

FOREWORD BY DALLAS JENKINS



THE

Rediscovering the Bible with

THE CHOSEN

SEASON ONE



FORGOTTEN



TEACHINGS



OF JESUS

Brandon Robbins

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THE FORGOTTEN TEACHINGS OF JESUS:
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Episode 1

TROUBLE

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There is going to be trouble.

A woman is troubled by the demons that possess her.

The Romans are troubled by the revolutionary sentiment brewing within the Jewish community.

Two brothers are troubled by the oppressive taxes that threaten to take away their livelihood.

A tax collector is troubled by the hatred he faces from both Jews and Romans.

And yet, trouble is not necessarily a bad thing. By the end of episode 1, we will be introduced to a man who will stir up his own trouble. Ultimately, he will look upon all these characters and proclaim the powerful message we hear in the opening song:

Oh, child, come on in

Jump in the water

Got no trouble with the mess you been

[Come] Walk on the water

Chapter 1

HOPE IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

The night is cool along the Sea of Galilee. The scent of fish lingers in the air, drifting over from the port where merchants are closing up shop and fishermen are casting off to seek tomorrow's catch.

Close by, perhaps just across the field from Mount Arbel, a father sits with his daughter outside the tent that is their home. The girl awakens abruptly from a nightmare and comes to her father for comfort. He does what any first-century Jewish father would do in such a moment—he offers her the words of God's promise: "But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine'" (Isa. 43:1 NKJV).

Her father recites these words from memory. The words feel so natural, as if they are his common tongue, his *lingua franca*. He doesn't pause. He doesn't search. The words simply flow.

Through this touching moment, *The Chosen* gives us a bold introduction to the world of Jesus.

Unlike today, the people of Jesus' day didn't have personal copies of Scripture. Few if any had access to all the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament). Even the local synagogue would have had only a handful of scrolls.

So, instead, the Jewish people would memorize Scripture. They would begin to learn it at an early age from whatever source they could, and they would recite it frequently throughout each day. In this tender exchange between father and daughter, the father

is demonstrating this practice. He is helping his daughter to have God's Word written upon her heart, readily accessible wherever she is and in whatever she is going through.

But by opening the series with this particular verse from Isaiah, *The Chosen* is communicating something more. Obviously, these words would be comforting in and of themselves, a reminder that God will never abandon this little girl—that the Lord will see her through whatever is causing her to worry. But these words aren't meant just for her. This little girl is part of something much bigger than herself. And so are these words.

In fact, the comforting words spoken by Isaiah were written long before this girl was born, to a people living in a land far away from where she and her

There were several factors that led to the paucity of Torah scrolls in local synagogues.

One was space. When we look at the archaeology of first-century synagogues, their Torah closets were not large enough to hold all the books of the Torah. In Qumran, where portions of all but one of the Old Testament books were found, the scrolls take up cave after cave. Additionally, paper was expensive, and few men were equipped to copy these Scriptures. So, it is safe to assume that few, if any, towns had more than a handful of scrolls.

father resided. Isaiah wrote these words at a time when the Israelites had been removed from their land by the Babylonians. They were captives in a foreign country, and they had no idea when or if they would ever return home.

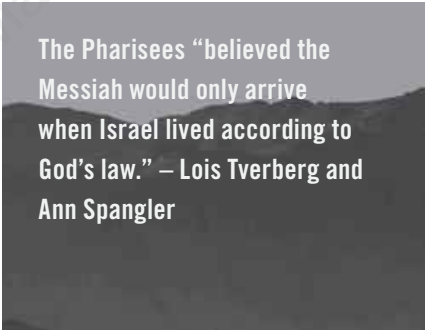
Nevertheless, Isaiah was promising that this was not the end of their story. He was telling them not to fear, for the Lord would redeem them, return them to their land, and set them free again. And, ultimately, that is precisely what the Lord did.

Unfortunately, it's possible to be liberated yet not truly free.

As the fictional father and daughter ponder these words at the beginning of the first century, their people are still longing for freedom. While the Jewish people had been back in their land for several centuries, they were still oppressed. Once again, they were captives, but this time it was in their own land. Rome had made them subjects of the Roman Empire. They had to submit to Roman rule but received none of the privileges that would have come had they been Roman citizens.

So, to them, the words of Isaiah were not merely a promise to those long past but also a prophecy for the future. They were crying out to be free, and they trusted that God was going to send a Savior, a Messiah, who would not merely remove Roman occupation but would also restore them to the glory and power of their forebears.

