

**Find Life in the Son:
Come and See.
John 1:43-51**

Introduction

By the time John the apostle is writing his Gospel, the first 70 years of church history is drawing to a close. He's the last surviving apostle. He takes us back to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry when He is recruiting His closest band of followers. John, Andrew, Peter, and in our text today, Philip and Nathanael. Never forget when you first started following Jesus and why you did so. We continue the mission of pointing people to Jesus, telling them to come and see.

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." **44** Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. **45** 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." **46** Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." **47** Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" **48** Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree,

I saw you.” ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” ⁵⁰ Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” ⁵¹ And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

At the center of our text this morning are Philip’s words, “Come and see.” Jesus used these same words when Andrew and John asked where He was staying because they wanted time with Him.

Before Philip’s invitation to skeptical Nathanael the dominant verb we see is *found*. Jesus found Philip. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the Messiah.” After his invitation, “Come and see,” the dominant verb is some form of *see*. Jesus saw Nathanael under the fig tree before they met. The implication is that he saw more than the outside, because He exclaims that Nathanael is an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit—He sees Nathanael’s character before they ever met. It’s enough to convince Nathanael that Jesus is the one Philip declared Him to be. Then Jesus predicts that Nathanael will see yet greater things. He and the other disciples will one day see angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

Observations from the account
Jesus found Philip before Philip found Him.
When Philip found Him, he found Nathanael
and invited him to come see Jesus for
himself.

Jesus saw Nathanael before Nathanael saw
Him. When Nathanael realized who Jesus
really was, Jesus prophesied that Nathanael
and the other disciples would one day see
greater things.

1. Listen to the call of Jesus to follow Him (43-45).
2. Find others to come and see Jesus for who He is (45-49).
3. Trust in Jesus Christ and you will see greater things yet (50-51).

1. Listen to the call of Jesus to follow Him (43-45).

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

⁴⁵ 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."

We don't know Philip's history, just that he was from the same hometown as Andrew and Peter. It's possible he may have known them

before joining the band of Jesus' disciples, but that's not for sure. Bethsaida likely had a population of about 15,000 (a little less than Berea—do you know everyone in Berea?). During Christ's ministry this city ended up having significant exposure to Jesus and His gospel, yet most of the people there did not repent and believe.

Matthew 11:21

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

But Jesus found Philip and personally called him to follow. Unlike many in his city, Philip responded and became convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Has Jesus found you and called you to follow Him? Has He whispered your name?

John 10:27-28

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Think back. What or whom did God use to turn your heart toward Him?

A crisis?

A sin that was destroying you?

A message in a church gathering, VBS, Bible Study, Sunday School?
A mom or dad, brother or sister?
A friend?
A new acquaintance?
God's Word directly?

Verse 45 gives us better insight into why Philip followed Jesus and continued to do so. He was looking for the Messiah with eager expectation. He was familiar with what the law of Moses and the OT prophets wrote about the coming Messiah, and Jesus matched the description.

Sometimes people think that trusting in Jesus Christ means they are betraying their Jewish heritage. But the Jewish Old Testament Scriptures prophesy the coming Messiah, and Jesus matches what they predict. That was the message of the first century apostles who were themselves Jews familiar with the OT Scriptures.

Those who refused to trust in Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Savior-King, had other motives for their unbelief, not the Jewish Scriptures. They were entrenched in a religious tradition that had become more about self-perpetuation than about seeking for the Savior. Of all people on earth, the Jewish theologians and teachers of the OT law should have been the first to believe in Jesus,

but the majority of them dug in their heels and refused.

They had the Scriptures, but their loyalty was to the system and the rules they had built around the Scriptures. So much so that spiritual life was not attractive to them. Even God Himself in human flesh was a threat. He did not bow at their shrines or follow their rules. He did not stroke their egos. He called them to repentance and faith as He did the rest of the rabble. And they considered themselves better than other people, treating them with contempt.

That kind of religion continues to this day and is often called Christianity. But it's not. It's counterfeit, just as the Judaism that rejected Jesus was not true Judaism. True children of Abraham put faith in God's Word and in the Messiah His Word reveals.

