

## **Notes for “The Chosen” series (Season 1) small groups**

### **Pastor Barry Foster**

*The following notes offer some background information, brief explanations related to Scriptural content and context, and suggestions for things to look for when viewing the episode. One practical note: you may find that it is easier to understand what is being said if the captions are turned on when viewing the show.*

#### Episode 4 “The Rock on Which It Is Built”

Our fourth episode brings us to the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, where there are two primary themes. The first is Jesus’ action of calling people to follow him as his disciples, which marks him as a religious teacher (rabbi), and spurs questions about his identity.

The focus shifts primarily to Simon and Andrew, but two other characters begin to emerge from the background: James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who are merchant fishers with a small, but not insignificant fleet of boats. Matthew’s situation changes slightly, and we are made more aware of both his status in the community and his special talent for observation.

The second theme concerns Jesus’ connection with John the Baptizer. Each of the gospels includes the coming of John and his ministry as a crucial prelude to the ministry of Jesus. Jesus himself affirmed John’s status as a legitimate prophet of God and as the one who fulfilled the role of Elijah who was to come in advance of the Messiah (Matthew 11:7-19; Luke 7:24-28).

Episode four shows us the response to John’s message and ministry among the Pharisees. The gospels point out that there was a divide among them about John. Some Pharisees responded to him, and consequently responded to Jesus, whose message was compatible with John’s. Most, however, disregarded him, considering John to simply be a raving madman, since he did not follow the traditions of the rabbis. But there were serious investigations on the part of both the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees as to whether or not John was the Messiah (Matthew 3:7-11; John 1:19-28), indicating that they were at least somewhat familiar with his message—and that they were aware of the crowds who had responded to his preaching.

The climax of the episode relates to the story in Luke 5:1-11.

#### *Some things to look for:*

1. Notice the importance of the sense of obligation to family, including extended family. The bond of family was considered to be nearly unbreakable; it was almost unthinkable to act in a way that either dishonored or endangered one’s family. Among first-century Jews (and most others in the Greco-Roman world), caring for one’s relatives, providing for them, and staying connected to them was more important than anything else, with the exception of loyalty to God.

2. This familial connection is extended to one’s people, particularly among the Jews. As a conquered people, living in the land God gave them, but under the oppressive rule of a foreign, idolatrous government, Jews developed a hatred for the Romans, based, in part, on how Romans treated their brethren (their extended family, so to speak). Note the different ways in which the various characters express different levels of accommodation with Roman government.

#### *Some questions to consider:*

1. Why would the creators of this series want to emphasize Matthew’s ability to keep track of details?

2. What do you think underlies Andrew's certainty that Jesus is the Messiah?
3. What sort of fish are you? Are there fish around you that you question whether they belong here?