

The Chosen—Season 1, Episode 7, “Invitations” : “Easter Eggs” and Notes

Details and Notes that Might Be Helpful or Interesting:

‘*’ Indicates an extra/non-biblical character or reference

Time:	Reference:	Explanation/Note/“Easter Egg”:
<p>COLD OPEN— “Sinai Peninsula, 13th Century BC 00:00:00 – 00:03:03</p> <p>00:01:16 – 00:03:03</p>	<p><u>Moses</u>: “After today, the only Hebrews too sick to walk will be those who choose to remain so.”</p> <p><u>Joshua</u>: (skeptically) “Is there medicine in that bronze? You told the people that you would ask God to forgive their rebellion, to heal their serpent wounds...”</p> <p><u>Moses</u>: (interrupting) “I did.”</p> <p><u>Joshua</u>: “Then why are you hiding in a tent?!”</p> <p><u>Moses</u>: (angrily) “It wasn’t my idea, Joshua!”</p> <p><u>Joshua</u>: “That is a pagan symbol. You did not ask Him if He was sure? Maybe you misunderstood Him.”</p> <p><u>Moses</u>: (turning to face Joshua) “I’ve learned to do what He says without questioning...” (make sure you notice what seems to stand in the background there in Moses’ tent) “...You remember what happened at Meribah.” (He turns away and returns to his work.) (See Note 2 on Exodus 17, below.)</p> <p><u>Joshua</u>: “Just to be sure we could send a messenger to Ezion-geber, (Numbers 33:35, 36; Deut. 2:8) beg for aid...”. (See Note 3 on Numbers 33 & Deut. 2.)</p>	<p>Summary: We see Moses, sweating profusely, crouched over what looks to be an oven—or a forge. Joshua enters the tent to report that 300 more have died over the night. As the two men talk about how and where the dead are being dealt with, Moses pulls a length of glowing hot metal out of the forge and begins hammering it on an anvil. Joshua says his concern isn’t for the dead “but for the dying.” (We are seeing the unfolding story of the fiery serpents from Numbers 21—See Note 1, below.) Joshua expresses seeming hopelessness that hundreds are dying by the day and that for every serpent killed another ten appear. As the two men discuss what to do, Moses continues to hammer away at the metal he is forging, explaining that the only Hebrews too sick to walk and to leave the location where they are will be those who choose to remain so. Joshua grows increasingly impatient with Moses, who lashes back that, whatever it is he is making, it wasn’t his idea. (He is making a serpent out of bronze.) Joshua expresses doubt about Moses making “a pagan symbol” and wonders if Moses could have misunderstood God. Moses reminds Joshua of what happened at Meribah, where he (and the Israelites) quarreled with God and was judged accordingly. Joshua suggests they send a messenger for aid from the Edomites, who have already sent the Israelites away. Moses ignores Joshua and continues with his work. Joshua tells him the people will think what he’s doing is a cruel joke and begs Moses to help him understand. Moses reminds Joshua of what they’ve already seen from the hand of God and reminds him that all of this is act of faith, not reason.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers 21:4-9: From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom, but the people became discouraged on the way. ⁵The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” ⁶Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” ⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole, and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

	<p><u>Moses:</u> (ignoring Joshua's suggestion) "That pole. Hand me that pole pointing to the item in the background." (He hangs the bronze serpent on it.)</p> <p><u>Joshua:</u> "The people will say it is a cruel joke."</p> <p><u>Moses:</u> "Let them say that."</p> <p><u>Joshua:</u> "Help me understand. None of this makes any sense!"</p> <p><u>Moses:</u> "How do you explain the Red Sea? The manna and the quail? The pillar of fire? Joshua, (growing in volume and intensity) any Israelite who looks upon this bronze serpent and believes in the power of Adonai will be healed. It's an act of faith!! Not reason. (pausing intently) Faith." (Moses storms out.)</p>	<p>2. Exodus 17:1-7: From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²The people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" ³But the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" ⁴So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. ⁶I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Massah," in Hebrew means "testing," and "Meribah" means "quarreling." <p>3. Numbers 33:35-37: ³⁵They set out from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber. ³⁶They set out from <u>Ezion-geber</u> and camped in the wilderness of Zin (that is, Kadesh). ³⁷They set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 2:1-8: We journeyed back into the wilderness, in the direction of the Red Sea, as the Lord had told me, and skirted Mount Seir for many days. ²Then the Lord said to me, ³'You have been skirting this hill country long enough. Head north, ⁴and charge the people as follows: "<u>You are about to pass through the territory of your kindred, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, so be very careful</u> ⁵<u>not to engage in battle with them, for I will not give you even so much as a foot's length of their land, since I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession.</u> ⁶<u>You shall purchase food from them for money, so that you may eat, and you shall also buy water from them for money, so that you may drink.</u> ⁷<u>Surely the Lord your God has blessed you in all your undertakings; he knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.</u>"' ⁸So we passed by our kin, the descendants of Esau who live in Seir, leaving behind the route of the Arabah and leaving behind Elath and <u>Ezion-geber</u>.</p> <p>"When we had headed out along the route of the wilderness of Moab, ⁹the Lord said to me, 'Do not harass Moab or engage them in battle, for I will not give you any of its land as a possession, since I have given Ar as a possession to the descendants of Lot.'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Israelites have had some interaction, albeit cautious and perhaps even mistrustful, with the Edomites.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We hear the traditional relationship between the Israelites and the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, Jacob’s twin from Genesis.
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Scene: Capernaum—Matthew’s House*

