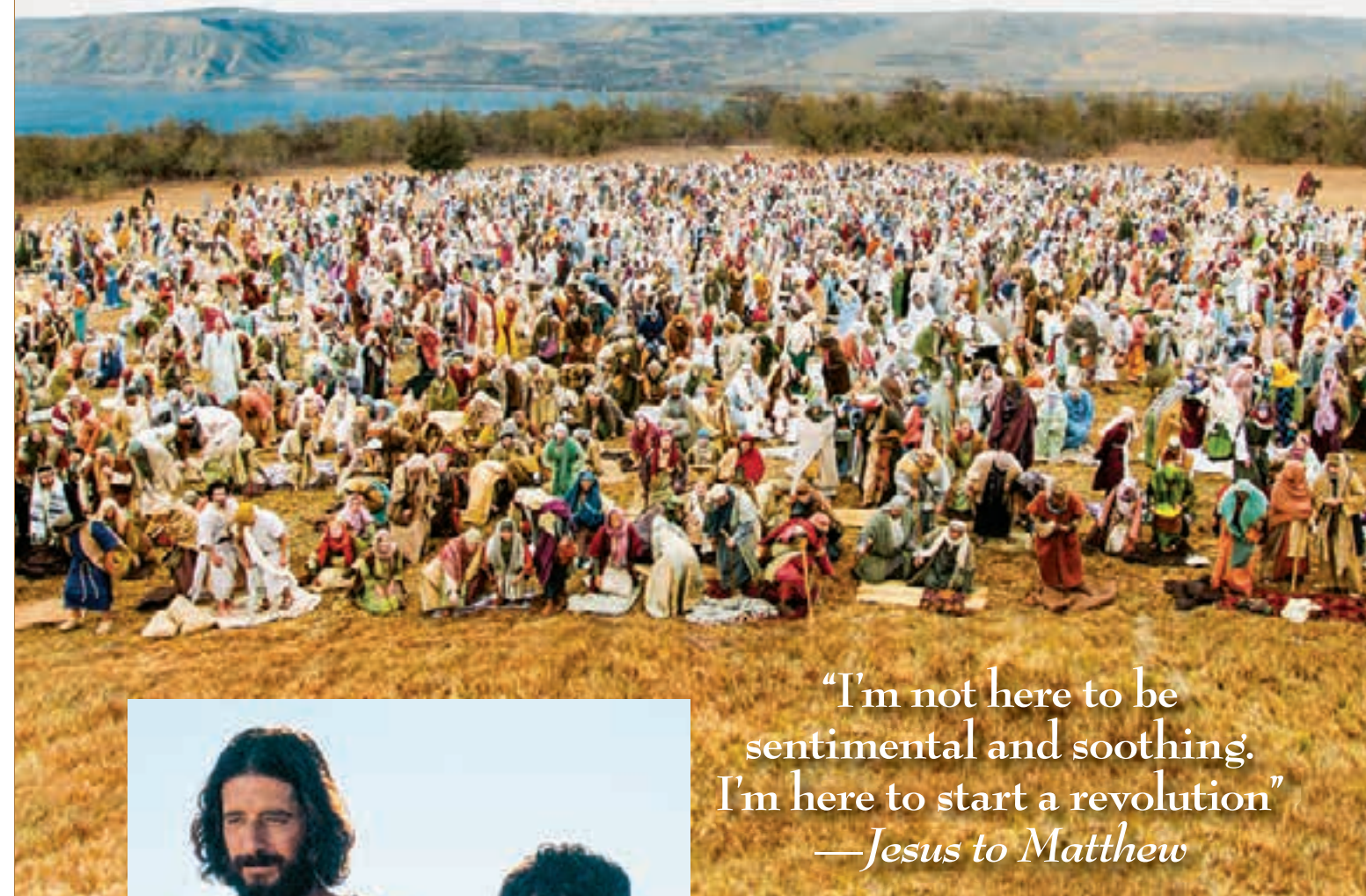
EPISODE 7

"Reckoning"

Jesus' sermon preparations are interrupted when He is taken into custody by the Romans. Shmuel is hot on Jesus' trail. A gleeful Quintus (Brandon Potter) finally gets face time with Jesus. Jesus enlists Matthew to help with writing the sermon.

HOLY SCRIPTURE Jesus' followers ask to learn more about how He prays, so Jesus teaches them the powerful words to the Lord's Prayer, starting with, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." **EPISODE MVP** There is no villain more deliciously sinister than Roman magistrate Quintus, the Praetor of Galilee. His exchange with Jesus is one of the series' most entertaining moments. "I don't know whether to eat You

or spit You out," Quintus tells Jesus after a lengthy fish metaphor. He adds, "I don't know what to make of You." A calm Jesus responds, "That's going to be a lot of people's problem with Me." No kidding. **NOTABLE THEME** Holding on to your faith, even during hardship. When Jesus returns to camp later that night, having stopped to pray first, a miffed Big James asks why He didn't return right away, given how worried they all were about Him. Jesus reminds them that He told them earlier that He'd be back and they need to trust in Him. He tells them that they can't just shut down when they're fearful. "And what are you going to do when I'm no longer here?" Jesus asks.