There was another source of trouble and concern, though. It was widely believed that one important change must happen before this Messiah would arise: The people must know and obey God's commands. Completely.¹



The Pharisees “believed the Messiah would only arrive when Israel lived according to God’s law.” – Lois Tverberg and Ann Spangler

When the Jewish religious leaders, like the Pharisees, looked at the oppression brought by the Roman Empire, they wondered why God was not rescuing Israel. Eventually, they concluded that the problem was that the Messiah couldn't come because the Jewish people were not properly obeying God's laws.

Torah can be a reference to both the first five books of the Old Testament and the entirety of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Consequently, at the time of Jesus, there was intense pressure for people to both know and obey the Torah. This makes the father's response to his daughter's fears all the more important. Not only is he offering her comfort by teaching her Scripture, but also he is

teaching her Scripture by obeying Scripture.

In Deuteronomy 6, God commands his people, "Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children" (vv. 4–7a NLT). These words come from a passage of Scripture called the *Shema* (pronounced shem-AW). It is one of the most important passages of Scripture in the Jewish community, a reminder of who God is and who God's people are to be. Faithful Jews recite it twice each day.

It has this name because *shema* is its opening word. It means "hear," but it also means "obey."

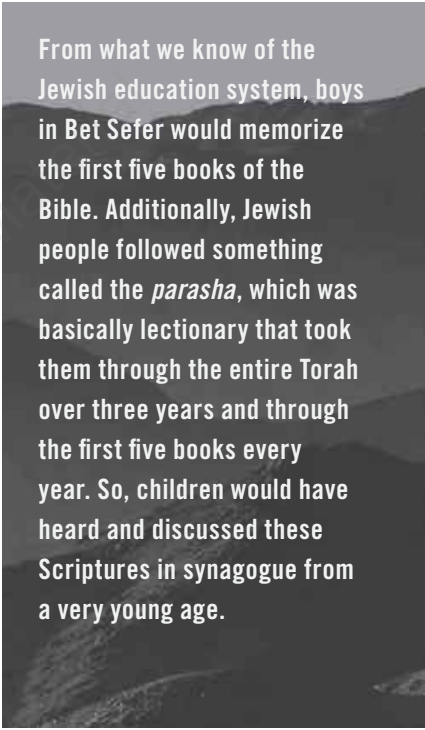
God was telling the Israelite people that they must know the law, obey the law, and pass the law down to their children. This was essential if the people were to remain faithful. And at the time of Jesus, they believed that it was essential in order for the Messiah to come.

The Jewish people would teach the Scripture while in their local synagogues, while doing work at home, when around the fire at night, and at every other opportunity. Just as we speak in our native tongue with little thought, Scripture became their common language, floating in and out of conversation naturally, often without need for explanation.

What's more, the community conversed not just in a handful of verses and stories; they discussed all of Scripture. They wrestled together with difficult and confusing passages. Children were taught not only "age-appropriate" stories, but even the stories that may scandalize many of us today.² Their mission was to pass down all of God's Word, and they didn't shy away from that responsibility.

They could do this because they did it as a community. They did it together. Good Jewish parents saw it as their responsibility to teach their own children the Torah, and the entire community saw this as a shared responsibility. They would draw upon the wisdom and insight of one another. And when difficult passages came up, they were prepared to explain them together.

Insights like this make me keenly aware of how different things are today. Not only do many of us feel intimidated because we don't know enough about Scripture to explain it to our children, but also



From what we know of the Jewish education system, boys in Bet Sefer would memorize the first five books of the Bible. Additionally, Jewish people followed something called the *parasha*, which was basically lectionary that took them through the entire Torah over three years and through the first five books every year. So, children would have heard and discussed these Scriptures in synagogue from a very young age.

we feel alone in the task. When it comes to passing our faith on to our children, many of us tend to rely on the children's programs in our churches or Christian schools. But in each of these instances, we are disconnected from the process.

There are few places where we gather as a community to teach our children. So, while we may not share the same reasons for memorizing and passing down Scripture that the Jewish people did at the time of Jesus, we would do well to follow their example.

In the years to come, the little girl from this scene and the people of her community will learn that the Messiah will come whether or not they have mastered complete obedience to the law. But that does not negate the importance of knowing it.

To the people of Jesus' day, Scripture was a gift. Sometimes, they would even dance when it was read!³ And Scripture is still a gift.

As this first episode continues, we will discover that it is not only this young girl who finds herself in trouble. Every person we meet is in distress. All of their lives are dark and filled with conflict. In most cases, it is the absence of God's Word in their lives and a separation from the community that has led them to such a painful place.

But as we will soon see, God's Word is about to come into their lives to set them free.