00:04:05 – 00:06:02		<p>Summary: We join Matthew, apparently getting dressed for the day, putting on a nice robe, a ring on his finger, perfume. He seems particularly antsy. Exiting his house, he meets Gaius* (his Roman bodyguard) on the street and is surprised to find him there. (If you remember from the earliest episodes, Matthew had to make his own way from his house to his tax collector’s booth where Gaius would meet him.) In their exchange, we hear some of what is going on internally for Matthew: “When you realize that nobody else in the world cares what happens to you, you think only about yourself.”</p>
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Scene: Capernaum—Nicodemus’ Quarters*

00:06:03 – 00:10:44		<p>Summary: We see Nicodemus seated at his table, pensive and anxious. He glances at an hourglass and his wife, Zohara*, comes into the room announcing that she has received word from Jerusalem that their daughter has given birth to a son, “You’re a grandfather again.” She begins to pack up to make the journey back to Jerusalem and quite animatedly, Nicodemus insists that he’s not going, that his research is not complete. (In fact, from the last episode, it seems his research has become considerably more complicated by what he has seen and cannot explain.) Zohara contends they must make it back in time for the <i>bris</i> (circumcision, performed on the 8th day after birth), but Nicodemus deflects by stating that the circumcision could be done by anyone. Zohara seems appalled he would react so regarding his own grandson! (“Fifth grandson,” he retorts.) Zohara is outraged at the potential for embarrassment and the gossip that could be generated if they were to miss that event, but Nicodemus is singularly focused on “not just one Jewish boy but all of Israel, past, present, and future.” Zohara continues with her annoyance, particularly of the backwater nature of Capernaum and demands Nicodemus come to his senses. “I have never been closer to my senses,” he firmly states, though Zohara—continually concerned with the way things look to others—retorts that it doesn’t look that way to others. Gathering herself, Zohara confesses how much she misses her family, and as Nicodemus prepares to reply the argument is interrupted by Praetor Quintus* who barges in dressed in all his official regalia. He notices and comments on the comfortable accommodations Nicodemus and Zohara enjoy in their elite status. Quintus wants to know if they have a problem, noting that both he and Nicodemus want the same thing: “...rules followed... order.” A back-and-forth commences between the two men, Quintus issuing veiled threats and warnings, Nicodemus deflecting and warning against creating a martyr. After Quintus leaves, Zohara detects Nicodemus’ sympathy toward Jesus.</p>
00:08:11-00:10:44	<p><u>Quintus:</u> “You and I want the same thing. We want rules followed. We want order. Soldiers, money, votes, that’s my world. Demons, prayers, oddballs, that’s yours. I need to know if our worlds are on a collision course. ... The so-called miracle worker?”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus:</u> (thinking for a second, seating himself at the table with Quintus) “Jesus of Nazareth.”</p> <p><u>Quintus:</u> (with ridicule and derision) “Don’t even know</p>	

what Nazareth is, but yes, him.”