"I'm not here to be sentimental and soothing. I'm here to start a revolution"
—Jesus to Matthew



EPISODE 8

"Beyond Mountains"

Jesus and Matthew continue to finesse the sermon's message. The disciples secure a location and meet business-savvy Judas (Luke Dimyan) along the way. Thousands arrive to see Jesus.

HOLY SCRIPTURE Jesus and scribe Matthew agree on an opening for the sermon, which comes from Matthew 5:3–12. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," He begins. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." These blessings will eventually become the Bible's Beatitudes. **NOTABLE THEME** Jesus is everywhere. The idea of Jesus being present when He physically may not be is hammered home once again as the time for the

Sermon on the Mount arrives. As Matthew asks how the sermon is "a map," a claim made by Jesus, He replies: "If someone wants to find Me, those are the groups they should look for," citing the meek, the humble, the poor in spirit and others. **ENEMY OR ALLY?** History has taught us that Judas is the disciple of Jesus who eventually betrays Him to the Romans. However, this series introduces the well-known Bible figure (without revealing his name until the end of the episode) as a gentle, caring businessman's apprentice with a distaste for the dishonest aspects of his job. For now, he is devoted to following Jesus. Time will tell when—and how—that changes.



"There has to be more to life," Dimyan's wistful Judas tells his greedy business partner. Above: Roumie and Patel; top: the crowd of thousands for Jesus' sermon

SEASON 3

“If anyone should slap you on your right cheek, turn and give him the other one also”
—Jesus delivering His Sermon on the Mount

EPISODE 1

“Homecoming”

Jesus (Jonathan Roumie) gives his powerful sermon. A new believer brings Andrew (Noah James) to the imprisoned John the Baptizer (David Armitage). Matthew (Patel) returns to his parents' home.

EPISODE MVP It's time to give it up for Jesus! Roumie's performance has never missed a beat, but after watching this episode, which opens with the well-known, commanding Sermon on the Mount, we declare that Roumie is one of the best actors to ever portray Jesus of Nazareth onscreen.

HOLY SCRIPTURE Many biblical classics, such as “Do unto others” (Luke 6:31 and Matthew 7:12), as well as the passage about loving your enemies from Matthew 5:43–48, appear in the Sermon on the Mount. Also, John the Baptizer tells Andrew “don't be afraid” (Matthew 6:25–27, 31–33) when the latter visits his former teacher in prison.

ENEMY OR ALLY? Jairus (Alessandro Colla), the new synagogue administrator in Capernaum, is very interested in Pharisee Yussif's (Ivan Jasso) writings about Jesus, going so far as to offer to hold on to them for Yussif to “cool off.” Is he too eager to get his hands on them, or could Jairus' intentions be honorable?

Jesus talks to Matthew (Patel, far left, with Roumie) after the Sermon on the Mount



EPISODE 2

“Two by Two”

Matthew makes amends with his family. Simon Z (Alaa Safi) receives a warning from Atticus (Elijah Alexander). Jesus pairs up the 12 Apostles in groups of two to spread his ministry far and wide.

EPISODE MVP Little James (Jordan Walker Ross), who has waited a long time to ask Jesus why He hasn't healed his paralysis. Says Jesus: “You can be patient with your suffering here on Earth because you know you'll spend eternity with no suffering...a man like you healing others. Oh, what a sight!”

NOTABLE THEME Spreading Jesus' word and healing the sick is the mission He gives His newly dubbed Apostles. It'll be a difficult and dangerous journey for them all. In fact, Jesus says, while on their missions, the Apostles will not bring money or food with them, not even an extra tunic. “Find out who is worthy in [that town], and stay there until you depart,” He says. Those grateful people will be in service to the Apostles.

HOLY SCRIPTURE A heartfelt moment wraps the episode as the 12 Apostles throw their arms around one another's shoulders, forming a circle and reciting Psalm 3:1–6. Simon starts with “O Lord, how many are my foes. Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul there is no salvation for him in God.” Soon, the rest join in: “But You, O Lord, are a shield about me....”



Shahar Isaac's Simon and his wife Eden (Lara Silva) in a sweet moment



Roman bully Quintus (Brandon Potter)

SEASON 3



Toddler Jesus and Sara Anne as young Mary

EPISODE 3

“Physician, Heal Yourself”

Jesus returns home to Nazareth for the Jewish new year, seeing his eema Mary (Vanessa Benavente) and some old friends. He also stirs up the locals by pronouncing He is the Messiah.

INTRODUCING... Jesus’ old pal, gregarious Lazarus (Demetrios Troy), who is supportive of his best friend’s endeavors as a rabbi. Laz urges Jesus to preach at the synagogue—and protects Him and Mother Mary when the synagogue elders turn on Him. **HOLY SCRIPTURE** Jesus reads about spreading “good news” (Luke 4:18) but then begins preaching His message of salvation and His being the Messiah. He also mentions the phrase “physician, heal yourself” (Luke 4:23). Unfortunately, His message is met with rage.

