



The Gospel of John, Lesson #9

John's Gospel is intensely dramatic.

- The life of Jesus is portrayed as a ruthless contest of cosmic proportions, a merciless duel between Light and Darkness, between Life and Death, between the Son of God and the Prince of this world.
- The conflict grows in intensity and culminates in the condemnation of Jesus. At that moment, darkness seems to have swallowed the Light.
- But it is precisely at that moment, at that "hour," that the perspectives are suddenly reversed.
- Paradoxically, the Condemned reveals himself as the Judge of the world, the Crucified as the Victor. The hour of death is precisely that of glory.

The ending we all desire...is seen in this gospel. It is truly an epiphany of "Good News" as the conclusion.

Note: Last thought/truth in the gospel.

John 21:24-25, "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."

Today's study:

John 1:43-44, "The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter."

He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me":

If we only had John's Gospel, we might think that this was the first time Jesus had met these men from Galilee. The other gospel accounts inform us that Jesus had met many of them before; yet this was His formal invitation to Philip.

Follow Me:

- Nothing dramatic recorded about the call of Philip. Jesus simply said to him, **"Follow Me,"** and Philip did.
- The verb 'Follow' is used in its full sense. Here...the present tense has a continuing force, 'keep on following'.

Bethsaida:

- Means 'house of the fisherman' or 'Fishertown'.
- Township a short distance east of the point where the Jordan enters the Lake of Galilee.

John 1:45-51, “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ And Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!’ Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ Nathanael answered and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.’ And He said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’”

John’s writing had a lot of conversations intermingled with his stories. He was precise in his writing; yet, his writing matured throughout his writings. He did not want to miss a thing. AND, AREN’T WE GLAD! For instance, Jesus’s conversation with Nicodemus (John 3), the woman at the well (John 4). All of the specific encounters were so detailed that he wanted to make sure the reader knew who stated each sentence in the conversation.

- **Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets wrote:** This was Philip’s testimony as a witness of Jesus Christ. He declared that He was the Messiah and the Savior predicted in the Old Testament.

Note: Nathanael is today generally understood to be the same person as Bartholomew, one of the Twelve (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). John refers to the apostle almost exclusively as Nathanael in his gospel.

- **Can anything good come out of Nazareth?** Nathanael responded to Philip’s announcement with prejudice. Hearing that Jesus came from **Nazareth**, Nathanael thought he had no more reason to think that He might be the Messiah or anyone important.

What reason for the response by Nathanael? A Roman garrison was stationed in Nazareth. The Jewish men who made money doing business with the Roman soldiers were considered traitorous collaborators.

This Nathanael is most likely the "**Nathanael of Cana in Galilee**" mentioned in John 21:2, so he would be familiar with Nazareth, which is only 6 kilometers (4 miles) southwest of his hometown of Cana.

Ever heard of “Stop 6” in Fort Worth? What about Oak Cliff in Dallas?

The prejudiced response: “Can anything good come out of Stop 6 and Oak Cliff?”

What do you think of Nathanael's initial reaction to what Philip told him?

It was based on his unqualified impressions (prejudices) - against all people from Nazareth ("Nazarenes" - see [He shall be called a Nazarene](#)).

Philip responded: "**Come and see**" Jesus for himself.

How applicable is his advice for people today?

- Most people who don't believe in Jesus base their beliefs or the lack of it also on unqualified impressions.
- They may have heard people who claim to know the Bible talk about it, but they have never studied the evidence - the Bible - for themselves. To them, Philip's invitation to "**come and see**" Jesus for themselves applies as much today as it did to Nathanael 2000 years ago.
- **Come and see:** Instead of arguing against Nathanael's prejudice, Phillip simply invited him to meet Jesus for himself.
- **Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!** Jesus gave him a wonderful compliment. The sense is that there was nothing tricky or deceptive in Nathanael. Not like Jacob who was deceptive and was arrogant...until Jacob's change of heart.
- **Under the fig tree, I saw you:** It is possible Nathanael liked to pray and meditate upon God and His Word under the shade of an actual fig tree. "**under the fig tree**" was a phrase Rabbis used to describe meditation on the Scriptures.
- **You are the Son of God, the King of Israel:**
 - ✓ This was the testimony of Nathanael regarding Jesus.
 - ✓ **Son of God** described the unique relationship of Jesus to God the Father, and
 - ✓ **King of Israel** described His status as Messiah and **King**.
- **You shall see greater things than these:**
 - ✓ Nathanael was amazed by what he already saw in Jesus, but Jesus told him that there was much, much more to see – **greater things than you can imagine...would be more natural for Jesus.**

NOTE: The promise to see greater things than these continues for the believer.

- ✓ "Have you known Christ as the Word? He is more; both Spirit and Life.
- ✓ Has He become flesh? You shall behold Him glorified with the glory He had before the worlds.
- ✓ Have you known Him as Alpha, before all? He is also Omega.

- ✓ Have you met John? You shall meet One so much greater.
- ✓ Do you know the baptism by water? You shall be baptized by fire.
- ✓ Have you beheld the Lamb on the Cross? You shall behold Him in the midst of the throne." (Meyer)
- **You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man:**
 - ✓ Jesus promised Nathanael a greater sign than he had seen before, even to see **heaven open**.
- Jesus' announcement of **the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man** probably connects with the dream of Jacob in Genesis 28:12, where Jacob saw a ladder from earth to heaven, and the angels ascending and descending upon it.
 - ✓ Jesus said that *He* was the ladder, the link, **the bridge** between heaven and earth.
 - ✓ Possibly it was the very portion of Scripture Nathaniel meditated on **under the fig tree**.
- **Son of Man:** The idea behind this phrase is not "the perfect man" or "the ideal man" or even "the common man." Instead, it was a reference to Daniel 7:13-14, where the King of Glory who comes to judge the world was called the **Son of Man**.

John shows four ways of coming to Jesus:

1. Andrew came to Jesus because of the preaching of John.
2. Peter came to Jesus because of the witness of his brother.
3. Phillip came to Jesus as a result of the direct call of Jesus.
4. Nathaniel came to Jesus as he overcame personal prejudices by a personal encounter with Jesus.

John shows us four different witnesses testifying to the identity of Jesus. How much more testimony does anyone need?

1. John the Baptist testified that Jesus is eternal, that He is the man uniquely anointed with the Holy Spirit, that He is the Lamb of God, and that Jesus is the unique Son of God.
2. Andrew testified that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ.
3. Phillip testified that Jesus is the One prophesied in the Old Testament.
4. Nathaniel testified that Jesus is the Son of God and the King of Israel.

Some information gathered from David Guzik's website.