



Season Three

*The third part of **The Chosen** takes us from the Sermon on the Mount to Jesus walking on water and inviting Simon Peter to do the same*

By Gerard Condon

THE CHOSEN, a multi-series drama about the life of Christ, is planned to run for a total of seven seasons. Season Three (Angel Studios, 2022; directed by Dallas Jenkins) premiered earlier this year and consists of eight episodes, varying in length between 53 and 100 minutes. This series takes us from the Sermon on the Mount (where Season Two left off) to Jesus walking on water and inviting Simon Peter to do the same (Mt 14:22-33). It's a dramatic finale to a season that features 1000s of

extras in elaborate costumes and highly detailed sets that were borrowed from the Mormon Church in the United States.

I think that the prologues to each episode present its best scenes, as these show imaginative flair and insight into Biblical theology. In Episode 6, for example, the passion of Jesus is unexpectedly anticipated in the dream of Pilate's wife (Mt 27:19). The Roman Governor of Judaea (Andrew James Allen) coolly dismisses her fear even as criminals are being crucified before his balcony. Much of Season Three,

Shahar Isaac with film director Dallas Jenkins; Isaac has been featured in numerous iconic films and TV shows

however, is taken up with the mundane. Should a shantytown that has sprung up around Capernaum be granted planning permission? Who is responsible for repairing a broken cistern? And how might an olive plantation become more productive?

Everyday life

The trivial details of everyday life carry little dramatic value, and the slow pace of much of the series is made more tedious by the contrived Hebrew accent of the cast (apart from the Roman officials and military, who speak with a regular American accent). It is especially jarring when combined with contemporary phrasing, such as Jesus telling his squabbling disciples, "Let's stay on topic... Everyone just listen up."

In fairness, Jonathan Roumie, brings gravitas as well humour to his portrayal of Jesus. And Season 3 of *The Chosen*, like its predecessors, addresses weighty theological issues such as, why does God answer some prayers, but not others? Simon Peter (Shahar Isaac) is angry when Jesus does not prevent his wife's (Lara Silva) miscarriage. The



question is also discussed when Jesus decides not to heal Little James (Jordan Walker-Ross) of the deformity in his leg. He explains that a person's witness to their faith can be more powerful when divine favour is withheld: "You can be patient with your suffering here on earth, knowing that in heaven there will be no suffering." In the final episode, Jesus beautifully defines faith as our pledge to, "Trust in God, choosing his will for your life."

Negotiated tension

The series will help viewers become familiar with phrases from life in 1st century Palestine. "Abba" means "father" or "daddy"; "adonai" means "lord" and "shalom" means "peace". To greet someone "Shalom, shalom" means to wish them the fullness of peace. The negotiated tension between the different socio-religious groups is also well illustrated. The Roman empire is the dominant force; its laws are enforced by legionary soldiers. The Romans realise, however, that they must win the goodwill of the Jews if they are to contain the threat posed by the Zealots, a revolutionary brotherhood. Soldiers like Gaius (Kirk B R Woller), a centurion, become secret admirers of Jesus. Gaius' fascination with Jesus grows as he witnesses miracles. He begins



ohm Amis, Invision

to believe that Jesus might heal his servant (Lk 7:1-10).

The Jewish religious authorities (principally the Pharisees) are usually opposed to the teachings of the "rogue preacher" Jesus of Nazareth, denouncing his miracles as sorcery. He scandalises the Torah by touching people who are unclean and because "he breaks bread with Gentiles." However, at least one synagogue official, Jairus (Alessandro Colla), begins to believe that he is the Messiah, especially following the raising of his daughter (Mk 5:35-43).

Who is Jesus?

As for the identity of Jesus, that remains enigmatic. He typically tells those who are healed not to publicise the event, because his time has not yet come. There is a particularly impressive storyline in Episodes 4 and 5 involving a woman called Veronica (Zhaleh Vossough), who is healed of her debilitating haemorrhages by touching the fringe of his cloak (Mk 5:25-34). Jesus assures her that it was her own faith in God which cured her, rather than himself. As the season progresses, the signs and wonders of Jesus are more directly linked to his own divine nature. His sense of self is already evident in Episode 3, when, on a visit to Nazareth, the local rabbi challenges him, "Who do you think you are? A prophet or the Messiah." Jesus asserts, "I am the Law of Moses." His audience regarded this as a blasphemy, and he is angrily shuffled out of his native town.

This scene is an excellent drama-

The cast of *The Chosen* attend the theatrical premiere of Season 3 during a charity fundraiser to benefit the Salvation Army at the historic Fox Theater in Atlanta

tization of Luke 4:16-30. However, we must remember that the Gospels were written decades after the Resurrection, when the first Christians knew that Jesus was the Son of God. *The Chosen* gives the impression that his divine identity was already fully understood by Jesus during his lifetime. In other words, the series opts for a 'high Christology', and does little to address the limits to the self-consciousness of Jesus posed by his full humanity.

Complex storyline

Such is the complexity of the storyline and the large cast, that I still find it difficult to distinguish many of the characters, one from the other. Among the women, I have a clear sense of Mary Magdalene (Elizabeth Tabish), who is often in the company of Tamar (Amber Shana Williams), an Ethiopian disciple. Among the apostles there are distinctive performances by Matthew (Paris Patel), their most fastidious member, and Judas Iscariot (Luke Dimyan), who is appointed their treasurer. He shows little trace of his future descent into ignominy.

All three series of *The Chosen* are available free-to-air at www.angelstudios.com and through dedicated iOS and Android apps. Season 4 is slated for release next year. **MSA**