NOTABLE THEME You can go home again...at least until you proclaim to be the Messiah. In this episode, Jesus relives memories, seen in flashback, like when His now-deceased adoptive father, Joseph (Raj Bond), taught a young Jesus (Darren Valinotti) how to hammer a nail. In the present, Jesus asks Mother Mary for a box that holds a mule’s bit and bridle—an heirloom from Joseph that serves as a reminder of their family’s escape from Egypt. Later, near Joseph’s tomb, Laz asks what they are for. Jesus says, “You’ll know soon enough.”

“There’s no turning back now, not after today”
—Jesus after He is rejected in Nazareth

Roumie, Benavente and Troy



James’ Andrew gets kicked out of town; below: Safi’s Simon Z performs an exorcism

EPISODE 4

“Clean, Part 1”

The Apostles return after performing miracles and spreading Jesus’ word. A water emergency brings a surprising pair together. Simon (Shahar Isaac) is clueless why wife Eden (Lara Silva) is unhappy.

IT’S A MIRACLE In a moving opening black-and-white montage, the Apostles (sent out “two by two”) are seen on their missionary journey. Thomas (Joey Vahedi) and John (George H. Xanthis) bring sight to a blind woman; Simon Z and Matthew take on an exorcism; Philip (Yoshi Barrigas) and Andrew get kicked out of a city after preaching. Once home, they struggle to process their varied experiences and the power that Jesus bestowed on them. As Nathanael notes, He worked “through them.” **ENEMY OR ALLY?** At this point in the story, Shmuel is an enemy. The controlling Pharisee, who

views religion as law, is set on punishing Jesus. In a Sanhedrin meeting in Jerusalem, an edict is passed against “rogue” preachers, but it’s still not enough for Shmuel. **INTRODUCING...** Veronica (Zhaleh Vossough), a distraught woman who meets Eden and leads her to a secret spring where the water isn’t contaminated. Veronica eventually shares her story, telling Eden how she became an outcast because of a rare medical condition that has caused her to bleed for 12 years and thus makes her “unclean” in the eyes of their people. Doctors haven’t been able to help her, but she hopes that Jesus can.



SEASON 3



Jesus and the Apostles go for a swim

EPISODE 5

“Clean, Part 2”

A flashback reveals a life-changing moment for Eden. Zebedee (Nick Shakoor) buys an olive grove for a new business. A frantic Jairus seeks Jesus to save his ailing daughter, Nili (Ella McCain).

NOTABLE THEME Faith. Once Jairus finds Jesus, he falls to his knees and begs for Him to heal his 12-year-old child. Jesus says to him, “You’ve never met Me, yet you have this much faith that I can heal your daughter?” That Jairus has such strong belief in Jesus leads Him to help the synagogue official.

IT’S A MIRACLE Healing by mere touch? Check! Raising the dead? Check! The long-suffering Veronica, desperate to be cured of her ailment, grazes the fringe of Jesus’ robe and is healed. He didn’t do it intentionally, but it works. Jesus also brings Jairus’ daughter Nili back to life after she dies from her illness. “Little

lamb, arise,” He says, before her eyes flicker open. But Jesus asks that Jairus and his family—as well as Simon, John and Big James, who are present—keep His ability to raise the dead under wraps for now, as it would get people too excited.

EPISODE MVP Roman guard Gaius (Kirk B.R. Woller) grabs our attention in this installment. We knew there was more to the centurion than meets the eye, but here we find out about his home life. He has two sons, one who was born to their servant woman and whom Gaius is raising as his own...sort of. Either way, the stiff guard is shedding his armor, piece by piece.



“It was your faith [that healed you],” Roumie’s Jesus reveals to Veronica (Vossough)



Jesus (Roumie), as seen in Claudia’s dream

EPISODE 6

“Intensity in Tent City”

Atticus reports to Pontius Pilate (Andrew James Allen). Jesus’ claim as Messiah is questioned by John the Baptizer. Simon Z faces off against the Zealots. Eden finally tells Simon about their lost baby.

IT’S A MIRACLE Once Jesus returns to Capernaum, He performs several miracles in front of a crowd outside of the city. In private, He sees Mary Magdalene’s friends, healing the humble and blind Shula (Anne Beyer) and fixing Barnaby’s (Aalok Mehta) leg. While Rabbi Akiva (Philip Shahbaz) calls it blasphemy, many others find His acts joyous.

EPISODE MVP We finally get more information about Tamar (Amber Shana Williams), the secretive but fierce Gentile and follower of Jesus. When Mary Magdalene accuses Tamar of not understanding the pain Jews have endured, Tamar tells her that she comes from a war-torn country and that a rival clan wiped out her village—including her parents. She shows Mary her mother’s bloodstains on her prized necklace.