Nicodemus: *“Anecdotes and rumors.”*

Quintus: *(impatiently) “And a stampede in the easter ghetto that delayed Herod’s envoy. (threateningly) That really made me look bad. I hate that.”*

Nicodemus: *(calmly but forcefully) “The unrest began when your soldiers waded into the crowd brandishing weapons.”*

Quintus: *(interrupting) “It isn’t an isolated event. I’ve heard reports, and my source has an unwavering knack for accuracy and a compulsion for the truth. So again I ask you...(menacingly) is there a problem?”*

Nicodemus: *(matter-of-factly) “No.”*

Quintus: *“You don’t seem sure.” (Nicodemus is unphased.) “Maybe I could get better information from this Shmuel?” (Now Nicodemus reacts) “He’s very eager to see me.”*

Nicodemus: *“The only way to learn this preacher’s intentions is to speak with him directly.” (Zohara seems to react with concern.)*

Quintus: *“So speak to him.” (picking up his helmet to leave) “I hate crowds. They take time and resources and then cleanup is a pain. When you arrange a private meeting, I want to know when and where. (again, threateningly) Understand?”*

Nicodemus: *(not responding to Quintus’ threat) “What troubles you about this man?”*

	<p><u>Quintus</u>: “Preachers have a habit of becoming politicians. They sprout up like weeds and spread. (turning to Zohara, perhaps sensing an ally) Your wife is a gardener. She understands.”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus</u>: “Some flora spread their seeds when trampled. (equally threateningly) Who’s to say you wouldn’t be creating a martyr?”</p> <p><u>Quintus</u>: (staring intently at Nicodemus and approaching him face-to-face) “I’ll take my chances.” (He walks out as Nicodemus ponders and Zohara approaches him.)</p> <p><u>Zohara</u>: (accusingly) “You sympathize with this preacher.” (Nicodemus is silent.)</p>	
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Scene: Jesus’ & the Disciples’ Campsite Outside Capernaum*

<p>00:10:45 – 00:14:49</p>		<p>Summary: We see the disciples and Jesus engaged in camp life and chores. John, son of Zebedee, questions whether they will be safe here and Jesus wonders what he means by “safe.” John suspects that the Jewish authorities will be looking for them because of what Jesus said about forgiving sins when healed the paralyzed man in the last episode. Jesus assures John they won’t be there very long, that the events of the day before will keep them moving from town to town. John wonders if that’s what Jesus wants, and Jesus replies, “I want to do the will of my Father. And I want to spread the message of salvation. So yes, I am happy not to stay in one place.” John seems unconvinced and uncertain.</p> <p>Thaddeus wonders about how much firewood to prepare. Jesus thinks for a second and suggests five days, which confuses John based on what Jesus just told him. Jesus teaches him—not all lessons are “curriculum”—that they’ll be leaving firewood for the next weary traveler and that “[h]ospitality isn’t only for people who own homes” (See Note 1 on p. 6 below.)</p> <p>Mary Magdalene enters the scene, apparently uneasy—Thaddeus notices—and asks to speak with Jesus. Privately, she apologizes for what she describes as the disruption of his teaching by escorting Tamar and her friends (from the previous episode) so that, what Mary thought, they could get closer to hear. Jesus assures her and comments, “...[W]ith their faith they would have found a way whether you brought them to the roof or not.” Mary tells him there’s more and recounts her conversation with Nicodemus asking for a private meeting. Jesus is intrigued by Mary’s previous brushes with Nicodemus in the Red Quarter of all</p>
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<p>00:14:12-00:14:49</p>	<p><u>Mary Magdalene:</u> (as Jesus begins to walk away) “Where are you going?”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> “To be alone. I need to think. And to pray.”</p> <p><u>Mary:</u> “I will pray also...that I did not put you in terrible danger.”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> (smiling assuredly and chuckling) “You have not. In fact, I have made plans already for tomorrow night.”</p> <p><u>Mary:</u> (puzzled) “Plans?”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> “Yes. Spread the word. A dinner party in the northern district, the tall house just past the arch.”</p> <p><u>Mary:</u> (skeptically) “But that row of homes...”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> “I know the kind of people who live there. (turning to walk away) Trust me.”</p> <p><u>Mary:</u> (still skeptical and hesitantly) “I will tell the others.”</p>	<p>places—remember the botched exorcism attempt from Episode 1—and Mary downplays Nicodemus’ presence there by insisting that Rome sent him, otherwise he wouldn’t have wanted to be there. But she also notes her encounter with Nicodemus after Jesus had healed her and his apparent earnestness, “There was a hunger in his eyes, not fear.” Jesus contrasts that with Pharisees in the window the day before who called the Roman authorities. Jesus tells Mary to broker the meeting and that Little James will know the location.</p> <p>As Jesus begins to walk away, Mary wonders where he is going and He tells her <u>He needs to be alone</u> to think and to pray. (See Note 2, on p. 8 below.) Before He goes, He divulges He has already made plans for the next night, “a dinner party in the northern district.” Mary seems skeptical about that location and its residents, but Jesus assures her and asks her to trust Him.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hospitality for the traveler and the stranger: There are a number of texts from the Torah that don’t necessarily require hospitality rendered for travelers per se, but definitely insist that aid be rendered even and especially for—depending on which translation you’re reading from—“aliens” or “strangers in your midst” or “foreigners,” sometimes rendered “sojourners.” Often, these texts set this hospitality or aid within the context of remembering what it was like to be treated with hostility as aliens/foreigners as slaves in Egypt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leviticus 19:33-34: “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. ³⁴The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the native-born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” • Deuteronomy 10:17-19: For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, ¹⁸who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. ¹⁹You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” • Deuteronomy 19:17-18: “You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow’s garment in pledge. ¹⁸Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.” • A key story from the Torah that features a culture of aid and hospitality to the stranger comes from Genesis 18:1-10: The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. ²He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them and bowed down to the ground. ³He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. ⁴Let a little water be brought, and wash your
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feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” ⁶ And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah and said, “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” ⁷ Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. ⁸ Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree while they ate

