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*Clabon Bogan Jr. – Interim Pastor*



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# *Sunday Church School*

*December 27, 2020*

**“Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael”— John 1:43-51**

**Golden Text: John 1:51**

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**“John 1:43-51”**

<sup>43</sup> The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."

<sup>44</sup> Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

<sup>45</sup> 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."

<sup>46</sup> And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "***Come and see.***"

<sup>47</sup> Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

<sup>48</sup> 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."

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**“John 1:43-51”**

<sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

<sup>50</sup> 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."

<sup>51</sup> 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."

**TODAY'S AIM** Facts: to study the example of John the Baptist as he continues to testify to Jesus' true identity as the Messiah. We also see the first disciples of Jesus Christ emerge.

**Principle:** to show how the first disciples of Jesus had a number of characteristics that we should emulate. They were spiritually hungry, bold in their proclamation, and willing to follow Jesus wherever He went.

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**Application:** to follow the example of the first disciples of Jesus Christ who displayed a spiritual hunger, a desire to tell others about Him, and an obedient devotion to Him.

When John saw Jesus walking toward him, he exclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

- By referring to Jesus as the Lamb takes us back to Genesis (22:8, 12-14), where Abraham was told to sacrifice his son Isaac to the Lord.
- Isaac’s query and Abraham’s response prophetically looked ahead to the atoning sacrifice of Christ.
- During the final plague, visited upon Egypt, the Israelites were told to choose a perfect lamb and slaughter it on the evening of the first Passover. (Exd. 12:7-23)
- They were told to paint the doors of their houses with its blood to protect their families from the plague that would kill all the firstborn of the Egyptians (Ex. 12:1-14).
- This event was also prophetic of the atoning death of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

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Some radical Greek teachers were said to have called disciples to follow them (e.g., Socrates called Xenophon), but normally ancient students or their parents chose their own teachers.

As often in Matthew and John, “**following**” could mean “**becoming a disciple,**” because disciples could show respect to masters of Torah (law) by walking behind them.

- In the Gospel of John this term also has greater significance (John 10:4).
- In the OT Israel “heard God’s voice” when they obeyed the law and His message through his prophets.
- Those who were in covenant relationship with God—knew Him (John 10:14-15).

## **LESSON OUTLINE:**

**I. MORE DISCIPLES—John 1:43-46**

**II. GREATER UNDERSTANDING—John 1:47-51**

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## **I. MORE DISCIPLES—John 1:43-46**

- We began our lessons in John’s Gospel with testimony about Jesus from John the Baptist.
- The next lesson dealt with Jesus’ first two disciples, to whom John had identified Jesus as the Lamb of God – one of whom was Andrew
- John was baptizing in the areas of Judea and Perea; and immediately he pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God that He decided to travel north from there to Galilee
- With the encounter of Jesus with Andrew and His brother, there is a model of engagement exhibited in their dialogue
  - ❑ **V 42** Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon [that hears; obeys] the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).
  - I. I See you      II. I know you      III. I will change you**
- This disciple meeting was followed by His meeting other men who would become future disciples.

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These meetings should not be counted as His calling these disciples to be apostles, for that took place at the Sea of Tiberias (Matt. 4:18), but it refers to their being convinced that He was the Christ.

- The to that work would occur a year after this original round of meetings (**Mark 1:17; Luke 5:7-10**)

Following Jesus' encounter with Andrew and Peter, He left Judea to journey into Galilee, a region in which He had grown up.

The first person Jesus found there and invited to follow Him was Philip who was from the fishing town of Bethsaida (**house of fishing**; fisherman's house)

- Andrew and Peter were from Bethsaida (V 44), though they later lived other about 6 miles away in Capernaum (**city of comfort**; Luke 4:31-32)
- As fishermen in a fishing cooperative, they would know each other (Luke 5:10)
- Jesus most often chose common people from common walks of life to follow Him.
- The principle stated in **1 Corinthians 1:26-29** by Paul is still true

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Just as Andrew sought Peter, so Philip was immediately moved to share the good news he had received so He finds and tells him about it Nathanael (John 1:45-46).

- The actions of Andrew and Philip are sterling examples of what every believer in Jesus Christ ought to be.
- Based on our knowledge of the consequences of unbelief, we are better equipped to share Christ than did these two disciples.

Philip told Nathanael that they had found the Promised One, of whom Moses and the prophets had written: “Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (V 46).

In citing the books of Moses as well as the Prophets, Philip was actually referring to the entirety of the OT Scriptures.

- He was claiming that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the prophecies about the Messiah found in the Scriptures.
- That was a remarkable declaration based on the brevity of their personal experience

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In response to Philip’s naming of “Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph,” Nathanael immediately expressed some reservations.

- This skepticism was based on the depraved, raucous reputation of Nazareth

Philip did not bother arguing the point with Nathanael; he simply invited him to **come and see** Jesus for himself.

- Nathanael was from Cana, which was about 4 miles from Nazareth (John 21:2)
- What greater proof than to see that a very significant person did indeed come from an insignificant place?
- It was a simple invitation to experience Jesus firsthand and make his own decision, which is still a most effective way to witness.