INTRODUCING... Pontius Pilate and his wife, Claudia (Sarah J. Bartholomew). We see Claudia wake from a mysterious dream where she sees a yellow snake slithering around while the disciples sleep and Jesus prays in the fog. Pontius, like Quintus, is a confident, arrogant Roman. Though the young ruler’s goal is to see Rome peaceful, that doesn’t mean he won’t crucify his enemies, as we see in the opening.

“The kingdom of heaven is at hand, and yet so many are missing it. Do not miss it” —Jesus preaching to a crowd

SEASON 3



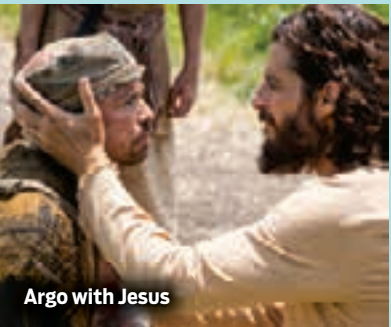
Simon wanders into the Roman Quarter and runs into Gaius (Woller, right, with Isaac)

EPISODE 7

“Ears to Hear”

Jesus and the group head to the Decapolis to calm the chaos created by Andrew’s and Philip’s teachings. John isn’t happy when he’s asked to stay behind and find an angry Simon.

IT’S A MIRACLE Before reaching the Decapolis, Jesus heals a deaf mute from the city, named Argo (Greg Roman), giving him the ability to hear and speak. As he’s done before, Jesus asks them all to keep the healing quiet. “Now is not the time for this word to spread, do you hear me?” The newly hearing man laughs and says, “Now I hear you!” **HOLY SCRIPTURE** Besides Jesus saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 11:15), when Apostles Andrew and Philip explain the chaos that has erupted in the Decapolis, Philip also quotes Isaiah 42:1–4 and says, “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well-pleased...”



Argo with Jesus

NOTABLE THEME Forgiveness. Sweet Mary Magdalene, who has struggled to let go of her shame from the past, is able to bring comfort to Matthew, who faces his own shame when he shares an uncomfortable memory from his time as a tax collector for the Romans. Both are able to forgive themselves and move forward. Someone who still needs to learn that lesson, however, is Simon, who is furious with Jesus for allowing Eden—and his unborn child—to face harm while Simon was away on missionary work. “How could He let something like this happen to Eden?” Simon angrily asks John on their way to the Decapolis.



“If You command the water to hold me, I will walk on it”
—Simon to Jesus

Simon (Isaac) walks on water; below: Simon and Jesus with the Apostles



EPISODE 8

“Sustenance”

Jesus and His disciples try to solve the dilemma at the Decapolis. After preaching to thousands (and feeding them), Jesus does the unthinkable to help Simon find his faith again.

IT’S A MIRACLE You’d think an episode where Jesus turns five loaves of bread and two fish into enough food to feed 5,000 people would be the only major miracle in this season ender. But Jesus also walks on water (it’s the only CGI scene that the show has used up to this point), and it’s a jaw-dropping moment. A soaking Thomas says it best, while the Apostles struggle to keep their boat afloat in the thunderstorm: “How is this the second most incredible thing I’ve seen today?”

HOLY SCRIPTURE A multitude of quotes, like Psalm 77:1, which is presented to King David (Jorge Franco IV) and Bathsheva (Moriah) not as a song but as spoken word. Also heard in the episode is Psalm 77:1–11, quotes from Matthew 13:3–9 and Psalm 13:2. **NOTABLE THEME** Running out of time. Rabbi Shmuel laments to Jesus about the sorrow in his heart. Jesus tells him, “You’re losing something. I know what that’s like.” Shmuel asks Jesus what He is losing and His reply is “Time.” Jesus has a lot of work left to do and not a lot of time to do it. He has hinted at His fate many times throughout the series, but this one hits especially hard.

SEASON 4

EPISODE 1

“Promises”

Conniving Queen Herodias (Shereen Khan) uses a dance performance by her daughter Salome (Briar Nolet) to get what she wants from King Herod Antipas (Paul Ben-Victor). Ramah (Yasmine Al-Bustimi) returns, ready to marry Thomas (Joey Vahedi). Joanna (Amy Bailey) fails to save John the Baptizer (David Amito).

HOLY SCRIPTURE In a flashback, we see John the Baptizer’s origins, which begin with a pregnant Mother Mary (Sara Anne) arriving at the home of Zechariah (Tony Amendola) and Elizabeth (K Callan), who, despite her old age, is also with child. The story follows Luke 1, which explains Zechariah’s recent loss of voice and how his and Elizabeth’s baby would be called John. It’s a fitting biblical tribute that is intercut with the lead-up to John’s execution by King Herod. **NOTABLE THEME** Female agency isn’t a theme you’d expect in a series with so many male characters, but here, the women are also making waves: Herodias schemes to manipulate Herod, Ramah decides to marry Thomas despite her father’s disapproval, and Joanna, who has stopped living at home because of her husband’s mistress, tirelessly tries to save John. **ENEMY OR ALLY?** The cracks in Judas’ (Luke Dimyan) armor are showing. In a scene with Simon Z (Alaa Safi), Judas gives his opinion of how inefficiently Jesus’ (Jonathan Roumie) ministry is being run from a financial standpoint.