.⁹ They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” ¹⁰ Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.”

This story is referenced in the *New Testament* book of *Hebrews*, indicating that a similar *Christian ethic* has already begun to take root within the earliest Christian congregations—**Hebrews 13:1-2**: *Let mutual affection continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. ³ Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them, those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.*

- Similarly there are any number of laws in the Torah that govern how farmers harvest their crops, specifically with the plight of the poor in mind:

Leviticus 19:9-10: “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ You shall not strip your vineyard bare or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God.”

Deuteronomy 24:19-22: “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. ²⁰ When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

²¹ “When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. ²² Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.”

We particularly see this ethic lived out in the book of **Ruth**, specifically in **Ruth 2** when the farmer Boaz orders his hired hands to see to it that they leave enough of the harvest behind for Ruth (a foreigner from Moab) and Naomi to gather for themselves.

		<p>2. Jesus retreating to a quiet place to pray: The Gospels frequently record Jesus’ retreat to lonely places to pray:</p> <p>Mark 1:35-39: <i>In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.</i> ³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” ³⁸ He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also, for that is what I came out to do.” ³⁹ And he went throughout all Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.</p> <p>Luke 5:12-16: <i>Once when he was in one of the cities, a man covered with a skin disease was there. When he saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”</i> ¹³ Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, “I am willing. Be made clean.” Immediately the skin disease left him. ¹⁴ And he ordered him to tell no one. “But go, show yourself to the priest, and, as Moses commanded, make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” ¹⁵ But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds were gathering to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. ¹⁶ <i>Meanwhile, he would slip away to deserted places and pray.</i></p> <p>Matthew 14:13-14: <i>Now when Jesus heard this, [that John the Baptist had been beheaded], he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns.</i> ¹⁴ When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.</p>
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Scene: Capernaum—Matthew & His Dog, Outside Someone’s Door*