John 5:39-40

39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, **40** yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

The very Scriptures they studied and taught pointed them to Jesus, but they refused to come. Doing so would have cost them too much status among their peers.

John 5:44-47

44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? **45** Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. **46** For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. **47** But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

Luke 16:27-31

27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— **28** for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' **29** But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' **30** And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' **31** He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

Luke 24:25-27

25 And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" **27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them

in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Will you open your mind and heart to what the OT teaches regarding the Messiah and see that Jesus matches those predictions? Or will you cling to religion instead—whatever your reasons—your family heritage, your standing in that religious community, the teachings of your religious group even where they contradict what the Scriptures say?

Applications

- Have you ever sensed that Jesus was speaking directly to you, calling you to follow Him? If so, when was that and what was it like?
- How have you accounted for the way the OT talks about the Messiah compared to the eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus?
- What evidence can you point to that you are following Jesus, not just practicing religion?

2. Find others to come and see Jesus for who He is (45-49).

⁴⁵ 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.” ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of

Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

As Andrew did with Peter, when Philip finds out that Jesus is the promised Messiah, he shares the new with a friend.

Clearly Nathanael was also familiar with the Old Testament Messianic prophecies. His first response to Philip questions that the Messiah could come from Nazareth.

Nazareth was a border town full of Gentiles, particularly Roman soldiers who had a garrison there. It was known for its irreligion. More importantly, Micah 5:2 prophesied that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, the city of David, not Nazareth.

Truth was, as we know from Matthew's and Luke's accounts of Jesus' birth, Jesus was in fact born in Bethlehem, though He grew up in Nazareth. It's possible Philip did not know the story of Jesus' birth yet. That likelihood is suggested by his also calling Jesus the son of Joseph. Joseph was His legal guardian, but we know from the eyewitness record that Jesus was virgin born of Mary, the miraculous sign Isaiah 7:14 had foretold. A virgin would conceive and bear and son who would be called Immanuel, God with us.

Like the other disciples of Jesus, and like Christians today, we don't understand everything. We have to grow. But God still used Philip, a new follower of Christ, to evangelize Nathanael.

We don't want to steer people wrong. We want to get our facts straight. But we are a work in progress. If you wait till you're perfect, you'll never tell anyone about Jesus. The point is to get them to Jesus.

G. Campbell Morgan talks about professing Christians who are "icily correct, and faultlessly faultless" but have no life and no zeal. Fact is, there's nobody who gets everything right all the time. And the people who think they do are self-deceived. Such thinking breeds self-righteous pride and disdain for others. We want to be a good example to people. We don't want anything to stand in the way. But we can't save anyone ourselves. Only Jesus can do that.

Those that obsess about crossing every *t* and dotting every *i* the way they think it should be done tend to talk very little of Jesus and to show very little of His character in their lives. The main thing Philip knew is that He had found Jesus the Messiah, and he's passing it on.

Even shortly before Jesus was arrested and crucified, Philip still had room to grow.

John 14:6-11

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **7** If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." **8** Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." **9** Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? **10** Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. **11** Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

I'm not saying that correct doctrine is not important. I'm saying that you can be inviting others to come see Jesus from the moment you come to know Him yourself. You'll be growing in grace and knowledge your whole life and won't reach perfection till glory, so you can't wait till then to start talking about Jesus to the people you know.

So how did Philip handle Nathanael's skeptical remark? Simply, "Come and see." Check Him

out for yourself. You don't have to take my word for it, but He's worth investigating yourself. That's far better than an argument. Discover who Jesus is for yourself.

John 1:47-49

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." **49** Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

An Israelite indeed with no deceit—Jesus knows Nathanael already. He's not an Israelite in name only or just by nationality. He's not practicing his faith just for show, just to fit in, just to appear respectable. He is earnest. He's been in the Word. And it's created a hunger for the Messiah.

When Jesus displayed His knowledge of who Nathanael actually was in his heart, Nathanael was astonished. "How do you know me?"