“Thank you”
—John the Baptizer’s final words to God, while watching the sun



John the Baptizer (Amito) moments before his beheading; below: Roumie’s Jesus mourns his kin



EPISODE 2

“Confessions”

Jesus and His followers journey to hold shiva for John the Baptizer. Simon (Shahar Isaac) and Rabbi Shmuel (Shaan Sharma) are elevated to higher posts. Matthew (Paras Patel) faces an uncomfortable truth.

INTRODUCING... Peter, the Rock. Jesus promotes Simon, renaming him Peter after Simon recognizes Jesus as Christ. “These carved statues of Baal and Pan and other idols that we passed? They’re dead and decaying, but we worship a living God. And you...you are His son,” the Apostle says. The others struggle with their jealousy of “Simon Peter.”

EPISODE MVP Paras Patel’s Matthew, who faces up to his own responsibility in his long-unsettled relationship with Simon Peter. Jesus directs the former tax collector to think about “who harmed the other first.” He gets Matthew to admit that he spied on Simon Peter and came close to turning him in to the Romans. “And yet, you’ve never apologized for

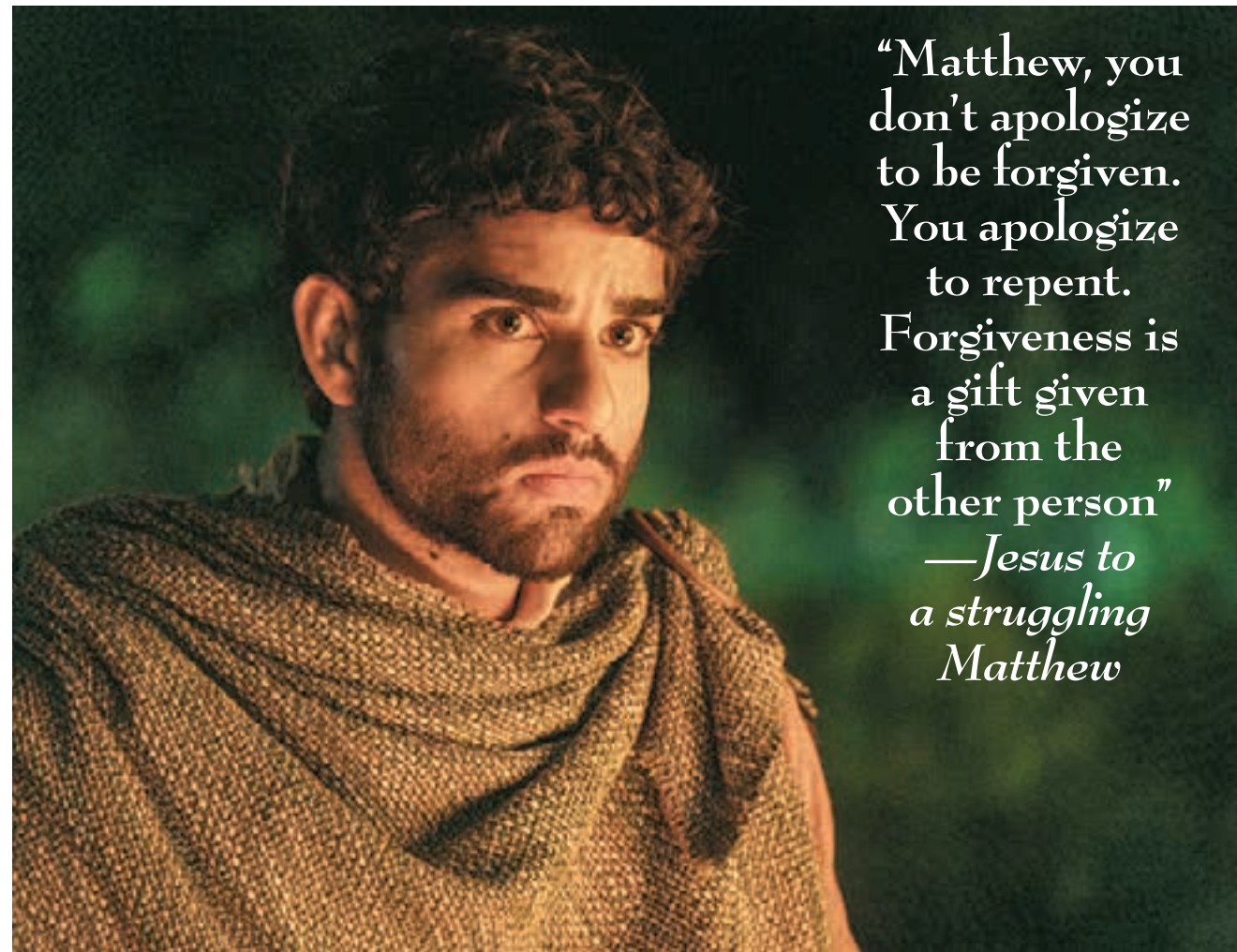


Isaac’s Simon Peter (right) is reassured by his brother Andrew (Noah James)

this?” asks Jesus. Matthew does, and a trying-to-be-better Simon Peter forgives him with a long embrace. “It’s over,” he says.