00:14:50 – 00:18:31		<p>Summary: We see Matthew and his dog outside someone’s door. Again, Matthew seems particularly anxious and antsy. He hesitantly knocks on the door, turns to leave, but stays. After no immediate answer, he knocks again, and this time the door opens a crack and a woman, seemingly surprised, greets him by name. Matthew greets HIS MOTHER, first with an intimate and familiar name, “<i>eema</i>”—“Mom”—but quickly corrects himself, calling her instead by her proper name, “Elisheva”* (the Hebrew form of “Elizabeth”), greeting her awkwardly. (What ISN’T awkward when it comes to Matthew!?) She hesitantly lets him in, noting she couldn’t do this if his father, (Alphaeus—See Note 1, on p. 9 below) we discover, a worker in leather goods who is away peddling his wares), were there. Inside, the hesitancy and awkwardness continues. Matthew offers, that if they were in need—as would have been the custom (See Note 2, on p. 9 below)—he could provide money, that he knows of many whose parents are utterly dependent on their children to provide. Whatever softness of heart we may suspect or hope for between mother and son is evaporated: “Your father would sooner die than take <i>your</i> blood money.”</p> <p>Matthew admits he knows of the shame he has brought upon the family, but in his way, suggests that is an irrational viewpoint, that</p>
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Rome will collect taxes no matter way, that he's skilled with numbers. His mother interrupts, wondering if he came here to justify himself. We see the most emotion we've ever seen from Matthew as he stands up and confesses "everything is like sand in a flood," that everything he once thought to be true has been shaken. He asks his mother if she thinks impossible things can happen, things that overturn the laws of nature. Elisheva responds by saying those sorts of questions were asked even when Matthew was a boy, so astonished were people at his talent for reading, math, the way he could think faster than any other child. Matthew notes his outward trappings of success—his wealth; that he requires an armed escort—but his mother responds with her disappointment in the direction his talents have taken him. Matthew returns to question of the miraculous, the unexplainable, the internal upheaval he has experienced, and Elisheva insists that he leave. After a few moments of silence, Matthew heads for the door. His mother fires a final shot: "You never even asked about your sister." But Matthew responds that she looks well and confides that he came to celebrate Shabbat a few weeks ago—we saw this in Episode 2—but that he left. "Goodbye, Eema," Matthew says as he leaves.

Notes:

1. Alphaeus—**Mark 2:13-14**: *Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. ¹⁴As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax-collection station, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.*

Mark is the only one who notes this detail—neither Matthew (**Matt. 9:9-13**) nor Luke (**Luke 5:27-32**) mention his relationship to "Alphaeus," though they do lift up Matthew (also called "Levi") as "a tax collector."

HOWEVER, Matthew does list "James, SON OF ALPHEUS," (**Matt. 10:2-4**), as does Luke (**Luke 6:14-16**), but the Bible never gives any inclination that the men are related in any way.

2. **Care for elderly parents:** The Torah does not give any more specific instructions for care for the elderly apart from (according to our numbering of the 10 Commandments), the 4th commandment from **Exodus 20:12**: "Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

There seems, however, to be a specific ethical responsibility in place in Jesus' day—note, for example:

Matthew 15:1-9: *Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ²"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat."³ He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?⁴ For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.'⁵ But you say that whoever tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God,' then that person need not honor the father. ⁶So, for the*

		<p><i>sake of your tradition, you nullify the word of God. ⁷You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said:</i></p> <p><i>⁸ ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;</i></p> <p><i>⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’ ”</i></p> <p>Here, Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of the self-righteous Pharisees, who have adopted a practice, apparently, of “fulfilling righteousness” through their Temple offerings, while at the same time declaring themselves free from any sort of family responsibilities to their elderly parents.</p>
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Scene: Capernaum—Simon & Eden’s House* and Jesus’ Conversation with Nicodemus

<p>00:18:32 – 00:31:30</p>		<p>Summary: Jesus is cleaning a fish as they all—Andrew, Simon, and Eden—prepare for the evening meal. Simon expresses his discomfort with what could be a trap, discovering that the potential “trap” is Jesus’ meeting with Nicodemus. Simon notes that Nicodemus—and really, the Pharisees, in general—are seen as collaborators with Rome, that it was the Romans who sent Nicodemus to Mary Magdalene in the Red Quarter. (See the note on the various Jewish factions of Jesus’ day, Note 1, below on p. 11). Jesus assures Simon that Jesus is well acquainted with risk, noting that Simon himself is as well. (“Risk is his oldest friend, I’m afraid,” Eden adds.) Jesus goes on to reassure Simon that Mary, of all people, is a good judge of character, having known some of the worst kinds of men in the world and that Simon should trust Mary’s instincts, as well as Jesus’.</p> <p>We hear Eden’s eema cough, which seems to irritate Simon. “I just don’t want our burdens to become his, okay?” Simon explains.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Andrew is fitting Jesus with a hooded cloak, a disguise it seems for the clandestine meeting with Nicodemus. Jesus wonders if the owner of the house has given permission, and Andrew assures Jesus that all has been arranged and that Andrew himself will be waiting at the door. Jesus sends him on ahead, reminding Andrew that his role is to be a guide for the guest, not Jesus’ protector. This is said within earshot, of course, of Simon, who seems to relish that role and wonders whether he should come so that there would be more eyes watching for trouble. Jesus insists Simon stay here with Eden and—after a seemingly pregnant pause—“your mother-in-law.” Jesus exits for the meeting with Nicodemus.</p> <p><u>Under the cover of darkness</u>, (See Note 2 below on p. 12) Andrew greets Nicodemus at the proscribed rendezvous place and urges him not to be alarmed and that Jesus is waiting. The two men—Jesus and Nicodemus—meet on the roof of an unnamed person’s house. Nicodemus thanks Jesus for agreeing to meet, and Jesus responds with gratitude for Nicodemus’ attempt to help Mary, to which Nicodemus confesses he was of no help. Jesus assures Nicodemus he was meant to there, noting that if hadn’t been for that day, Nicodemus wouldn’t be there now.</p>
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00:23:41 –
00:27:43

