

The CHOSEN

SEASON 2 EPISODE 4 - THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY

Soccer fans around the world have a saying “It’s the hope the kills you.” Soccer is a close game where you can be down 1-0 the whole game and all you need is one goal to change everything. You can hang on to hope, for something seemingly easy and small, all game, only to be let down.

We want to have hope, to hold on to hope in difficult times, yet it can be excruciating during difficult times or extended hard times. This episode explores the idea of hope, where people will turn for hope, and what happens when it seems there is no hope.

Where do people turn to for hope in this world? What happens when that hope runs dry? Where can we always turn to for hope, a different hope, and why?

Context Remember that, during the time of the New Testament, the land of Israel was occupied by the Roman Empire, which had conquered it several decades earlier. As The Chosen has showed us at various points, the Romans were hated by most of the Jews, who viewed them as oppressive enemies.

The Zealots were a group of Jews who believed that God had called them to overthrow the Roman Empire through physical force. Some of these Zealots, known as Sicarii, would carry out terrorist attacks and assassinations of Romans and Jews who cooperated with the Roman Empire.

Scripture Psalm 69 (David’s writing on the consuming ‘zeal for your house’)

-Zechariah 14:16 (Prophecy about all the nations celebrating the Feast of the Tabernacles)

-John 5:1-30 (Jesus heals a man at the pool and is questioned by the Jewish leaders)

Main Characters - For each main character write things you learn about them: their past, current situation, struggles, personality. **Scenes and questions to consider can be found on pages 2-3. Additional questions can be found on page 4-5. Additional Information about the Episode can be found on page 5**

Jesse (paralyzed) -

James -

John -

Simon (the Zealot) -

Thomas -

Atticus -

Nathanael -

Matthew -

Shmuel -

Simon -

I. A Tale of Two Brothers

1. What had each of the brothers, Jesse (paralyzed) and Simon), went to for hope? How do their lives now differ?

II. Preparing

2. What are the Zealots hoping to accomplish by assassinating the Roman official?

3. What is discussed about the Feast of Tabernacles?

4. What is Shmuel (the Pharisee) hoping to accomplish? What is his message about?

5. Why do people wait by the pool? Why is Jesse still there?

III. The Feast

6. The disciples know what the scriptures say about the Feast in the future. What do they struggle with or not understand? How does Jesus answer them?

7. What are the disciples concerned about with Shmuel? How does Jesus respond?

IV. In Jerusalem

8. When hearing the scriptures read what does Simon remember?

9. What history of the pool is discussed on the road?

10. What does Jesus react to on the road? Why?

11. What do you learn about the Romans and the Zealots from the conversation between Atticus and ?

V. A Reunion

12. What disagreements about their belief in God do Simon and Jesse discuss? Why did Simon say he left? What does Simon say about Jesse's current situation?

VI. No Longer a Bad Day

13. What was Jesse so focused on to begin with? What does Jesus want him to focus on? Later, what are the Pharisees focused on? Why?

14. Why did Jesus perform the miracle when he did?

More Questions for Episode 4

1. Why do you think The Chosen made Simon the Zealot and Jesse the Invalid brothers?
2. What do you think it would have been like to be a person who waited around pools like Bethesda in hopes of having a sickness or disability healed? What emotions do you imagine you'd feel?
3. In this story, Jesus sees the invalid lying by the pool of Bethesda and asks him, "Do you want to be healed?" How would you react if someone asked you that question after you'd been disabled for almost 40 years?
4. Why do you think Jesus asked him that question? What do you think he meant by it?
5. Notice that the man doesn't reply directly to Jesus' question. Instead of saying he does or doesn't want to be well, he explains why he thinks he can't get well - he doesn't have anyone to put him in the pool when it is stirred up. Jesus then simply tells him to get up and walk and he's healed. What do you think we're supposed to conclude?
6. How does it affect your view of Jesse, to know that he had a brother who left him at the pool in order to go fight the Roman Empire?
7. How does it affect your view of Simon the Zealot, to know that he went off to become a Zealot and fight for the freedom of the Jews while leaving his brother helplessly lying by the Pool of Bethesda?
8. What has Simon the Zealot put his hope in to bring salvation? What has Jesse the Invalid put his hope in to bring salvation? How do the hopes of Simon and Jesse turn out?
9. Jesse initially hopes that the Pool of Bethesda will save him from his injury but ends up disappointed. In the place of the pool, what does he discover is a much better hope?

10. If Simon the Zealot had gone through with his attempt to assassinate the Roman leader, his hope would also have been disappointed by the intervention of Atticus, the undercover Roman agent. After seeing his brother healed by Jesus, do you think he will continue to hope in violence to bring salvation?
11. What kinds of things do people today put their hope in?
12. In what ways do these hopes end up disappointing us?
13. What do you think it looks like to stop putting hope in things that disappoint us, like the Pool of Bethesda, and to instead focus our hopes around Jesus?

More Details about Episode 4

- During the time of the New Testament, it was common for people to believe that certain places like the Pool of Bethesda had miraculous power to bring healing. Some Jewish people might have believed this was because God had blessed these places, but others believed that these healing centers were connected to pagan gods like Asclepius.
- The Pool of Bethesda was specifically known to heal people only at a specific time - when the waters had been stirred up. It was most likely an underground hot spring. Only the first person to reach the stirring waters was healed.
- Invalids - people with debilitating sicknesses, injuries, or birth defects - would often congregate around these miraculous places like Bethesda in hopes of having their sicknesses healed. Some might have family members carry them back and forth from home and help them when needed, but others were basically homeless people who had to beg in order to get food and care
- Jesus really did know a Zealot named Simon. The Gospels tell us almost nothing about him, but they all list him as one of the twelve disciples. While the Chosen depicts Simon the Zealot as the brother of Jesse, the invalid Jesus heals by the Pool of Bethesda, this detail does not come from the Gospels. The Chosen creatively connects these two characters in order to make a point.
- In order to explain why, in the Gospel of John, the invalid tells Jesus that he has no one to put him in the water, this episode of The Chosen depicted him as having a brother who abandoned him in order to pursue life as a Jewish Zealot.