ENEMY OR ALLY? Rabbi Shmuel finally gets what he wants and is promoted into the Sanhedrin, the political council of religious

leaders. But when they praise him for John the Baptizer’s execution and for his investigation of Jesus, he looks remorseful. The Sanhedrin are ready to condemn Jesus for being a “damning and dangerous figure,” but will Shmuel help them persecute him? Kill him?



“Matthew, you don’t apologize to be forgiven. You apologize to repent. Forgiveness is a gift given from the other person”
—Jesus to a struggling Matthew

SEASON 4

EPISODE 3

“Moon to Blood”

Love is in the air—for a little while longer, at least—as Thomas gives Ramah a pre-wedding gift. A raging Quintus (Brandon Potter) errs during the frenzy after Jesus’ sermon, and it costs the group dearly.

IT’S A MIRACLE Before beginning His latest sermon, Jesus stops to heal Uzziah (Ryan Radis), who has been blind since birth. We’ve seen Jesus perform this act before, but this time it’s on the Sabbath in public, in front of concerned Pharisees. It’s the spark that ignites the flame of chaos that follows.

HOLY SCRIPTURE 2 Samuel 12:15–23 comes to life in the 980 B.C. opening as we see King David (Jorge Franco IV) fasting for six days in hopes of saving the life of his sick baby with wife Bathsheba (Moriah Smallbone). When the infant dies, it raises questions as to why the Lord didn’t save him.

EPISODE MVPs Thomas and Ramah completely stole our hearts in this installment. As Thomas gives his love a



Thomas and Ramah, so in love, in the season premiere; center: Potter as Praetor Quintus

sundial, he announces, “We’ll be together until the end of time, and we’ll have this to keep track of the hours in between.” He didn’t know the end of their romance was just around the corner as Ramah is tragically—and unintentionally—slain by Roman Praetor Quintus when he draws his sword during the disorder after Jesus’ sermon. And surely there wasn’t a dry eye when Ramah spoke her last words: “Thomas, stay with Him. It’s all I want.”



“Do you think I have come to give peace on Earth? No, but rather division,” Jesus preaches in front of Pharisees



“Remember when it was just the three of us?” Jesus asks His first disciples, Little James (Jordan Walker Ross, left) and Thaddeus (Giavani Cairo, right)

EPISODE 4

“Calm Before”

Quintus is demoted, and a surprised Gaius (Kirk B.R. Woller) becomes Praetor of Capernaum. Simon Peter tries to help the grieving Thomas. A frustrated Judas faces temptation.

IT’S A MIRACLE The blind faith that newly installed Praetor Gaius displays in Jesus’ ability to heal his near-death son leads to a miracle. “Lord, I am not worthy to have You come into my home,” he tells Him. “But You only need to say the word, and he will be healed.” Jesus cures the sick boy from afar and Gaius rejoices.

HOLY SCRIPTURE Apostles Big James (Abe Bueno-Jallad) and John (George H. Xanthis) nervously ask Jesus for seats at His side in His kingdom. His response comes from

Mark 10:35–45: “You don’t know what you are asking.” Later, he adds, “to sit at My right hand and My left, it is not Mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” Jesus vents His frustrations about His followers not understanding what He has been trying to tell them about what lies ahead.

EPISODE MVP Roumie’s charming, easygoing Jesus is starting to fade as the reality of his impending death settles in—and it is a mesmerizing thing to see. Alone, he prays to His Father. “My heart throbs, My strength fails me,” He cries. “And the light of My eyes, it also has gone from Me.” In a haunting moment, Jesus compares Himself to an olive press—it’s just a taste of the drama to come.



A joyous and faithful Gaius (Woller) embraces his two healthy sons



Judas contemplates his options; right: Pharisees Shmuel (Sharma) and Yussif (Jasso)



EPISODE 5

“Sitting, Serving, Scheming”

En route to Jerusalem, Romans humiliate Jesus’ followers, but He has a lesson to pass along. Yussif (Ivan Jasso) tries to find his place within the Sanhedrin. Judas vents his frustrations to an old friend.

NOTABLE THEME Acts of service—like walking that extra mile for an enemy—are highlighted in this episode. Later, at Lazarus’ (Demetrios Troy) home, it comes up again when his sister Martha (Sophia Blum) struggles to prepare a

worthy meal for the group, and resents their sibling Mary (Catherine Lidstone), who instead of helping is sitting with Jesus to hear His preaching. “The food, your servings, they’re wonderful, but they’ll pass away with the rest of this world. My words, they’ll never pass away,” Jesus notes.