Nicodemus: “Born again?”

Jesus: “Yes.”

Nicodemus: “You mean like a new creature?” (pausing to think) “A conversion from gentile to Jewish?”

Jesus: “No. No, that’s not what I’m talking about.”

Nicodemus: “Then, what is ‘born again’? I hope you don’t mean return to the womb because that would be a problem for me. My mother, may she rest in peace, is dead.”

Jesus: “Truly, I say to you... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. (grasping Nicodemus’ hands) That which is born of the flesh is flesh... (placing his hand on Nicodemus’ heart) and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. That part of you, that is what must be reborn to new life.”

Nicodemus: (shaking his head, trying to make sense of it all) “How can these things be?”

Jesus: (sighs patiently) “A teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things.”

Nicodemus: “I’m trying, Rabbi.”

Jesus: “I know. I know.” (Jesus pauses for a moment

The two sit, their faces now illumined by lamplight. Both Jesus and Nicodemus note the prevalence of previous fiery preachers who gathered crowds, but Nicodemus asserts he had never seen or heard any of those tell a paralyzed man to get up and walk, let alone it actually happen. Jesus wonders about Nicodemus’ conclusion, and Nicodemus confesses, “I believe you are not...acting alone. No one can do these signs (See **Note 3**, on p. 12 below) you do without having...God in him. Only someone who has come from...God.” Jesus wonders how this belief of Nicodemus’ is being received in the synagogue and Nicodemus chuckles uncomfortably and shakes his head.

Jesus asks Nicodemus what else he wants to know, to which Nicodemus questions, “What else have you come to show us?” Jesus replies, “A kingdom,” which Nicodemus tells him is what the authorities—Rome, in particular—are worried about. Jesus assures him it’s not the kind of kingdom that anyone can see without being born again, which puzzles Nicodemus. The words Jesus speaks to clarify “born again” are pretty much straight from John 3, and it is noteworthy that in this conversation, as he does in the Scripture, Nicodemus calls Jesus, “Rabbi,” (“Teacher”), treating him as an equal. As the conversation comes to a close, we see Andrew and John (the one who would record these words in his version of the Gospel!) eavesdropping on the street below.

The conversation draws to a close as Nicodemus reflects on that day with Lillith... Mary, nothing that he commented that she was beyond human aid, that only God could have healed her, “And here you are. The healer,” he concludes. Nicodemus begins to weep. Jesus invites Nicodemus to follow Him, even noting all the reasons that would hinder him from doing so. “I understand,” Jesus says, “But the invitation is still open.”

The scene ends as the sun of a new day rises.

Notes:

1. **Note 1—The Jewish Factions of Jesus’ day:**

Pharisees: (Nicodemus is one.) The Pharisees were a movement of common, lay people (rather than a movement of priests, like the Sadducees) who had more in common with Jesus’ teaching than any of the other Jewish movements. They acknowledged the entirety of what we today call the Old Testament. They believed in a resurrection of the dead and a dynamic and spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures. The Pharisees’ response to the Roman problem was largely avoidance; practicing faithful interpretation of and response to Torah; and to look forward to eventual freedom from Roman rule.