"I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Jesus knew Nathanael inside and out. Jesus saw him where he was spiritually and

physically. Nathanael's heart and life were an open book to Jesus.

Same with you and me. Jesus knows you as you really are on the inside. At any given moment of time He sees exactly where you are. *Nobody else knows you the way Jesus does. Nobody else sees you the way He does. He's the ultimate safe place for you. Forget any pretense, come just as you are.* He already knows you.

That was all the convincing Nathanael needed.

Rabbi—teacher, my great one
Son of God
King of Israel

We wonder whether Nathanael may have been meditating on Psalm 2 under the fig tree, because he uses the same descriptions Psalm 2 does for the anointed one, the Messiah. He is the Son whom God the Father has established as king of the all the earth on His holy hill of Zion.

Applications

- When's the last time you invited someone to come and see who Jesus is?
- What are the names of persons with whom you have enough connection that they would take you up on that invitation?

- What if anything have you ever done to explore who Jesus is for yourself?
- Who if anyone would you trust to help you with that exploration?

3. Trust in Jesus Christ and you will see far greater things yet (50-51).

⁵⁰ Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹ And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Nathanael would see greater things for sure. He would see Jesus turn water to wine, heal all kinds of disease, cause the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He would see Jesus feed thousands with one lunch, walk on water, cast out demons, and raise the dead. He would see Jesus crucified and risen again. But there would be yet more.

Jesus shifts from singular to plural in verse 51. So he's talking about not just what Nathanael will see, but what all His disciples will see someday.

There is no record in the gospels of any event like what verse 51 describes. The description reminds us of Jacob's vision in Genesis 28 when he saw the angels of Yahweh

descending and ascending a ladder between heaven and earth. Jesus is that ladder, the only way to the Father. Angels attend Him and His redemption work. Men, women, boys, and girls bear testimony to His saving power.

Jesus ties that image with the Daniel's prophecy of the Son of Man, which is Jesus' favorite designation for Himself.

Daniel 7:13-14

13 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. **14** And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Matthew 25:31-32

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **32** Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Jesus is the Son of God, the King of Israel, and the Judge of the world at the end of the age. He promises Nathanael and he and all other believers will one day see with their

very own eyes the end of the age, when Jesus Christ, the Son of man will come with His holy angels to judge the world and rescue His own. In fact, since to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, who reigns from the heavenly city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, where myriads of angels gather. Those angels carry out the orders of God between heaven and earth for the sake of the heirs of the kingdom. Today Nathanael and every departed believer get to watch Jesus the Son of man direct angels in their ministry descending and ascending, doing heaven's work on earth, rejoicing over every sinner that repents and turns to Jesus.

There are gospel blessings from Jesus we get to see in this life, but there is much more to come, culminating in the new heaven and new earth where righteousness dwells. This is the promised future for every saint of God, made so by faith in Jesus the Messiah, the Savior King, God the Son.

Applications

- What are some greater things you've seen God do since you started following Jesus?
- How can you let the bright future that Jesus has promised His followers help you remain faithful throughout the hardships and temptations of this life?

Conclusion

1. Listen to the call of Jesus to follow Him (43-45).
2. Find others to come and see Jesus for who He is (45-49).
3. Trust in Jesus Christ and you will see greater things yet (50-51).

Closing Song: Show Us Christ

Summary of Applications

- Have you ever sensed that Jesus was speaking directly to you, calling you to follow Him? If so, when was that and what was it like?
- How have you accounted for the way the OT talks about the Messiah compared to the eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus?
- What evidence can you point to that you are following Jesus, not just practicing religion?
- When's the last time you invited someone to come and see who Jesus is?
- What are the names of persons with whom you have enough connection that they would take you up on that invitation?
- What if anything have you ever done to explore who Jesus is for yourself?
- Who if anyone would you trust to help you with that exploration?

- What are some greater things you've seen God do since you started following Jesus?
- How can you let the bright future that Jesus has promised His followers help you remain faithful throughout the hardships and temptations of this life?