HOLY SCRIPTURE While on the road, Jesus and His followers cross paths with a group of Roman soldiers. The law states that they are able to command the Jews to carry their

weapons and armor for one mile. But once they’ve walked that mile and are told by the Romans that they can go, Jesus brings to life the words of Matthew 5:41: “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two.” Judas is *not* happy.

ENEMY OR ALLY? Judas shows even more self-interest after visiting his cynical former colleague Hadad (Josh Zagoren), who convinces Judas to skim money from the ministry’s purse.



“I’m exhausted,” Judas tells Jesus (Roumie, with Dimyan) after they finish carrying the Romans’ weapons



Bueno-Jallad’s Big James lies injured after being stoned

EPISODE 6

“Dedication”

The Feast of Dedication begins. Matthew questions Judas about a monetary discrepancy. Jesus’ preaching leads to a stoning, and an Apostle is injured.

NOTABLE THEME Yet again, ambition is at play in this episode as a primary force for Judas’ actions. Here, he asks Jesus to let him help out more financially, but Jesus only tells him to closely listen to His upcoming sermon. John questions Judas, implying that his ambition may be bigger than merely advancing Jesus’ kingdom after Judas pitches money-making ideas to the group, to little enthusiasm. And in a pointed scene, Matthew notices that there is something wrong with Judas’ numbers.

HOLY SCRIPTURE Jesus quotes John 10 while giving His public sermon in the Holy City of Jerusalem. The crowd grows and violence erupts when Jesus announces, “I and the Father are one.” Later, as the Pharisees stone Jesus and His followers, He gets heated: “You know little of the Law of Moses!” He shouts at the religious leaders. **EPISODE MVPs** This episode goes out to the Apostles, who walked miles, slept in tents, were threatened and now are stoned—all for Jesus. Before the stoning, they spend the night celebrating Hanukkah—acting out the story of the holiday, singing and arm wrestling. Not all are in good spirits, but it’s a nice moment that reminds us that their love for Jesus—and each other—has seriously grown.

SEASON 4



Laz's sisters (Blum and Lidstone) cling to each other outside of his tomb

*"Lazarus, come out!"
—Jesus beckons Lazarus from
his tomb*

EPISODE 7

"The Last Sign"

A glimpse into the future tells the fate of some of Jesus' followers. In the present, Lazarus' death shakes the group as they sit shiva in Bethany. Judas questions why there are more losses than wins. Jesus shocks everyone—especially Thomas—by bringing Lazarus back to life.

IT'S A MIRACLE Raising Lazarus is a huge Bible moment, right up there with Jesus' other big marvels, such as walking on water. When Lazarus asks Jesus, "Why me?" Jesus

tells him He's running out of time and that raising him was His last public sign. **HOLY SCRIPTURE** In John 11, Jesus raises Lazarus after he's been dead for four days. As the Scripture says, upon arriving at the tomb, Jesus asks that the stone covering be removed. In the series (which adjusts for present tense), Jesus says, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I know that You always hear Me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that You sent Me...Lazarus, come

out!" And Lazarus exits the cavern to the bewilderment of all. **EPISODE MVP** Distraught Apostle Thomas' anger and confusion finally erupt after Jesus resurrects His old friend Lazarus. "Rabbi, look me in my eyes," he pleads. "Why him and not Ramah? Why not your own cousin, John? This is...it's sick!" Jesus explains that it's His Father's will and His own will. He asks Thomas to stay with Him, and he will understand in time. But can the doubting Thomas continue to devote his life to Jesus?



Mystified, Lazarus (Troy) holds on to the funeral cloths he had been wearing when he rose from the dead



Above: Claudia (Bartholomew) and Pontius Pilate (Allen); right: Sharma's Shmuel argues with Jesus



EPISODE 8

"Humble"

Caiphias (Richard Fancy) ramps up the plot to kill Jesus as King Herod and his court dine with Pontius Pilate (Andrew James Allen). Pontius' wife Claudia (Sarah J. Bartholomew) and Joanna have an inspiring chat. Yussif and Shmuel are on the same page politically, but it does not last. Jesus gives Simon Z and Matthew an important task for his entrance into Jerusalem.

NOTABLE THEME The episode is called "Humble" for a good reason. The opening is a flashback to King David triumphantly riding a steed into Jerusalem after victory, which contrasts with Jesus, who will trot into the Holy City on a donkey. There is even a connection between the men, as Jesus now has David's bridle, a family heirloom passed on to Him. That same

bridle is put on Jesus' donkey for a modest ride that we'll see in full during Season 5. **HOLY SCRIPTURE** John 11:45–57 talks of the plot to kill Jesus, Matthew 26:6–13 and John 12:1–8 tell of the anointing of Jesus' feet, and Matthew 21:1–7 is seen when Jesus asks Simon Z and Matthew to retrieve a never-ridden, tied-up donkey. **EPISODE MVP** Joanna, wife of King Herod's household manager Chuza (Nick Chinlund), and longtime under-the-radar Jesus supporter, comes into her own in the final moments of the ender. After an insightful conversation with Claudia about having something to believe in, Joanna decides to leave behind her life of luxury—literally abandoning Chuza in a carriage and running out into the crowded streets to purchase palms ahead of Jesus' arrival. It is jubilant.