Sadducees: Often foils and rivals to the Pharisees, the Sadducees did not believe in the supernatural; an afterlife of any kind; angels, spirits, demons, etc. They held exclusively to the written Pentateuch/Torah (5 Books of Moses). Their approach to Jewish faithfulness could be expressed, “*You get one shot at life, and faithfulness to the Law ensures a good life in the here and now.*” The Sadducees were usually the group from whom the priests and High Priest were

	<p>and notes the wind.) “Do you hear this?”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus:</u> “What?”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> “Listen...What do you hear?”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus:</u> “The wind.”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> “How do you know it’s the wind?”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus:</u> “Because I can feel it, and I hear its sound.”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> “Do you know where it comes from?”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus:</u> “No.”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> “Do you know where it’s going?”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus:</u> “No.”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> (pointing directly at Nicodemus) “That’s what it is to be born again of the Spirit. The Spirit may work in a way that is a mystery to you, and while you cannot see the Spirit, you can recognize His effect.”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus:</u> (frustrated) “My mind is consumed with thoughts of what a stir these words would cause among the teachers of the Law.”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> “Yes, and I do not expect otherwise. I speak of what I know and have seen, and it has not been received by the religious leaders.”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus:</u> “It is hard to receive.”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> “So if I have told you of earthly things and you do not believe... how can I tell you heavenly things?”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus:</u> (earnestly) “I believe your words. I just fear you may not have the chance to speak many more of them before you are silenced.”</p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> “I have come to do more than speak words, Nicodemus.”</p>	<p>selected and were often seen as collaborators with the Romans for the sake of keeping the peace.</p> <p>Essenes: The Essenes were Jewish mystics or monastics whose response to the Roman problem—or their perceived problem of secularism in general—was to withdraw into their desert communities, chief of which was Qumran, on the NW shore of the Dead Sea. (The Essenes were the sect who collected and warehoused what we call “the Dead Sea Scrolls.”) The Essenes’ general beliefs and practices mirrored those of the Pharisees. There is no direct mention of them in the Scripture—most of what we have come to know about them comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves or the Jewish Roman historian Josephus (AD 37 – ca. 100). Some scholars have suggested that John the Baptism could have been an Essene, or had been influenced by them.</p> <p>Zealots: As <i>Crazy Book: A Not-So-Stuffey Dictionary of Biblical Terms</i> puts it, “As vegans are to vegetarians, zealots were to Jews” (363). Faithfulness, to them, was a political-economic response of open, violent opposition to Rome as well as Jewish collaborators and the re-establishment of the Davidic Kingdom of Israel. The Zealots instigated the rebellion that in 70 AD led to the Roman destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Luke/Acts lists one of the disciples/apostles as “Simon the Zealot” (Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13).</p> <p>2. Note 2—Nicodemus, under cover of darkness:</p> <p>John 3:1-2: “Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.”</p> <p>In John’s Gospel, Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night, under the cover of darkness to learn more about Jesus and his teachings. It is Nicodemus—remember: he’s a Pharisee—who comes with Joseph of Arimathea (also a member of the Sanhedrin, according to Luke 23:51) to acquire Jesus’ dead body and to provide the spices and ointments for a proper burial.</p> <p>Jesus’ teaching and signs throughout John’s Gospel focuses on the contrasts between “light” and “darkness,” between those who CAN see; those who THINK they can see; and those who CAN’T SEE and yet also “see” clearly WHO JESUS IS. (See John 9 and his account of the man born blind.)</p> <p>3. Note 3—Signs vs. Miracles—Remember John’s Gospel labels Jesus’ miracles as “signs,” which point to Jesus’ identity as the Word made flesh.</p> <p>4. Note 4—Psalm 2: “Kiss the son, let he be angry...”</p> <p>Here in this scene, Nicodemus quotes a partial verse from Psalm 2, “Kiss the Son...let He be angry and you perish in the</p>
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<p><u>Nicodemus</u>: <i>“More miracles?”</i></p> <p><u>Jesus</u>: <i>“Yes, but even more than that. Do you remember when the children of Israel complained against God and against Moses in the wilderness of Paran?”</i></p> <p><u>Nicodemus</u>: <i>“Yes, they wanted to return to Egypt, and they cursed the manna that God sent them.”</i></p> <p><u>Jesus</u>: <i>(affirmingly) “And then?”</i></p> <p><u>Nicodemus</u>: <i>“They were bitten by serpents and they were dying.”</i></p> <p><u>Jesus</u>: <i>“But...?”</i></p> <p><u>Nicodemus</u>: <i>“But God made a way for them to be healed.”</i></p> <p><u>Jesus</u>: <i>“Moses lifted the bronze serpent in the desert, and people only needed to look at it.” (pauses) “So will the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.”</i></p> <p><u>Nicodemus</u>: <i>“Our people are not dying from snake bites. They’re dying from taxation and oppression.”</i></p> <p><u>Jesus</u>: <i>“I’m sorry to disappoint you...but I did not come to deliver the people from Rome.”</i></p> <p><u>Nicodemus</u>: <i>“Then from what?”</i></p> <p><u>Jesus</u>: <i>“From sin. From spiritual death. God loves the world in this way...that He gave His only Son... that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”</i></p> <p><u>Nicodemus</u>: <i>“So this has nothing to do with Rome? It’s all about sin.”</i></p> <p><u>Jesus</u>: <i>“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, Nicodemus. He</i></p>	<p><i>way,” while Jesus completes the verse, “And blessed are all who take refuge in Him.”</i></p> <p>Interestingly enough, this is one of those Messianic interpretations that we’ve established to be kind of a bugbear in MISunderstanding <i>what kind of Messiah Jesus is</i>.</p> <p>Here’s how the whole Psalm reads, noting its imagery of power and wrath:</p> <p><i>Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying, 3 “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast their cords from us.” 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision. 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury, saying, 6 “I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.” 7 I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. 11 Serve the Lord with fear; with trembling 12 kiss his feet, [other alternative translations go with “Kiss the son...”.] or he will be angry, and you will perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Happy are all who take refuge in him.</i></p> <p>However it is Nicodemus has previously understood and anticipated the Messiah, it seems his understanding is CHANGING.</p>
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<p>00:30:53 – 00:31:30</p>	<p>sent Him to save it through Him. It's as simple as Moses' serpent on the pole. Whoever believes in Him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already.”</p> <p>(Nicodemus kneels before Jesus.)</p> <p><u>Jesus</u>: “You don't have to do that.” (Much to Jesus' puzzlement, Nicodemus kisses Jesus' hand.) “What are you doing?”</p> <p><u>Nicodemus</u>: “<u>Kiss the Son...lest He be angry and you perish in the way.</u>”</p> <p>(Jesus takes Nicodemus by the hand and has him rise.)</p> <p><u>Jesus</u>: “<u>And blessed are all who take refuge in Him.</u>” (The two men embrace, and Nicodemus sobs.) (See Note 4, above on p. 12.)</p>	
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Scene: Capernaum—Matthew's Tax Booth*

