

Pt 10 The Calling of Nathanael – John 1:45-51

A sermon series in the Gospel of John, by Pastor Byron Chesney at Porchlight Baptist Church www.pbcknox.com

John 1:45-51

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

This morning, with the help of the Lord, we are going to look at verses 45-51 of John chapter 1, which deals with the calling of Nathanael as a Disciple.

We covered verse 45 last time; however, for context sake we included it again in today's message just so no one is confused about what is taking place.

Let's go ahead and read again verse 45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

So far there has been 5 disciples called: Andrew, Peter, James, John, and Philip. While John doesn't provide an inclusive list of the disciples, all three of the Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Acts does.

Matthew 10:1-4 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. 2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Mark 3:13-19 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. 14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, 15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: 16 And Simon he surnamed Peter; 17 And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: 18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, 19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

Luke 6:12-16 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; 14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James

and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, 16 And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

Acts 1:13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

Disciples as listed in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts				
#	Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:13
1	Simon called Peter	Simon surnamed Peter	Simon named Peter	Peter
2	Andrew, Peter's brother	James son of Zebedee	Andrew, Peter's brother	James
3	James son of Zebedee	John brother of James	James	John
4	John brother of James	Andrew	John	Andrew
5	Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
6	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
7	Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
8	Matthew the Publican	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
9	James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus
10	Lebbaeus surname Thaddaeus	Thaddeus	Simon called Zelotes	Simon Zelotes
11	Simon the Canaanite	Simon the Canaanite	Judas brother of James	Judas brother of James
12	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Matthias*

*Matthias chosen to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26)

This morning we are placing our sights on the 6th disciple, Nathanael.

NATHANAEL, is listed as Bartholomew in all four lists of the Twelve. In the Gospel of John he is always called Nathanael. Bartholomew is a Hebrew surname meaning "son of Tolmai." Nathanael means "God has given." So he is Nathanael, son of Tolmai, or Nathanael Bar-Tolmai.¹

If I had been one of the Apostles I could have been called Byron son of James or Byron Bar-James. There is no Hebrew name for Byron but the meaning of my name is an Old English name for "The place of the cow sheds."

But, getting back to Nathanael, our opening text tells us that Philip found Nathanael and told him that they had found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write. I think we can safely assume that Philip and Nathanael were good friends, perhaps, best of friends.

They also know the Scriptures. That is one thing we need to always remember. Just because Jesus called mostly blue collar workers, fisherman, uneducated men, that doesn't mean they were ignorant of the Scriptures. In fact, nearly all the disciples knew the Scriptures which is one reason they readily accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Now we learn something else about Nathanael – he has a human side. He's like most people I know, including myself, always looking for the worse in a situation instead of immediately looking for the best.

So, instead of Nathanael saying "Great! Take me to him so I can meet him!" he says; "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" There probably a good reason for this.

¹ MacArthur, John F.. Twelve Ordinary Men (p. 135). Thomas Nelson.

The Bible tells us Philip was from Cana in Galilee. **John 21:2** *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.*

If you look at a map of Galilee, you will find that Cana is right beside Nazareth. I'm sure those from Cana looked down on those from Nazareth. It's probably the way people from Farragut look down on us hillbillies in Corryton.

But, for whatever reason, Nathanael seems to be doubtful anything good could come from Nazareth. Also, since he studied the Scriptures, perhaps he was thinking: **"Hmmm, I thought according to the Prophet Michah, the Messiah was coming out of Bethlehem Ephratah?"**

Again, if you look at an ancient map of Israel, you will see there is also a Bethlehem in Galilee just above Nazareth; however, the prophet Micah prophesied the birth would be in Bethlehem Ephratah, which is the birthplace of King David and is in Judea. So, this could be another reason Nathanael may have been doubtful of anything good coming out of Nazareth.

Nazareth was a rough town and full of rough people. It was one of those towns where most people only passed through if they had to on their way somewhere else.

Philip saith unto him, **Come and see.** Philip does not stand there and argue or try to convince Nathanael of anything, he simply says **"Come and see."**

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, **Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!**

As Nathanael and Philip walk towards Jesus, Jesus is already aware of them and waiting. He gives Nathanael a great compliment: **"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"**

The word **"guile"** means **"deceitfulness."** You may remember an Israelite who was full of deceitfulness (Jacob). Jacob deceived his father, his brother, and his father-in-law. But Jesus gives Nathanael a compliment of an Israelite who does not have the guile of Jacob. The Bible says in **Psalms 32:2** *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

Jesus recognizes Nathanael as an upright truth seeking Israelite. Despite Nathanael's first reaction about the worthiness of someone from Nazareth, he is still spiritually minded enough to overlook that and go and see for himself.

48 Nathanael saith unto him, **Whence knowest thou me?** Jesus answered and said unto him, **Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.** Nathanael seems surprised that Jesus seemed to know him even though he had never met him. So he asks him, **"Whence knowest thou me?"** Have we met before? Have you been talking to my parents? Did Philip tell you about me? What's going on? I love Jesus' answer to him: **Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.**

This must have floored Nathanael. It's obvious Jesus had not been there when he was under the fig tree. This could only mean that he is omniscient. This was all it took for Nathanael to positively identify that Jesus was the Promised Messiah. We know this by what Nathanael says next:

49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, **Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.**

You can almost see in your mind Nathanael hitting the ground on his knees. There was no doubt in his mind that Jesus was the Messiah. Only the Messiah could supernaturally know him without physically meeting him. This is why Nathanael called him the Son of God (meaning the Messiah) and King of Israel (meaning the One who would sit on the throne of David).

50 Jesus answered and said unto him, **Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.**

Jesus is not rebuking Nathanael for his faith, he is more or less asking him: "So, the man who doubted anything good could come out of Nazareth, now believes in me simply because I told him I knew him in his secret place beneath the fig tree?"

But then Jesus is quick to ensure Nathanael that he will witness greater things than just him knowing him.

51 **And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.**

This is another reference to Jacob. Listen to what it says in:

Genesis 28:10-12 *And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. 11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put *them* for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.*

Jacob saw angels of God ascending and descending on a ladder. The ladder represented a connection with man to God.

But Jesus tells Nathanael that he will see angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man (meaning Himself). The Son of man is now the connection with man to God.

And that ends the first Chapter of the Gospel of John. It started out with John stating **John 1:1** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

And the chapter ends with proving the Word is the Son of God and the Son of man.

Next time, Lord willing, we will start Chapter 2 and read about the Wedding at Cana.