Missing Letters

By Julie K. Cohen

Below, we've listed the names of Jesus and His Apostles. To solve the puzzle, fit the names into the cross. The names can be read starting at the top and working your way down, from left to right, going row by row, with some names wrapping from one row to the next. The names are not in any particular order.



Here are the 13 names to fill:

ANDREW
JAMES
JAMES SON OF ZEBEDEE
JESUS
JOHN
JUDAS ISCARIOT
MATTHEW
NATHANAEL
PHILIP
SIMON PETER
SIMON THE ZEALOT
THADDEUS
THOMAS

WORD SUDOKU

C	W						
U			W			M	R
	M			N	R		A
A			R	W	U		S
	R					A	C
S		U			N	W	
	A	O	M		C	S	N
N	U			S			O
			N	O		C	

The goal of sudoku is to fill in every empty box with one of nine letters. Each letter can appear only once in each horizontal row, as well as in every vertical column and in each of the 3x3 grids. After preaching, Jesus instructs a discouraged Simon to cast out his net once more. The entire boat fills with fish, enough to pay off Simon's and Andrew's debts to whom? To find out the answer, finish the puzzle. This sudoku has the letters A C O M N R S U and W.

MYSTERY WORD: _ _ _ _ _

WORD SEARCH

Find these words associated with Jesus in the puzzle grid below.



ANOINTED
EMMANUEL
FAITH
GUIDE
HEALER
HUMANITY
KING OF KINGS
LAMB OF GOD
LIGHT OF WORLD
LORD
MESSENGER
MESSIAH
PEACE
PROPHET
PROTECTOR
REDEEMER
SHEPHERD
SON OF MAN

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FAITHFUL CONNECTIONS

Would you like to hear a daily reflection from the Bible as read by *The Chosen*'s own Jesus, Jonathan Roumie? Or fall asleep to the sound of the actor's familiar voice as he reads one of Jesus' famous sermons? Maybe you'd like to try a Gregorian chant, then listen to Christian hip-hop. Now you can, because there's an app for that. Founded in 2018 by CEO Alex Jones (not the *Infowars* host), Hallow is an audio-based Christian prayer and meditation app that offers an astoundingly wide variety of content. It's free to download on major platforms (and then costs \$69.99 per year). Whether you'd like to expand your community, listen to the Bible in a Year podcast, keep a journal of your thoughts, deepen your faith practices or just enjoy some quiet meditation, here are a few fun things to know about Hallow.

1 You'll be in good company. Roumie isn't the only celebrity involved with Hallow. Actor-producer Mark Wahlberg partnered with Jones in 2022, recording such exclusive content as instructions on "How to Pray," the

mysteries of the Rosary and inviting the faithful to "pray with me." Actor Jim Caviezel (*The Passion of the Christ*) participated in 2023, and last year, *Man vs. Wild* host and survival expert Bear Grylls and comedian Kevin James recorded content for the app.

2 You can sing with the choir. Music is a key part of the content on Hallow. Subscribers are able to listen to the Sistine Chapel Choir performing classical hymns, contemporary Christian music star Lauren Daigle's songs or singer and *The Voice* coach Gwen Stefani's thoughts about how she views music and songwriting as a gift from God.

3 Hallow, which means to make something sacred or holy, has become the top Catholic app in the world since it first was released in 2018. As of last year, according to the founders, the app had been downloaded more than 22 million times in more than 150 countries. Amen!



Wahlberg (left) and Roumie have teamed up with the app



PUZZLER ANSWERS

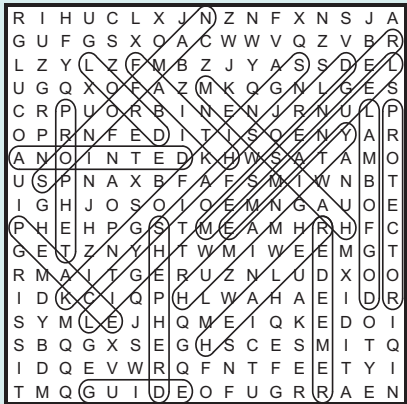
MISSING LETTERS

Puzzle on page 94



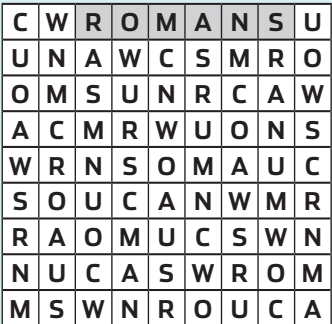
WORD SEARCH

Puzzle on page 95



WORD SUDOKU

Puzzle on page 95



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“My house shall be a house of prayer,
but you have made it a den of robbers”
Matthew 21:13