<p>00:031:34 – 00:35:09</p>		<p>Summary: Matthew is once again at his post, with the watchful Gaius* outside and a long line of tax payers. Gaius tries to make conversation with Matthew, and Matthew in his way rebuffs him.</p>
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Matthew indicates he went to see his mother and recounts the conversation, noting that she's ashamed of him for using his talent "against God." Gaius actually tries to reassure Matthew of his choices in using his talent to make a living.

As the conversation continues, Jesus and the disciples walk by, Jesus and Matthew making direct eye contact. Gaius notices and watches intently as Jesus passes by, stops, turns around and makes his way back to Matthew's tax booth. As Jesus calls him by name, we see Gaius handle his sword. "Matthew, son of Alphaeus," Jesus says, "Follow me." (See **Note 1**, below.) Simon is perturbed. Matthew is puzzled. Gaius orders Jesus to move on. The energy of the scene rises.

Matthew, at once, gets up, locks the door, and begins to move toward Jesus and the disciples, but Gaius grabs him by the tunic to stop him, and with a boldness we have not seen before, Matthew tells him, "Let me go, Gaius." Gaius is absolutely flummoxed, listing all of what Matthew is about to leave behind: "You have money. Quintus protects you. No Jew lives as good as you. You're going to throw it all away?" "Yes," says Matthew as he hands both the key to his tax booth and the signet ring of his position to Gaius, looking him straight in the eye.

Simon is as flummoxed as Gaius, saying, "I don't get it," and Jesus quickly, sternly, and good-naturedly reminds him, "You didn't get it when I chose you, either."

"But this is different," Simon says, "I'm not a tax collector."

"Get used to different," Jesus retorts.

Gaius tells Matthew he'll regret this.

Jesus asks Matthew about the tablet he's carrying, and Matthew indicates he just absent-mindedly grabbed it but could put it back. Jesus tells him to keep, that he might find use for it yet.

Matthew asks where they're going, and Mary Magdalene tells him, "A dinner party." Matthew reminds them he's not welcome at dinner parties. "Well that's not going to be a problem tonight," Jesus answers, "You're the host."

NOTES:

1. **Note 1—Matthew 9:9-13:** ⁹As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax-collection station, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

¹⁰And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹²But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous but sinners."

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