Nathanael is not mentioned in the lists of apostles given by the Synoptic writers, but each of them names Bartholomew as one of the twelve.

- John alone mentions him; thus, most scholars think Nathanael is Bartholomew
- One thing we do know, he was an honest man with no hidden motive

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## II. GREATER UNDERSTANDING—John 1:47-51

- Upon receiving the invitation, Nathanael joined Philip as he returned to Jesus; and Jesus seeing him approach, made a declaration about his character
- Jesus said (a) He is really what he professes to be—a Jew, a descendant of the patriarch Jacob, fearing and serving God.
  - (b) He makes no profession which he does not live up to.
  - (c) He does not say that Nathanael was without guilt or sin, but that he had no disguise, no trick, no deceit—he was sincere and upright.
- This is a most honorable testimony and rest assured Jesus knows each of our hearts as well – we become aware of this as we learn Christ’s Divinity
- Yet, hearing Jesus express a favorable opinion of him, he naturally inquired by what means he had any knowledge of him – ***How do you know me?***
- His conscience testified to the truth of what Jesus said—that he had no guile, and he was anxious to know How Jesus had learned his character.

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- Just as He done with Peter, Jesus related information that could only have come from a supernatural source
  - ❖ “*When thou wast under the fig-tree*” indicates that there something which occurred in this venue that spoke to Nathanael’s character
  - ❖ *I saw thee* -- is a clear statement that Jesus did not mean to say that he was bodily present, but he knew his thoughts, desires, secret feelings and wishes.
- It is not improbable that Nathanael was accustomed to retire to the shade of a certain tree, perhaps in his garden or in a grove, for the purpose of **meditation and prayer**.
- What is critical is the truth that He judges of our character by our private devotions, which are secret, and the world does not see.
- Nathaniel responded “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel”
- Jesus correctly confirmed Nathanael’s character, and therefore he could be no other than Messiah, the Divine Son of God, knows the heart of man.
- Nathanael also called Him “the King of Israel,” ironically the title which was affixed to his cross **Iēsus Nazarēnus Rēx Iūdaeōrum ( INRI—John 19:18)**

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The great object John had in view in writing this gospel was to collect the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah (John 20:31).

This situation where Jesus searched the heart, and this pious Jew recognized the Christ is an important testimony.

Then Jesus told Nathanael that his testimony would afford him “Greater things”

- I.e., Nathanael would have fuller proof of Jesus’ Messiahship, particularly what is mentioned in the following verse.
- In V 51 “verily, verily” means “amen, amen” – or so be it certainly
- Jesus said “Ye shall see” – not necessarily with physical eyes – moreover, you shall have evidence that it is so.
- “Heaven open” is a figurative expression, denoting the conference of favor:
  - **Psalm 78:23-24** Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, <sup>24</sup> And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

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- It also denotes that God was about to work a miracle in attestation of a particular thing.
  - ❑ **Matt. 3:16** And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:
  - ❑ The language here is an evident allusion to the ladder that Jacob saw in a dream, and to the angels ascending and descending on it (Gen. 28:12).
- It is not probable that Jesus referred to any particular instance in which Nathanael should literally see the heavens opened.
- The baptism of Jesus had taken place, and no other instance occurred in his life in which it is said that the heavens were opened
- The fact that Nathanael was sitting under a fig tree also has larger implications.
- Several Old Testament passages use the image of sitting under a fig tree to indicate a period of safety, peace, and rest.



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## **“ADVANCE YOUR KNOWLEDGE”**



1. What did Philip share in common with Peter and Andrew? What does that possibly signify?
2. How was Philip's immediate response to Jesus' invitation similar to that of Andrew?
3. What claim did Philip's citation of Moses and the Prophets make about Jesus?
4. How did Jesus greet Nathanael, and what did this prove about Him? How did Nathanael express his surprise?
5. What three things are revealed about Nathanael's understanding in his response to Jesus?
6. What did Jesus say about Nathanael's initial responses to Him? How did Jesus connect Nathanael's time under the fig tree with Genesis 28:10-15?

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## **PRACTICAL LESSON POINTS:**

Jesus' call, “Follow me,” must be answered by everyone with either a yes or a no (John 1:43).

Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecies in both the law and the prophets of the Old Testament (V. 44-45).

Those who truly follow Jesus will want others to follow Him as well and they will try to help them find Him (V 46).

Jesus knows everything about everyone and there is nothing about our character that is hidden from Him (V. 47-48).

Jesus Christ is the Son of God and one day all will confess He is Lord (John 1:49; Phil. 2:5-11).

Faith in Christ opens our eyes to see great spiritual realities (John 1:50-51).

# Man 2 Man

**MENS ZOOM FELLOWSHIP**

**Saturday January 9 – 8:00 AM**

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**Password: 172091**

**FACILITATORS**

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**Frances A. Schaeffer**

**Christ Baptist**

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**Starting January 5, 2021**

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